

Young Researchers Experience



What insight can be gained from consultation with students?

- Our project was 3fold in aims:
 - A group of students with an aspiration to teach, have spent a year leading a research project to learn the attributes and qualities needed to be an excellent teacher through lesson observations.
 - The college sought to explore if these student observations can provide meaningful information for teachers to act upon in lesson planning?
 - NFER are specifically interested in my role as a facilitator of group research; seeking a model of guidance to advise future facilitators on how best to carry out the role.

“People’s perceptions of the world around them are profoundly significant, both to themselves and others. In which case it is very likely that students perceptions of that same class may be very different and in turn will affect their perceived learning.” *Flutter and Ruddock*



About the group....

Project aims:

- To learn about teaching as a career.
- What are the qualities and attributes of a good teacher?
- To provide teaching staff with a student perspective on teaching.
- To gain experience in a practical group research project.



What have we been doing on the course? (Project methods)

In weekly sessions.....

- Group discussions – sharing experiences of learning/teaching.
- Lesson observation training.
- Gathering and reflecting on information and ideas through team reports.
- Discussion forums through Moodle.



Outside of sessions.....

- Pre observation interviews with our teachers.
- Lesson observations.
- Review meetings with teachers.
- Lesson planning.
- Trip to Richmond Upon Thames College.

Phase 1 - Findings

Training – 30 minute observation – write the report – feedback to Becky.

Initial experiences:-

Altered perspective

- Prior to any training, many in the group found it easier and more natural to pick out the negative aspects of a teaching session, rather than the positives.
- However, after training and practise in our observations, the majority of notes commented on positive aspects of the lesson.

Note taking (writing the report)

- Simply difficult to record everything needed during the time.
- Need to keep focusing on recording objectively throughout observation, as opposed to making subjective judgements when observing.



Phase 1 - Findings

Interesting Observations

Student participation

- Extent that student participation became an important indicator as to how effective the lesson seemed, however important not to make assumptions.

Learning styles

- In many cases, teachers appealed to many different learning styles, and in most lessons, observers reported largely engaged classes.

Recapping learning

- Students revisited knowledge and skills from previous lessons which enabled them to build on what they had learned.

Teacher Interest

- We were surprised how highly our designated teachers valued student voice – both students and teachers seem to be gaining from the project.
- Reinforced the significance of our project and highlighted the arguably growing importance of student voice in education.



Phase 1 - Findings

- The teaching is really good, very little to comment on or criticise.
- More practical experience of teaching now needed – particularly how to plan lessons.

The Sixth Form College Farnborough

Lesson Observation

Teacher: Lesley Connor Subject: Sociology Course: GCSE Venue: Soc/56 Date: 07/02/2011

Students on Register: male [] female [] Students present: male [] female []

Observation Time: 30 minutes

Summary of Lesson Activity: Crime and the labelling of young people in society

The Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning

What key features of the classroom activities did you observe that were either good or outstanding in how they impacted upon student learning?

- The majority of students were focused in tasks set, with minor talking about the activity
- All students responded well to post-it note task, focussing for rest of session
- The teacher created a friendly, purposeful atmosphere in which students felt both safe and confident to engage with activities prepared
- Lesson was well prepared, with experiential activity introduced straight away after starter
- Pace of the lesson was excellent, with set time guideline allowing for sufficient time to complete tasks but not drag on, as prompted by teacher (e.g. "5 minutes!" and "1, 2, 3..."), as well as enabling individuals to seek clarification from mobile teacher
- Majority of students made active contributions to task/debate, and if not, did so willingly on prompt from teacher
- Students respond well to and engage with visual and physical resources as a means to complete set task
- All students very engaged in role play activity, listening to each other with maturity and sincerity

What key issues did you observe that required further consideration and development?

- Teacher refers to previous lesson content, but students have blank faces
- Minor weekend-conversation during group work activities when teacher occupied with other students
- One student arrived ten minutes late and though appropriately dealt with by teacher, played a largely passive role in remainder of session (however, another late student was very actively engaged)

Observer: Amy Grandvoinet

Date: 07/02/2011

Signature:

Phase 2 – developing skills

Teacher interests developed.

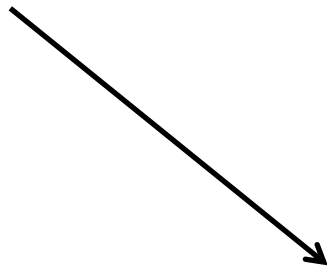
Interest in student feedback and suggestions.

1. Teacher identified focus for student feedback.
2. Full lesson observation.
3. Student completes report, adds suggestions.
4. Joint plan a lesson.
5. See our student voice implemented.



Phase 2 – Developing skills

- Revised lesson report



Suggested strategies for development

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Lesson Observation Record

Teacher: _____ Subject: _____ Course: _____ Venue: _____ Date: _____
Session length (mins): 90
Students on Register: male: _____ female: _____ Students present: male: _____ female: _____
Observation time
(minimum 60 mins): _____

Summary of lesson activity:

The effectiveness of the teaching and learning

What key features of the classroom activities did you observe that were either good or outstanding in how they impacted upon student learning? (Consider the answers to this to be 'key strengths')
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(This is an opportunity for the observer to offer suggestions to carry out tasks in a different way, or to provide comments on a task from a student perspective.)
•

Notes: Refer to Aide-Memoire

What difficulties have we overcome?

Problem	Solution
Time management and coordination as a large group of both students and teachers.	Students set short term goals from session to session to move forward in project with steady and controlled pace.
How exactly to observe lessons.	Example videos, training, and student-teacher discussions.
Recording objectively.	Practise observations and practise feedback sessions - the 'sandwich technique'.
Communication.	Email, texting, face book.
Difficult to identify what to suggest on reports for development.	Teaching at Farnborough is very good. Training , more lessons next year.

Skills gained:

- Confidence in working with each other and with staff.
- Scheduling independent work to coordinate with each other.
- Specialist skills in observing lessons and feeding back.



Final thoughts from the group

- ❖ “Before the project, I thought that teaching should be quite strict, with lots of writing. However when I observed Lesley I learned how important it is to be active and play around with facts that you have learned, in order to exercise what you know. The hard working should be in your own time.” Natalie Chappell
- ❖ “You have to consider lots of aspects when teaching, preparation of a lesson, the resources you wish to use, when teaching, your time management and student participation.” Sidrah Ahmed
- ❖ “Teachers care about our learning experience.” Rachel Clark

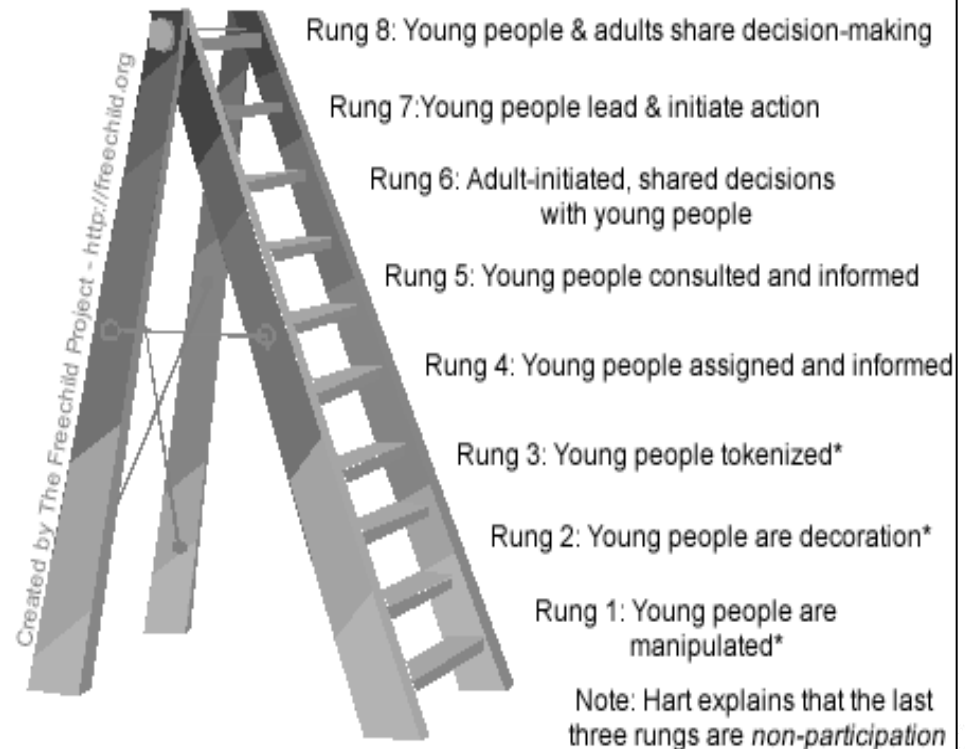


Student participation in research

Diary exert – The need to plan!

‘Letting go of the leadership skills I use as a teacher is very challenging. Planning and delivering the project is a vital role of the student researcher. I need to consider how to create opportunities for students to take the lead in sessions. I feel out of my comfort zone not knowing how the project will end, however it is key for the students to discover this as action researchers.’

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Teacher V's Researcher

PHASE 1 – LESSON OBSERVATION TRAINING

“For teachers there is a potential conflict between their role as a teacher and that of a researcher. A researcher is classically expected to be a detached and impartial observer, encouraging voluntary rather than enforced participation, who records rather than challenges opinions.” (Kirby, 2001: 75)

Diary exert – playing an equal

“I need to remove myself from the teacher/ student relationship to that of facilitator if I am to let the students discuss ideas freely without prejudice.”

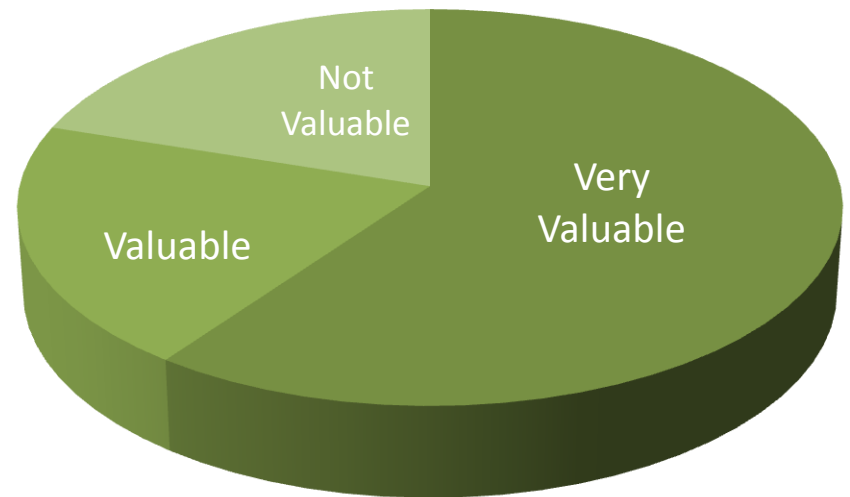
Thankfully my experience as a teacher enabled me to move forward as a researcher with the group, when I realised that the same issue arises in teacher training when teachers use emotive language rather than objective observations and the solution seemed to be in asking the students, as we do teachers, to view the lesson from the learner perspective.



Teacher Feedback

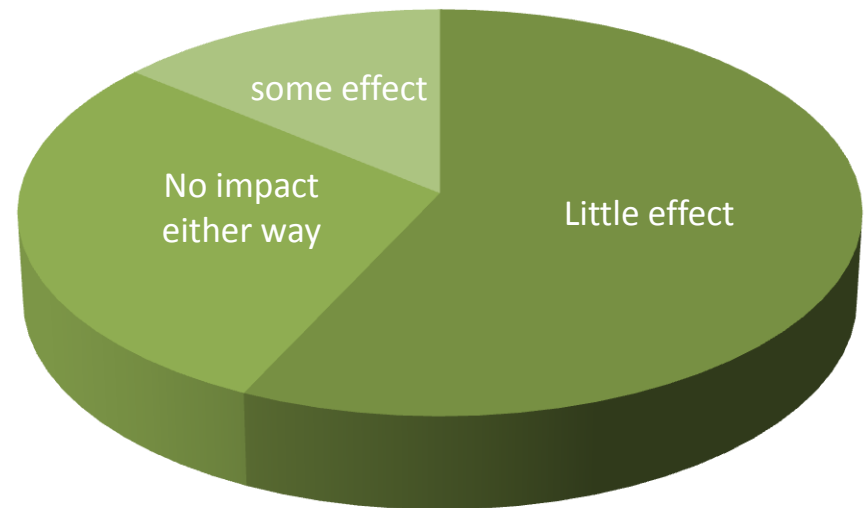
How would you rate student observation in your lessons?

- *“I felt I could have an honest conversation with them about what I felt I needed to do in my lessons to make them better. I was able to share my anxieties in a way that I am reluctant to do with colleagues. I felt the whole process was free of judgement.”*
- *“It is important that we understand our job from the point of view of those who we teach.”*
- *“It may be judged by others to be a risk and it probably was but it was an important risk to take.”*



Student Feedback

By the end of the project did you feel that your role as a student observer was contributing to the development of your teacher's practice?



Has your opinion of teaching changed throughout the year?

Student response at the start of the project

1	Patience
2	Respect between students and teachers
3	Sense of humour
4	Understanding and Reasonable
5	Organised
6	Set clear aims
7	Meet all students needs
8	Knowledge
9	Confident
10	Inspiring
11	Smart appearance

Teacher response

1	Knowledge
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11	Smart appearance

Comparison to teacher feedback

Student response at the end of the project

1	Knowledge
2	Respect between students and teachers
3	Understanding and Reasonable
4	Organised
5	Set clear aims
6	Inspiring
7	Patience
8	Meet all students needs
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Teacher response

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Top tips as a facilitator

- ✓ Choose an interesting topic, with broad appeal, to get lots of people interested in your project.
- ✓ Have a critical friend to bounce ideas off.
- ✓ Focus on what the YRs want – facilitate their learning, rather than leading the project.
- ✓ A clear delivery model is required for a large group research project with a variety of flexible communication tools.
- ✓ Students need help most at the beginning and end of a project, so be aware that there will be more demands on your time then.
- ✓ Be flexible in your approach to time - need to consider student and teacher commitments



Future plans

We hope very much to role the project out again next year and will put into Practice the advice from our YR:

- ✓ Start the project in September rather than November
- ✓ Seek AS students for the project, as the experience is so valuable for applying to degree.
- ✓ Start the lesson observation training much earlier in order to carry out more lesson observations throughout the year, and build a better relationship with teachers.
- ✓ Weekly group sessions could perhaps have the sole function of a seminar, in which students learn from each others' on-going experiences on a regular up-to-date basis.
- ✓ Enhance a team spirit and sense of working collectively towards a goal through team building exercises at start of year.

