

**Radiography teaching under the lens
using student therapeutic radiographers
as co-researchers to reimagine teaching
observation**

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BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Context

Teaching excellence is at the centre of debate regarding notions of 'quality' within Higher Education

Greater focus via the TEF and new notions of 'value for money'

Historically we have not *routinely* been **externally/systematically** judged on the quality of our teaching

But the 'new order' seeks an assessment of teaching quality – **government argues that this should be evidence based**

University degree courses to be ranked in 'MoneySuperMarket' style system, minister says

'Universities will no longer be able to hide if quality of teaching is not up to a world-class standard'



QUICK QUESTIONS



How is the quality of the teaching **you** deliver assessed in YOUR institution?

Is it legitimate / reliable / valid?

Is it even 'a thing' ????

Criticisms of traditional approaches to assessment of teaching quality

Difficult to capture (NSS? Module evaluation? Degree classification?)

Managerialist agenda – just get your observation ticked off the list!!!

Undertaken by educators for their own self-interest (self-policed, in-house, ?biased)

Assessment through observation stifles innovation

WHAT ABOUT THE STUDENTS???????

‘data collected for such exercises invariably rely on reductive metrics that fail to reflect either the authenticity or complexity of HE teaching.’

(O’Leary 2017)



The project

- 18 month research (Nov 16- Apr 18) employing *students as partners* in the observation process
- Philosophy of inquiry rather than punitive criteria- driven assessment
- Radiotherapy selected as one of five case studies



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Project Lead /
Steering Group BCU

BA (Hons)
Early
Childhood
Studies

BSc (Hons)
Nursing
(Adult)

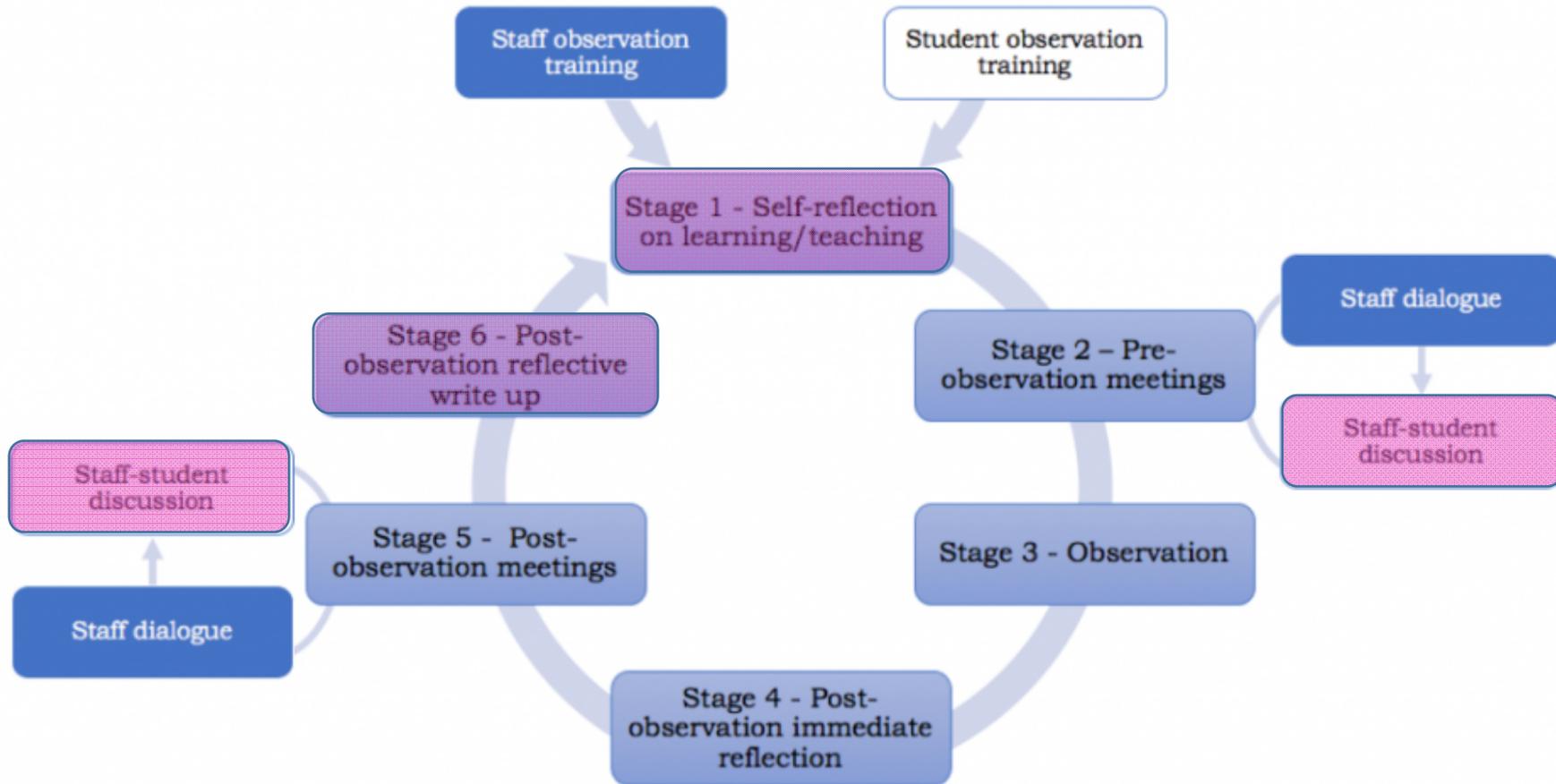
BSc (Hons)
Radiotherapy

BSc (Hons)
Nursing
(Child)

BA (Hons)
Primary
education
with QTS



Cycle of Collaborative Observation (CoCO)



Data



Findings – T&L

- Both students felt taught sessions were effective but that their own learning was heavily dependent on the **(social) cohesion** of the group
- Students described the **'feel'** of the each taught session – they readily described **interaction of tutor with group as a measure of success/effectiveness**
- Students described the importance of **how tutors 'gauge' levels of understanding** within the taught sessions (cross-questioning, humour)- described as a positive feature of T&L

Findings – T&L

- Students told us they had a great sense of **'tutor workload'** such as managing the group and need to 'pause and check'
- One student described the strength / weakness of friendship groups **changed the dynamic within the class** (students described "its better when there are more people like me")
- Both students **used their own enjoyment** of the sessions as a vicarious measure of **teaching success**

Findings- students assessment of being observers/researchers

- They found it difficult!
- Worried about their OWN learning as they had another job to do (multitasking)
- One of the students felt he was looking for 'problems' with the taught sessions



Findings –tutor perspective

- Teaching assessment *involving students* was felt to **be a genuine process**
- Observation only succeeds where student observers are 100% **committed** and **trained** (and paid?)
- We did initially have concerns about **students motivation** to participate

The impact of collaborative observation on our understanding and improvement of learning

- Students are much more **sensitive to the learning going on around** them than we gave them credit for
- Students may be concerned that their own learning is prejudiced by the **pace of learning** amongst the group
- Students **validated our current practices** and identified suggestions for improvement (e.g. workshops, VERT use)

The impact of collaborative observation on our understanding and improvement of learning

- Conversations about teaching that we don't usually have with our students!
- **Collegiate work** with students
- Students gained a more critical insight of their own learning and gained some **valid experience as novice researchers**

For the future.....

- **DO**- Consider embedding student collaborative observations as *robust evidence* within a TEF submission
- **DO** consider how this might articulate with the *type* of teaching activity you do
- **DON'T**- abandon staff peer-to-peer teaching observation- it has its place
- **DON'T** assume all students have the skills to be your 'critical friend'

Acknowledgments

References.

1. Birmingham City University (2017) *Improving learning and teaching through collaborative observation* <http://blogs.bcu.ac.uk/collaborativeobservation/>
1. O'Leary, M. (Ed) (2016) *Reclaiming lesson observation: supporting excellence in teacher learning*. Abingdon: Routledge