Reflective Account of Practice

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

I was appointed as Lecturer for the XXXX at Sheffield Hallam in August 2004 from my previous position as an Associate Lecturer at XXXX. I arrived with two years experience of part-time lecturing whilst studying for my PhD in Sport Sociology. I was fortunate enough to be supported in the completion of my PhD whilst fulfilling my full-time teaching responsibilities at SHU and passed with minor amendments in 2007. I also completed my Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCertHE) in 2006 (A5, K2)). This was not only invaluable in exposing me to literature and philosophies of education for the first time but also for introducing me to peers outside of my subject expertise and wider department with whom I could share experiences and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment (K3).

Having sport sociology as my subject expertise has had an inextricable impact on my educational philosophy which centres on the importance of the 'sociological imagination' (Wright Mills, 1959) (K1). Whilst the concept is fundamental to the teaching of much sociology I would argue that it is of the utmost relevance to all learners in that it explains the value of being able to link our 'personal troubles' to 'public issues'. Learners should be enabled to make the connections between their own experiences and understanding of everyday phenomena and wider institutional and social structures. A straightforward example would be that an individual enduring poverty due to unemployment is connected to wider socioeconomic structures of government, capitalism and so on. I do not see this as a subject-specific concept but one that embraces all learners, even more so in a competitive graduate context where fixed employment, and the stable identity it could subsequently provide, is increasingly less likely for current graduates (V4). Therefore, developing students' skills as lifelong, autonomous learners becomes more important than ever before.
In my teaching I have strived to facilitate and encourage the 'deep learning' and critical thinking skills that such a philosophy requires. Furthermore, I endeavour to support learners in making the necessary links between theory and practice (A1, K1, K2).

One of the fundamental ways in which I have embedded this philosophy into my teaching is integrating my own research knowledge and experience into module delivery to provide learners with an experience that is both research-oriented and research-based (Griffiths, 2004). I have employed an inquiry-based approach to my teaching on the 'xxxx' and 'xxxx' modules where much of the curriculum is not designed to acquire subject content but around inquiry-based activities. For example, my students design and conduct their own

media analyses of topics that are relevant and intriguing to them. As Griffiths (2004) supports, I have found that this approach has led to the division between teacher (as authoritative expert) and learner being minimised in my classroom, thus developing the students' confidence as autonomous and critical learners (V3). An additional benefit has been that students are more engaged with the subject itself and more acculturated into a 'research ethos' which leaves them better equipped for independent enquiry in their final year of study and future careers (K3). Student feedback for these modules in particular has been consistently positive as is evidenced by staff-student committees and formal module evaluations which have cited the exposure to cutting-edge research as a significant reason for their strong engagement (A2, K5).

I have developed curriculum that employs specialist speakers from industry (xxxx, xxxx) to share with students the impact of current organisational practices and media discourses on their everyday working lives. I have developed strong links with local xxxx community development organisations. Students are challenged to produce their own feature news article and the strongest work (as selected by the external organisation) is published online and shared within the organisation's own networks. Feedback from students and our external examiners has praised the inquiry-based activities that support the assessment (participating in a press conference with the organisation, field visits, independent research) and the confidence that they have attained by having their work reviewed by external xxxx industry professionals as well as a member of academic staff (A4, K5).

My teaching is not restricted solely to xxxx xxxx as I have contributed to the disciplines of xxxx and xxxx at SHU. From 2008 I have gained substantial experience in contributing to the Course Design Approval process at SHU as a key member of the Course Design and Approval (CDA) planning group for several degree programmes at SHU (BSc xxxx; BA xxxx; BA xxxx; MA xxxx).

My particular focus within the Course Design Approval process has been embedding effective assessment strategies into the curriculum (K6). I have worked to design effective opportunities for feed-forward assessment to identify both learner's strengths that they can build on in future work but also the apparent limitations that would need to be addressed for the student to progress in their learning. There is evidence, both anecdotal and empirical (Norton, 2007) that in the current higher education climate students can be overly focused on their grades at the expense of qualitative, constructive feedback. In an effort to address this and my own professional development in the use of mobile technologies I have piloted the use of both audio feedback and online feedback which were new to my course team. The feedback from students with both methods has been extremely positive in that they reported a much stronger engagement with the feedback itself as the students perceived it as more detailed (online), supportive and personalised (audio) in tone. This latter assertion is supported by Gould and Day (2005) who argue that written feedback can be perceived as 'cold' in comparison (A3, K4).

Course Leader
After five years at Sheffield Hallam, I progressed to the role of Course Leader in 2009 for BA xxxx. The role necessitates engaging staff with the strategic priorities of the Department, Faculty and the wider University whilst promoting a strong identity for the assigned course

and strongly influencing its strategic direction. Being a Course Leader is challenging in that it does not command any 'authority' per se, as it is not a senior role within the organisation, but demands leadership through influence. To facilitate my transition into this role I engaged with several professional development opportunities. Most notably, I undertook SHU's training in 'Managing Difficult Conversations' and 'Leadership and Influencing'.

A key component of the Course Leader role has been reflecting with students and colleagues on the effectiveness of course planning, teaching and learning and responding in a timely and proactive manner in order to promote a learning community where students feel valued and supported. It is valuable to engage with formal procedures such as the NSS, staff-student committees, module evaluations and course reviews but can also be achieved through informal interaction with students which was feasible given the relatively small cohort of my students (K5, K6, V4). Key changes that I led on during my tenure were:

- standardised use of electronic marking templates with 'three things you did well/three things to improve' to aid clarity of assessment feedback (Bloxham, 2015)
- scheduling of assessments over the full academic year in advance to avoid 'bunching' and over-burdening of both staff and students
- implementing 'Project briefing' sessions at the end of L5 to transition students for the rigours of independent research at L6
- workshops with LIS staff to address perceived weaknesses in provision as reflected in NSS scores
- closed feedback loop from staff-student committees by publishing notes of meetings, highlighting key actions taken and discussing further with the whole cohort in scheduled sessions

As Course Leader I initiated the Course Design Approval process for one course (xxxx xxxx) by organising a CPD event for our course team with external industry experts, critical friends from other HEIs, current students and alumni. The event was designed around the 'golden threads' of Employability and Research which have subsequently been highlighted as models of good practice by the Approval Panels and are supportive of what is now common practice within xxxx xxxx (A1, A5, V3, V4).

These experiences of curriculum design, planning and leadership within my own institution have served me well in accepting the role of External Examiner at another HEI (xxxx University) for two courses (BA xxxx; MA xxxx) (A5). I have supported and encouraged my external colleagues to

- Incorporate a wider range of assessment types into the curriculum, moving away from a reliance on traditional essays to also including presentations, portfolios, inquiry-based tasks

- Provide greater opportunities for students to reflect on their own practice and learning journey, thereby enabling students to make clear links between academic theory and professional practice in 'real world' settings
- Clarify to learners how they are performing against defined assessment criteria, enabling students to identify more specifically how they are performing well and where they need to improve and develop their practice

Principal Lecturer
In March 2013 I was appointed the Undergraduate xxxx for xxxx. In this broad-ranging role I

am responsible for enhancing the quality of the student experience and steering the direction of Sheffield Hallam's Undergraduate programme in the competitive sector. This experience includes the revalidation of undergraduate xxxx courses (to be discussed in Case Study Two), the effective implementation of quality processes and liaison with a wide range of staff at various levels across the University.

As xxxx I work particularly closely with Course Leaders and chair the xxxx 'xxxx xxxx Group'. From the outset I have drawn from my own experience as a Course Leader to encourage a distributed approach to leadership which is argued to be particularly apt for the HE sector (Bolden et al, 2015) in its focus on context, trust and collaboration. In my first year in post I facilitated a 'Course Leader Development' role where relatively new staff in xxxx who aspired to a leadership role in the future participated in Group meetings and worked on course-specific projects to enhance the student experience. These projects ranged from social media campaigns to boost 'course identity', to extended induction programmes and the refinement of staff-student feedback systems. The outcomes of these projects were shared at Group so that best practice could be shared and adopted by other course teams (A4, K5, V2).

The impact of the Course Leader Development role was that in 2015 the xxxx shifted its approach to course management to further promote the benefits of distributed leadership. We now give Undergraduate xxxx course teams resource to distribute as they see fit for their courses. Whilst all courses have a Course Leader, I support course teams to manage their courses in ways that fit their particular needs. For example,
- xxxx/xxxx have year tutors to focus on specific elements of the student experience i.e. L4 making the transition to Higher Education, L5 employability and work-based Learning, L6 research skills and career mentoring (V1)
- xxxx have piloted an extended induction programme to promote course belonging and a more effective transition into HE study (V2)
- xxxx are embedding sport governing body qualifications into the curriculum to enhance students' employability (K3)

We are working in an uncertain Higher Education climate as the sector still tries to unpick the impact of rising tuition fees, the growing importance of the National Student Survey (NSS) and an uncertain graduate job market, particularly in the xxxx sector where qualifications and experience are not clearly delineated in the way they might be for lawyers and nurses, for example. I work closely with our Course Leaders and teams to respond to quality enhancement tools, the NSS in particular, which have been driving forces between many of the changes that we have seen at SHU regarding our assessment framework, feedback strategies and approaches to staff-student contact (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2015) (V4).

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