

Why is it necessary to keep thinking about learning as teachers?

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Abstract — This paper is about what constitutes learning and is written in the form of a deep and honest reflection by an HE practitioner engaged in the field of post-16 teacher education whilst, at the same time, being trained to teach in HE via a programme validated by SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association). The tensions that exist between what academics think about teaching and learning and what learning should really be about (for both academics and their students) are explored via addressing in a reflective manner the learning outcomes and values of the SEDA course and reflecting back to the central question of this paper which is that learning is forever changing as we re-position our thinking and take various actions. The paper, it is hoped, adds to the collective reflection on what learning is about and how we should never stop engaging in reflection about it in an active, revolving and changing manner. Similarities between second language learning and generic learning intersperse the reflective account as the author looks through the lenses of her own disciplines of Linguistics and English as a Second Language. The author also shows how she modelled key SEDA values and includes diary entries in real time for the actions she took to improve her own teaching and learning whilst trying to 'refine the tune' she was playing on an imaginary accordion by 'pressing' on the most critical moments of her practice during 2007-2008. The emotions of a critical pedagogue are thus channelled into a 'pedagogy of hope' for a better future.

Index Terms — Transformatory learning, Critical pedagogy, Critical reflection, Post-16, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper, it is argued that Learning Theory is not static and that Educators, teachers, Learning and Teaching scholars and students need to continuously reflect about their practice and adjust their thinking about what constitutes learning, in an ever changing cycle that leads to action. The paper is structured around a deep reflective cycle that the author went through herself as a Teaching and Learning scholar. The paper critically presents her own reformulation of what constitutes learning by giving, first, some background to what fashioned her thinking, including the key theorists that she was inspired by. Second, she takes the reader through her practice and how it changed to accommodate new thinking about learning and teaching, specifically emphasising the core values of transformative and critical pedagogy. The paper is in the shape of a deep reflective commentary backed up by concrete examples of praxis and research in Teaching and Learning. The author also presents her practice in the form of diary entries that address key learning outcomes of the SEDA course that she went through, with each section highlighting the key actions that she took as a direct result of reflecting on how to meet those learning outcomes. Consequently, it models best practice as taught to trainee teachers who have to write

diaries or journals to make sense of what they are learning and how it is affecting, not only their present practice, but also, their future plans. This methodology leads the author to conclude that each time anyone concerned with learning goes through this kind of reflective cycle, they are 'playing a distinctively transformed tune' as they put back Learning at the centre of everything they do.

The most critical moment came when the author explored her own feelings about two key contexts in Higher Education – that of the teacher training context and that of the staff development context. At the start of the academic year, many Higher Education Institutions run staff development days for academics engaged in teaching and learning. Such days tend to focus on how to develop excellence in teaching and learning and are somewhat akin to appraisals of how to teach, but not so much of what to think should be learning in the first place. Indeed, institutional staff development days are about teachers as practitioners rather than teachers as thinkers. In direct contrast to this staff development context, the author explores a teacher training context in which she was a participant between 2007-2008 and which unleashed in her the desire to reach to the bottom of all of her thoughts and experience

as a teacher and think very hard about learning and teaching. The most critical moment came when all the participants were very explicitly asked to come up with their own theory of learning on day two of the course.

2 A THEORY OF LEARNING

2.1 Where did the thinking come from?

Such dichotomy between the two contexts of what might be expected of teachers (and learners) re-surfaced as a key theme a month later in a lecture by Dr Jonathan Doherty [1] from Leeds Metropolitan University, entitled 'Children's Thinking in the Early Years'. Doherty bemoaned the absence of higher order thinking skills in the way teachers have been made to educate children in particular. 'Sustained shared thinking' (ibid.) is both a concept and a technique that the progressive teachers in his sample promoted in order to stimulate higher order skills in children when debating issues or topics. The teachers were in effect applying a coaching style to the teaching of 'thinking skills' to children as they would not interfere with the children's debates unless they felt that thinking skills had to be stimulated. He stressed the importance of D-mode thinking (deliberate thinking) where the teacher purposely says: "Let's do some creative thinking now", deliberately eliciting thinking skills. This also linked up very well with the ideas of Claxton [2] and McGuiness [3] who both espouse the importance of a more holistic curriculum that gauges and facilitates thinking skills and, then, assesses them too.

2.2 What's the formulation then?

Being expressly asked to come up with their own theory of learning on the SEDA course also sustained the shared thinking of the participants and the author found herself reflecting afterwards in a way which seemed more profound to her. If she benefited so well from being made to think creatively (as in the SEDA course) then it follows that that needs to be applied to students. In HE, the emphasis is often on higher order skills but not many people seem to know for certain how to facilitate that, and, unfortunately, not everyone benefits from the 'luxury' of being on a teacher training course. The author was also in the process of publishing a paper about what she decided to call 'The creative knowledge of ESOL teachers' as ESOL teachers have traditionally been recruited

from various disciplines, professional backgrounds or contexts that have little bearing with this highly specialised area of adult learning. This reminded her of her belief in the transfer that can be made by teachers from one discipline or set of skills and work experience to another discipline or work place. The question is: What makes someone want to become an ESOL practitioner in the Lifelong Learning Sector, even though the whole sector is under-funded, complex and has cumbersome processes which make unreasonable demands on its workforce? The picture is not as positive as the sector skills' council wants us to believe (cf. LLUK). However, it is in that very sector that the author has seen some of the best teachers of adults. Indeed, in 2007-2008, she was engaged in training 24 teachers of Skills for Life (Adult ESOL, Literacy and Numeracy) and observed many of them in their practice regularly, and, came to the conclusion that the hypothesis of the paper that she wants to publish next year must have some founding; in that ESOL/Literacy teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector must value the focus there is on their creative knowledge within that discipline, and, in some way, like their students themselves, they are transferring knowledge creatively from one system to another. In the case of ESOL learners, the transfer is from one culture to another and from one language system to another where the only true universal, according to Chomsky [4], between all the languages of the world is G for a Grammar of some sort – so one can imagine the amplitude and complexity of the schematic transfer from language 1 to language 2 (and sometimes from many languages to an additional language).

All of the examples chosen to illustrate the journey that the author took through part of the SEDA course converge towards exemplifying her own theory of learning, based on her own critical awareness and experience to date of both the HE and Lifelong Learning sectors. This theory of learning could therefore be expressed as follows:

To experience new knowledge/concepts/skills and then critically take action to change something/someone/a system in and outside of yourself using your already existing thinking skills so that you can make the necessary adjustments to the new experience and make it make sense to yourself and to the world around you

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This is assuming, of course, that the conditions are all ideal and that the learner has not been presented with barriers (institutional or otherwise) to prevent such transformation from happening. In order to facilitate such transformatory learning, it follows that teaching has to enable these processes to happen, or at least create the conditions for them to start happening. Brookfield [5: 353] argues that 'teaching critically has a transformative impetus' because without combining theory and practice, such practice would be merely striving to develop cognitive processes in adult learners without necessarily striving to create a better world, more equal and anti-racist/sexist. In a way, one could argue that the transformatory impetus can be for micro or macro purposes, similar to what is stated in the definition above of 'change something in' (micro & more likely to be a cognitive change) 'and outside of yourself' (macro & more likely to be more socio-political). The transformatory element of critical pedagogy can be obtained via different methods. Indeed, Brookfield [5] stresses the eclectic nature of the methodologies of critical pedagogy where some theorists have argued for self-directed learning (such as critical reflection) and others for collaborative, collective learning (such as popular education methods) as ways by which learners would develop critical thinking skills [6]. However, the argument beautifully advanced by Brookfield [5] is that such eclecticism is necessary in a world where diversity reigns, especially in Adult Education contexts.

2.3 The reality about teaching and learning

In his inaugural lecture which is also a damning report on the state of the Lifelong Learning Sector, Prof Frank Coffield quotes from the QIA's definition of excellence the following words [7:23]:

'We believe that excellence means developing, maintaining and delivering to the highest standards of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency'

Coffield argues that there are two problems with this definition – *what* should be developed? And why is *equity* not included in the criteria for judging standards?

Like Fielding [8], Coffield then argues that [7:24]:

'Written policies on teaching and learning need to go way beyond administrative details and offer an explicit model of learning and of change; and be able to show how both are used to make students, tutors, the senior management team and the institution itself better at learning in a person-centred learning community.'

In her present HE role of post-16 teacher trainer, she author stresses the importance of learning and change to her trainees but is aware at the same time that this may not be happening in the contexts (some of them very dire) of where most of these trainees work. Just like Coffield suggests above the administrative side of learning (or rather 'delivering learning') takes precedence over the more essential and equitable 'change management' side of learning. In terms of learning theory and its implication for curriculum design this is very similar to what Meyer and Land [9] suggest happens when 'a threshold concept' may remain simply an issue of cognitive organisation and perspective rather than a 'troublesome' concept for learners. If teachers in Higher Education do not give due credit to troublesome knowledge and its potential for transformatory learning (or at least for a re-positioning of subjectivity) and have themselves become converted to forms of what Meyer and Land [9] call 'ritual knowledge', then it follows that they may all be perpetuating the (potentially disastrous) status-quo that Coffield warns us against.

This in effect is what can be also be experienced on staff development days in HE, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper. What has therefore framed this reflective commentary is the tension that the author felt existed between the good practice in the teacher training context and the not so good practice that has to be abided by by employees of large organisations that have not yet learned how to learn better. Sometimes the teacher trainer might feel like saying very bluntly to his/her trainees: 'Don't kid yourself. All this is rubbish. You'll soon find out that you cannot apply any of your gorgeous creative knowledge to your workplace etc..' but, if, like the author, one believes in a pedagogy of hope as pioneered by Freire [10] then one should always strive to never become cynical. At times of personal anxiety, there is an urgent need to remind oneself why one is here as a teacher educator in the first place. As Parker and Lynn warn, although in their case they are arguing for an

anti-racist pedagogy, teachers must always look at the power they have from all kind of angles. In a paper on the usefulness of Critical Race Theory, they argue that [11:15):

'White teacher educatorsengage in reflexive thinking about what it means to be White in a field such as education and its impact on practice'

It is precisely this awareness of the power a teacher or teacher educator has, whether in terms of their ethnicity, gender, politics, ideology and so on that should prevent teachers from imparting a sense of despair and loss to the students that they teach. It is conceded though that in the messy sector where the author's students teach it is a very hard stance to take as the author, herself, left the sector for exactly those reasons that Coffield enumerates. The hope is that, together with like-minded people, critical pedagogues, like the author, will be able to identify what Meyer and Land [9: 377] call 'stuck places' - or those places that 'may occasion 'epistemological obstacles' that block any transformed perspective' - in order to counteract the change in culture that is happening in HE or, at least, in what are called post-1992 universities which have not yet acquired the status of the old ones, and, therefore, have to impose strict controls on their outputs including teaching and learning.

'Should we rock the boat and steer it away from its fast ride towards the iceberg (as Coffield imagined) or should we conspire (like we all did, and, with devastating consequences, with the war) with a system that values efficient evaluations without sparing much thought to what it is we are all thinking we are doing in the first place?' says the author, in one of her diary entries.

The author imagines an 'accordion' of learning, where key teaching and learning values are matched with examples from her own practice in black and white boxes, almost suggesting, as one unwinds the metaphorical keyboard, that the would-be accomplished teacher has the perfect set up now to run their fingers along the keys, producing a harmonious tune that begins with *designing teaching programmes through to methodologies of teaching, resources and materials, not withstanding, developing effective learning environments, assessing effectively, and, finally, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning practices.* This is how the above-italicised SEDA course

6 learning outcomes were imagined by the author. The metaphorical 'accordion' image worked as the author then imagined that in her commentary, she would press some of the 'black keys' when she wanted to give precise examples of how she was addressing the SEDA learning outcomes. She also imagined that she would have a go at practising the 'fan' part of the 'accordion' where she could expand or constrict the air that is produced by the life force of her own concerns about learning and teaching – i.e., practice her own reflective skills.

In effect, teacher training programmes are about all of the teaching and learning values that are held dear by many teachers, but, at the same time, the author was aware that it was absolutely critical for her to concentrate on one or two examples from her own practice at a time to 'refine the tune' and make it more relevant to her own reflections so that her 'accordion' would play the music that makes sense to her and, hopefully, to the world of the students around her; in effect supporting her own above-mentioned theory of learning whereby she believes that after the initial change, then, transformation within and without, teachers have ultimately to make sense of it all to themselves and to the world that they operate in. Brookfield urges an appraisal of learning and teaching in terms of how it should challenge ideology and unmask power, whereas Meyer and Land suggest that it is about helping to solve troublesome knowledge that threshold concepts provoke in learners. The effect remains transformative in both the teacher and the learner and may or may not lead to socio-political action such as that suggested by Marxist pedagogues of the Freirean tradition.

3 EXAMPLES OF THE AUTHOR'S DIARY ENTRIES FROM PRACTICE

3.1 Design appropriate teaching programmes and critically evaluate their effectiveness – Author's diary entries

'My 'accordion tune' begins with an example of how my co-trainer and I devised a worksheet in which learning outcomes were combined with evaluation for our first session of the teacher training course for teachers of Skills for Life. We wanted the students to list how many learning outcomes they had achieved and, at the same time, by the end of the session, re-visit the learning outcomes and place themselves on the rungs of a ladder

in terms of how 'happy' they felt in having achieved them. I also asked them to place themselves on the ladder at the start of the session and compare that with the end of the session to see whether their satisfaction levels had increased. Their sense of achievement at the end of the session was immense as they gave us oral feedback whilst two of them emailed to say that they were very happy with how the session went. The SEDA values of *understanding how our students learn* and of *valuing their differing stages of development* seemed directly relevant here as this activity is about trying to understand our students better by explicitly asking them to feedback on the learning outcomes that we had decided they needed for this module (dare I say, in this case, without the negotiating 'praxis' part of the Freirean tradition to which I belong which created some unease in me and, consequently, a heightened desire to see whether my co-trainer and I were really addressing the learning needs of our trainee teachers). At the same time, this example hopefully shows how we were valuing their diverse needs by asking them to rate their satisfaction at the start (without our input and the class activities to facilitate learning) and then at the end (after our input and learning activities). My second example – a report I wrote after my co-trainer and I met all of our students (not just a few reps) at the end of last year's course – also testifies to the importance of SEDA values around *inclusion* and around *the development of one's own practice* in particular, as we wanted to go beyond what the university quality procedures required and include all of our students, giving all of them a voice and an opportunity to help us improve the course and learn from their perspective too. I believe that that has helped me develop my own practice this year, and, I have worked very hard on refining some of the content, methods, and, assessment of the course.'

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: What I need to do next time I deliver the module in 2009 is to evaluate discrete elements of my teaching and ask the students, for example, what they thought of this particular way of combining learning outcomes with satisfaction levels. Deep and surface approaches, as explained in an article on learning styles by Jan Smith [12] and how they can be used to promote learning are very important areas of research that I could also explore further and hopefully refine my evaluation methods further by 2010.

3.2 Learning and Teaching methods for large and small groups – Author's diary entries

'I confidently carry my 'tune' over to two of my best examples, showing how, on the one hand, I support individual teachers, by observing them, tutoring them and feeding back to them, therefore, applying SEDA values such as *diversity and respect for the individual learner, professionalism and ethical practice, as well as developing myself and my learners*. I then also have included an example of a short staff development session I delivered to teams of post-16 teacher educators from Adult Education and from Higher Education, where I had to be aware that this was addressing extremely well qualified teacher trainers and academics who probably had more experience of their respective sectors than me. I needed to convince myself that I was *the* expert on ESOL. However, in order not to centralise the power in my hands only, I decided to apply a Popular Education method used in Latin America by feminist educators in the poorest of areas. The 'dressing up the undressed teddy bear and then cuddling it' activity is my own interpretation of an activity I read about in Denise Nadeau [13] and, I hope, as used by me that day, reconciles trainees to the affective parts of their transformation so that they do not feel the despair that may spring up when being challenged by new learning. This reminds me also of what Meyer and Land [9] call 'troublesome knowledge' and which I have highlighted in section 2.3 above. I believe that, whether we teach small or large groups, or, indeed, on a one-to-one basis (as in the observation of teachers in their practice), we have to keep our awareness of diversity, respect for individual preferences, ethical inclusive practice at the forefront of all of our activities, resources (including our own discourse/s) as well as our planning of learning and of assessment. By constantly re-assessing the way we do things, we also continue to improve our own practice and that of others.'

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: I am not yet there in terms of my deeper understanding of some aspects of Critical Pedagogy. For instance, I want to learn more about the differences that exist between the key methodologies of 'pedagogy of hope', 'pedagogy of desire', 'pedagogy of love' etc.. and their implications for teaching and learning, and, in particular teacher education. I attended a very theoretical presentation last

year (at the Critical Pedagogy week-end of the HEA's C-SAP) by a critical pedagogue called Sarah Amsler [14] who has also recently won a 'teacher of the year award'. Sarah gave me a long list of references to research the different aspects of pedagogy that she talked about. I need to attend, in general, a few more sociology seminars, and, in particular, devote more time to research on Critical Pedagogy. A book by S. Brookfield, entitled 'The power of critical theory for adult learning and teaching' [5], as suggested by my SEDA tutor, is now on my list of books to read from cover to cover, rather than the focused reading of one chapter that I have done so far. The advantages of reading such a book are such that I will be able to delve into the key theories behind Critical Pedagogy and research the area further.

3.3 Designing, producing and evaluating materials – Author's diary entries

'I focus on two examples (apart from the 'Teddy Bear' example mentioned above). Using Youtube videos in my teaching, as well as more visually interesting powerpoint presentations with, for example, photographs of key theorists, increases the range and quality of materials that I can use and goes beyond the narrow approach I used to take of using OHTs, handouts and flipcharts almost exclusively. As a teacher trainer in the 1990s, my resources were quite limited, whereas now I have developed myself further, and, have started experimenting with online materials and resources, such as Youtube, Powerpoint with weblinks, and, very recently, uploading onto the VLE. By using C&IT resources, I am sure that my students are motivated to learn better, as long as I keep some of my traditional kinaesthetic methods alive so that all learners are included. I read an article by Truluck and Courtenay [15] where it is argued that as adults develop and change, their learning styles shift towards less kinaesthetic, more auditory approaches and more structured course designs that lead to reflection. Should we therefore always strive to use a mix of methods to meet the needs of our diverse groups of students?

What Popular Education methods (underpinned by my strong beliefs in Critical Pedagogy and 'transformatory' learning) also allow me to do is resist the tendency there is in constructivism - such as in Light and Cox [16] to believe that 'All knowledge is idiosyncratic and personal', thus denying the

possibility of sharing and communicating knowledge between people – such as in Fox [17]. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that an eclectic approach to materials and resources is necessary to maximise learning, not relying on just one way of presenting/eliciting new information or knowledge to/from students.

By doing so, I am trying to address key SEDA values such as *understanding how people learn* (by using of mix of styles and resources including C&IT), as well as *engaging with continuing reflection* and, thereby, *developing my own practice* (by reading and extending my knowledge of different pedagogies and research on learning and teaching that I can either use or adapt for my own professional context).'

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: I need to find the time to update my skills and attend further training on VLEs, Powerpoint, and, Interactive Whiteboards. In addition, I need to learn how to film and how to edit and upload students' videos onto Blackboard, as I would like to experiment with filmed reflections that the trainees can access flexibly.

3.4 Effective learning environments and learning support systems – Author's diary entries

'I fine tune my 'accordion' by focusing on 3 examples of my current practice of attempting to incorporate the VLE into my teaching, and, maintaining the importance I give to supporting my students via email and responding promptly to all of their emails. I have updated the materials and reading that I use on the course that I teach and uploaded them onto Blackboard for my students. Even after having been trained on how to use Blackboard last year, I realised that I was still struggling to come to terms with using it. What I found very useful this year is using a checklist of instructions that our Blackboard trainer gave us last year, and that, in itself, re-kindled my own confidence at experimenting with Blackboard again. Handouts are after all very useful tools for reminding students of what they have learned.

I also, for the first time this year, typed up a flipchart on 'Barriers to Learning' that my trainees had contributed to during a workshop and promptly posted it for them on the VLE so that all of their 'creative knowledge' during that session is not lost and is re-used as a

handout generated by the students themselves. My SEDA tutor uses Powerpoint as a flipchart and records all of our 'creative knowledge' there and then within the session, and later on, posts those handouts on the website for us. It is a very useful technique for valuing what students bring to a session. I watched as my co-trainer used this technique too in one of our sessions. I too would like to use this technique sometime, but am perhaps too worried about losing the kinaesthetic/visual re-assurance that my students seem to experience when they have different textured paper or card and pens in vibrant colours to work with collaboratively. Perhaps, next time I shall use both techniques to model both the use of C&IT and 'low-tech' kinaesthetic resources for the development of collaborative learning to my trainees. By strengthening the quality and range of resources and the support that I can give to my students via maximising my C&IT approaches, I am taking care of my students' *diverse needs and individual differences*, whilst at the same time noting how my peers make use of certain approaches to *develop my own practice, others, educational processes and systems* – both key SEDA values.'

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: I will need to undertake further training on other aspects of C&IT, such as Pebblepad, blogging and podcasts. I intend to develop my skills in C&IT by making use of the training that already exists within my university, and, by attending relevant e-learning conferences as proposed by the Skills for Life Improvement Programme of the QIA. Also, I would like to shadow more colleagues than I have so far done to develop an even wider range of approaches than I have so far managed to do.

3.5 Innovative range of assessment to support learning and students' progress – Author's diary entries

I have chosen the following two examples from my own practice in terms of assessment. The first example is that of an assessment day where the trainee teachers that I teach made mini presentations on aspects of their teaching and learning to each other, as well as, assessing and grading each other. We then moderated the grades and awarded final grades to all of their presentations. This assessment was written in a quest to diversify the assessment procedures used on this programme. Indeed, the assessment strategy on the course that I teach has

diversity as its main concern and includes; oral presentations, essays, case studies, surveys that embed mathematical skills, reflective diaries, and, observations of practice. In addition to this inclusive assessment strategy, my co-trainer and I also introduced an element of peer assessment which seemed to stimulate reflection, collaborative learning and the sharing of good practice among our trainees further, as they had been reading Curzon [18] and had asked whether we could model these concepts for them. In the students' feedback last year, the oral presentations were rated very high by the students for best learning experience on the course.

The second example for this learning outcome is the observation form that we use on the course and that I refer to in my feedback to individual trainees when assessing their practice. It is a very thorough observation form that is mapped very explicitly to the professional standards for teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector (see LLUK the latest professional standards for Teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector). It therefore links very clearly practice to standards. When I carry out observations of this kind, I feel that I am homing in on individuals' needs and supporting the development of teachers in the sector even more than when I am assessing by grading essays only. When I have my observer's hat on I can see where teachers maybe experiencing particular problems with specific standards or parts of a given standard or set of standards. These standards are, in a way, similar to the 'Threshold concepts' of Meyer and Land [9] and ultimately constitute the benchmarks by which we measure the achievement of teachers in this sector in a developmental and formative way. The difference between these standards and 'threshold concepts' is, to my mind, non-existent, as long as the teaching and support offered to the teachers on our courses are formative and the assessment developmental. It is when such concepts or standards are interpreted as absolute 'targets' that one must reach via summative exam-type assessment or Ofsted-type scrutiny that they lose the appeal they could have of contributing to the ongoing cycle of learning.

These two examples illustrate at least 3 of the SEDA values and focus on how we should always strive to *understand how people learn* (as in my example about peer-assessment), *promote inclusivity and encourage learners' participation, empowerment and equality of*

opportunity (as exemplified above via the assessment strategy that is used on the course that I teach and that we keep on improving as we gain more insight into what our learners want), as well as, develop our own practice (by getting regular feedback from our students for example and incorporating that into how we refine our courses).'

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: I need to get more involved with diversifying the assessment process at the university, by, perhaps maximising my impact on the new work-based learning modules that are being developed at the moment, and, by, adding to the list of assessment methods that is also being discussed by course leaders in my institute. The list will then need to be translated into feasible ways of assessing that we could write into our modules in 2010.

3.6 Monitor my own practice and underpin my reflective practice – Author's diary entries

'The example of a course evaluation by my students has already been discussed in section 3.1 above. This evaluation was also followed up by a report that I wrote about it, trying to represent all the views expressed. The second example is that of a peer observation I carried out of a very experienced colleague teaching a session on assessment where I learned that it is very important to teach undergraduate students how to write an essay very explicitly.

I must also say that a teacher trainer is always being observed as I, indeed, feel constantly scrutinised by my trainees who not only are qualified and experienced teachers but also subject specialists in a wide range of disciplines and areas of the Lifelong Learning Sector. They often give me oral feedback on my teaching and sometimes use some of my own methods or resources when I observe them teach. In addition, when I observe each one of them, I learn for myself about approaches and techniques that I could also use in my own teaching. Very often, we discuss our respective approaches in the light of what I see happening when I observe them teach.

In addition, within my immediate course team, I have also shadowed/observed 2 of my colleagues and once specifically co-taught a group of international students doing a performance management module as part of

an MSc in Educational Management and Leadership. The best feedback came when the students present applauded me at the end. Being applauded after giving 3 papers last year in various teaching and learning conferences somehow did not feel as fulfilling as being applauded by students. That gave me enormous confidence and a sense of achievement that further motivated me to contribute more to aspects of the post-graduate side of my university that I would have otherwise found too challenging to contemplate (e.g. Masters supervision and assessment). I also feel more and more like teaching on some of the Masters programmes that some of my colleagues co-ordinate.

I was also observed by one of my SEDA colleagues from a very different discipline - a veterinary specialist who looked at how I teach and gave me very helpful and insightful feedback, focusing very clearly on generic teaching and learning skills.

The SEDA values, of which there were 7 and which I italicised in each of the sections above, underpin this cycle of observations, including; observations by trainee teachers of my own teaching, observations by colleagues of my training, shadowing and observing by myself of countless subject specialist teachers, academic colleagues, my mentor and other teachers and trainers, including the SEDA course tutors. Am I over-observed? Over-scrutinised? Maybe yes, but, in the end, I value the process as it has given me the impetus to persist in my own development and learning and never to cease reflecting on what learning is all about, so that, after all, I remain constant in my drive to understand how people learn, value and respect them, encourage them to succeed and make a significant contribution to their area of work and to their own students' achievements. *Engaging in a continuing reflection on my own practice will hopefully make me better at promoting all of those key values through my professional role/s in both HE and the Lifelong Learning Sector.'*

4 CONCLUSION

As Derrida concludes in his book 'L'écriture et la différence', although his concerns are specifically about the four stages of Language production (19:428): '*...la conception, la formation, la gestation et le travail*', the feeling

emanating from this paper is that, perhaps, educators are at the stage of 'travail', without which a re-interpretation of what learning should be about and what should be done to make it make sense to teachers and to their students might not happen. Educators would, like a second language learner inevitably experiences at some point of their learning of a new language system, feel stuck in that 'messy' bilingual phase of 'interlanguage' where language 1 and language 2 do not reconcile and can lead one to produce personally stressful forms of a language that does not make sense to anybody (or worse, forever remain silent in language 2). Every new rule of grammar noticed has not been schematically stored as the already existing language system/s may sometimes refuse the re-positioning that is necessary in order to let 'divergent' thoughts and processes settle alongside them. The learner is thus in a constant state of 'liminality' (Meyer and Land: 9), rather than the more re-assuring and fulfilling state of transformation which good teaching and learning should ensure happens (although this does not necessarily imply 'convergent' closure, but rather the beginning of re-invention and re-interpretation). Anxiety and despair may reign and like in the case of the trainee teachers that the author trains, there must be a reconciliation between what is known already and what is needed to be known to change and improve. This is, therefore, why this paper asks educators to think about how a return to what constitutes learning in the first place is essential so that they can play a distinctively transformed tune each time the theory that the author has attempted to formulate in the first place, for herself and for those around her, is re-visited.

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