Some opportunities of developing reflectivity and lesson observing of beginner folk music teachers

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to present the experience of using the five-step lesson observation method in the development of novice teacher reflectivity. For the last year of their studies the folk music teachers have reflective seminary to help them developing their reflectivity. The main problem was that the students were shy if they were observed but they were judgemental being observers. Usually observing someone's lesson we have feelings and judgements for the first time. To help professional pedagogical conversations we set a five-step method of objective observing. This method can be used when we observe each other's lessons, but even if we look back our own lesson from video recording. We made qualitative research on how the beginner teachers attitudes change before and after using the five-step method.*

Key-words: *Beginner teacher, reflectivity, video-training, lesson observing*

1. Introduction

In the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music we train music teachers in undivided education since 2015. In the last two semesters of their studies the students complete a one-year teaching practice guided by mentors in schools. In this final period a seminar on reflectivity takes place, which helps to develop professional thinking about their own and others pedagogical work.

The teaching of folk music is deeply rooted in Hungarian folk tradition. Its main form of knowledge transfer is imitation-based learning. While the teaching of classical music has a broad methodology with a well-developed international

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literature, the teaching of folk music develops its own methods partly from peasant culture, partly from the dance house movement of the 1970s and partly from classical music methodology. I think it is important that at this developing stage, a fruitful exchange of ideas and a lively culture of debate based on professional foundations should develop between those involved in the teaching of folk music.

The Reflective Seminar for Graduate Folk Music Teaching Students was a great opportunity to experiment with a method to help future teachers to develop a forward-looking professional discourse by exchanging professional experiences during the discussions following the lesson observations.

2. Object

In pedagogical observation, as in the case of all observations, the attitude of the observer has a decisive effect on the perception. This attitude determines the focus of the observation, the interpretation of what is seen, the given emotional and cognitive reactions, and ultimately the conclusions itself. The conclusions drawn are therefore integrated into the individual's future attitude as a real experience. This is how they become reinforced preconceptions during the next observation.

How to break this vicious circle? That's what we were looking for.

The first and most important task is to try to make the observation as objective as possible. It must be removed from the observer's personality. The next task is for the observer to get to know the motives of the people involved, to be curious about them. He should broaden his own horizons with information from others, and from this broadened perspective he should be able to enrich the professional community by formulating his individual observations.

To help this process we made a protocol so called five-step lesson observing method.

The five-step lesson observing method
1th step: Observing the lesson and write down only the facts.

Who did what? Who said what? What words did they use? What was the body language like? What was the facial expression of the teacher/student? What was the teacher/student situation in the classroom?

It is important not to write opinions, feelings, judgments, advices, etc.

2th step: Setting the key points.

   In the text written about the lesson the observer searches points, where it was most difficult for him/her to write down only facts. Then he/she needs to analyze what is causing this difficulty for him/her. His/Her positive or negative feeling, memory, opinion or expectation

3th step: Ask questions.

   Once the key points have been identified and the source of the difficulties experienced has been analyzed, the observer should ask open questions to the teacher involved in the lesson observation. E.g.: I saw that..., why did you decide to do that? What did you mean by "quoted text"?
   In each case, the questions should be based on an observed fact.

4th step: Include the answers in the observation,

   The observer must interpret the reasons that have been hidden and incorporate them into the facts described at the beginning of the process. If necessary, repeat steps 2-4th.

5th step: Give feedback

   After examining the key points identified in Step 2 in sufficient depth, we will formulate our findings, reflecting on the information obtained. Our statements should always include observed facts, incorporating the answers to our questions. We can also formulate assessments using different techniques (e.g. sandwich technique).

The five-step lesson observing method was expected to facilitate the formulation of professional conclusions in the post-lesson-observing discussions, as well as to reduce fear in the observed and to make it easier for the observer to communicate his/her observations authentically, making what is said more receptive.

       During the seminar, after discussing the general knowledge of cognition and observation, we asked the students to watch a lesson that was publicly available on youtube. The lesson observation was followed by spontaneous reflections and a collective analytical discussion. The students were free to formulate their first impressions of what they had seen and then reacted to each other's suggestions by formulating their own insights. We then imagined how the teacher giving the

lesson would receive the comments and how they would react if they received them after a lesson they had given.

This was followed by a presentation of the five-step lesson observation method. During the second viewing of the video, the students were only allowed to write down facts, which were later reconciled with each other. Then each student identified their own "key points" and questions were formulated. Possible answers and explanations were then discussed. Finally, we made a reflection on the lesson.

In the remaining lessons of the seminar, we practiced the five-step method with a snippet of the lessons taught by the students. Once the facts were recorded and key points identified, it was time to ask real questions and incorporate real answers. Students were able to reflect and self-reflect on their own pedagogical work.

3. Method

Using a qualitative method, we investigated whether the students' communication changed after learning and applying the five-step observation method.
Students surveyed by year of study:

Year	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Students	10 pers.	9 pers.	17 pers.	9 pers.	12 pers.

We examined the occurrence of the following groups of expressions during the discussions at the seminar:
- expressions describing positive emotions
- expressions describing negative emotions
- phrases containing a positive judgment
- phrases containing a negative judgment
- phrases containing advice what to do
- phrases containing advice what not to do
- asking questions

We marked it if there was a reference to a fact supporting the opinion/statement/question.

In a group interview at the beginning and end of the seminar, we asked students how uncomfortable they felt about observing their lesson or having to observe and give feedback on someone else's work.

At the end of the seminar, we conducted an in-depth interview with a student volunteer, in which the student talked about his/her own development, changes in his/her observation skills and professional communication skills.

4. Results

The research is ongoing and we can only report partial results here. For the first group in 2019, the methodology was still being developed, so the data from this group cannot be considered complete. For the group in 2023, only the first reflections and the method have been recorded, and the application of the method and the recording of experiences will be done in the future.

The findings of the research are based on data from three cohorts and should therefore be treated as partial results.

Based on the observations made so far, the following statements can be made:

The observations of the students recorded in the first lessons contained judgements, opinions, suggestions, which were not or only rarely supported by facts. In examining what they themselves said, the students acknowledged that they contained more of their own attitudes than possible aspects of the lesson they had seen. In this case, attitudes are understood as experiences, expectations, emotional attitudes, preferences, beliefs, etc...

During the seminar, students recorded their own lessons. After the videos were recorded, the student who gave the lesson was free to choose the five-minute video segment that he or she wanted to submit for analysis for the seminar. The aim was to make the analysis of the video clip desirable for the observed student. During the analysis, the five-step clock observation method was practiced.

The difficulty in observing and describing facts was that students had to interpret the difference between "fact" and other aspects of observation. For example, they had to distinguish between the sentences "the teacher said that the student solved the problem well" (description of what was said) and "the teacher was happy with the student's success" (inference).

Once the facts were written down, identifying the key points became easier. Separating opinions and judgements from facts led students to identify the points involved.

The most enjoyable part of the analysis was the professional conversations that emerged from the questions asked, as reported by the students.

The statements made in the reflections at the end of the question-answer discourse contained supporting facts and reasons alongside the subjective elements.

Overall, when analyzing the interviews in all categories:
- expressions describing positive emotions
- terms describing negative emotions
- expressions describing positive value judgements
- expressions describing negative value judgements
- expressions of advice on what to do
- phrases containing advice on what not to do
- asking questions

increased proportion of items supported by facts (observed and based on responses to questions). The number of phrases containing positive elements increased when using the five-step lesson observing method.

The in-depth interviews at the end of the semester revealed that the student reported a more accepting attitude as an observer after recording the facts and answering the questions. As an observer, they were more willing and less anxious to present their lesson and participate in the professional discussion when using the five-step lesson observation method.

Overall, they also reported a positive shift in the degree of sincerity and usefulness of professional communication following the use of the method.

5. Conclusions

For lesson observations, it is not enough to provide observers with criteria and indicators. The attitude of the observer essentially influences the observation and the reflection based on the observation. To shape attitudes, questioning as a means of opening up to the other and developing a broader horizon is an easily acceptable and incorporable communication tool. The five-step lesson observation method is a method that can be quickly learned and applied. It has the advantage of facilitating professional communication and encouraging self-analysis by both

the observer and the observed. It should be emphasised that the method provides the observed teacher with a communication space in which he is not forced into a defensive position, but is given the opportunity to present his own professional convictions and methodology.

Based on the experience with sixth-year folk music students, it is worth considering whether this method could be applied to other lesson observations method. For example, a supportive lesson-tracking protocol could have a positive impact on the lesson observations required by the performance appraisal system to be introduced in Hungary from 2024. But also more generally, the participants in each professional pedagogical community can turn their discussions following each other's lesson visits into fruitful discourse.

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