

A3: State something you do in finding out how students are doing (assessment) or helping them to understand how they are doing (feedback).

Introduction

When students present their work so far to a group, I ask each to take 10 mins at the beginning of the session to write down two questions about their work or specific points that they would like me and their peers to feedback on. After this each student presents their work, ending or beginning by asking their peers for these specific feedback points. I have done this in the 'Writing as Performance'.

My aim is to empower students to make assessment work for them and achieve 'esteem recognition'. Previously, I found feedback between peers was minimal (they looked to me, the teacher, to give feedback) or generic ('I thought it was great!'). With this new approach, I aim to encourage more engagement and in-depth critical discussion and peer assessment. This approach also allows for self-assessment: in the 10 minute period, students quietly reflect on the strengths and limitations of their practice.

Background

Here, I'm influenced by Jan McArthur's 'Assessment for Social Justice': 'in order for students to lead fulfilling lives we must support them to see how their engagement with knowledge effects other people'.¹ This is a mutual connection between our own well-being and well-being of others. 'A social perspective isn't some add on... We need to see the social significance as embedded in the engagement with knowledge and how we assess it.'²

McArthur identifies 'esteem recognition' – the feeling of making a contribution to society— as one way students feel a sense of achievement. Students rarely feel success from marks alone, rather the highest 'sense of achievement' is achieved when students feel they: have engaged with knowledge, applied it, seen its future application in society and to the greater social good. I aim to enable students to see how their writing effects the well-being of others, for the social good – and so to reach that highest sense of achievement.

Evaluation

This assessment approach worked well – evidenced by high student engagement in detailed discussion.

Unexpectedly, students prompted myself and the group to focus on areas we might not have otherwise e.g. delivery rather than content. Another student asked us 'Do you think my writing is cringe?'. I was impressed by how honest the student was in revealing this insecurity. It allowed me to open up a discussion: 'What is 'cringe'? Why is it not desirable?' All students contributed here with reflections on their own practice and that of others. I offered an alternative perspective: that no woman has ever written enough.³

¹ 'Assessment for social justice with Jan McArthur', *Higher Education Podcast*, October 2020, accessed 23/03/22, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/17AljCvpMTw1vuPylPfHIA?si=2868c90ae78d4616>.

² Ibid.

³ bell hooks

Ordinarily, I don't think any student would have called another's 'cringe', so I'm glad this approach opened opportunity to confront a harsh inner critic. This contributed to the student's own sense of achievement – evidenced by change of mood.

In terms of social justice, students could see the social impact their work had immediately in the way that peers were moved to respond and reflect in detail.

Moving Forward

This group is small – 8 students. Inviting critical feedback from invited tutors could encourage a wider range of critical feedback and perspectives, creating greater esteem recognition.