

Lessons Learned from Observation

EDCI 943

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First Observation:

For my first observation, I searched for a highly-rated professor at ratemyprofessor.com. The lecturer I observed had a score of 5.0 on her ratings and had very good teaching reviews. One of the reviews said that she cares about her students and always remembers them. I contacted her and asked permission to attend and observe, and she welcomed me to her class.

The first observation was of a face-to-face lecture in a medium-sized room. With around 50 students in the class, space for movement was limited. The instructor used limited technology: only a projector to show lecture notes. Her style of teaching was traditional but very effective. She made the lecture fun and interactive yet also very rich in content and information. Everyone in class was paying attention and taking notes. She kept the students' interest throughout the 2-hour lecture, which is difficult to do, especially in such a large class. All in all it was a meaningful, educational experience, and I really enjoyed observing her teach.

Some lessons learned:

1- Give examples and tell stories. This will make the information more meaningful. The professor in this class used a lot of real life stories from her experience and had a story for every concept. She explained all of the concepts and principles in the book by telling stories and students were interacting by sharing their stories as well.

2- Be interactive with the students. The professor was given a lot of good reviews for the relationship she had with her students. Her relationship-building skills were evident in the lecture; in the middle of explaining a point or telling a story, she would ask, "Are you from here?" or "Where are you from?" She also remembered who was absent and said in front of the class, "You're the guy who wasn't here last lecture." The personal interest she takes in her students makes them care about attending the class. Every chair in the room was filled.

3- Encourage the students and never embarrass them. She was very encouraging when students answered questions, responding with "Perfect example, better than the book!" and "Perfect! Good answer."

4- Make the lecture relevant to real life and get students to reflect on their learning.

The professor did this very well by getting students to share their stories. When she explained a principle she would say, "Hey! You know what I'm talking about. Do you have a real case example?" This way, she would get students to share their stories and reflect on their learning.

5- Give a fun game to get the class enthusiastic about the topics they are learning. In this class the professor used an excellent content-review game. The game lasted 45 minutes and consisted of 3 or 4 roles: an Asker, a Teller, a Checker, and if needed, a Helper. Starting from chapter 1, the asker asks a question and chooses a student in the class to tell the answer. The teller then chooses a checker to check the answer or, if the teller doesn't know the answer, he/she chooses a helper. The checker then checks the answer and provides the reference, such as "From our lecture notes on Feb 9, it says"

Then, the checker chooses a new student in class to ask a question.

The game did not involve any movement, but it required the students to be alert because they could be chosen at any time. Every student in the class participated and the professor supervised this by making sure everyone played one of the roles. They went through many cycles of the game with many askers and tellers and covered a lot of content from all the chapters they had covered. Askers tailored their questions to information they were missing in their lecture notes, so when the answer was given, I could see them writing down the answer and filling out what they had missed.

This is something I would like to use in the future; it is especially good for review and getting students to fill out information they are missing in their lecture notes.

Second Observation:

For my second observation, I chose a professor from the list of distinguished professors published on the K-State website. The class I attended was very large with over 100 students. The lecturer did an excellent job with such a large class. He started the class with a song and a poem. He used a microphone and used many different multimedia methods including videos and a map in the lecture, making the content interesting and easy to follow, even for the people sitting at the back. It is difficult to get everyone's attention in a large lecture hall such as this one but he managed it very well. Another interesting lesson on class management occurred when two students were talking in class and disrupting others and the instructor politely told them to pass notes instead of talking aloud, unless they had something to share with the rest of the class. He handled the situation very well and the students were quiet after that.

Some lessons learned:

- 1- Set the mood for the class by beginning with a song, poem, joke, or wisdom.**
- 2- Use videos, pictures, maps and other multimedia sources to make your lecture entertaining, especially in large classes.**
- 3- Use a microphone if needed.**
- 4- Use stories and share personal experience that is relevant to the lecture.**
- 5- Get all the students to participate during the lecture.** A good way of getting everyone to participate is to ask a question and have all students write down the answer on a notecard and leave the card on a table. This also helps the professor to read the students' thoughts and get a glimpse of their understanding of what they had just learned.

Third Observation:

The third observation was of an online classroom. The professor who taught the class was a very traditional professor who used to reject the idea of online teaching. It was very interesting to see his point of view and to hear about his transition from being someone who disapproved of online classes to someone who is now teaching online classes. It was also interesting to learn the differences in his opinion between online and face-to-face classes.

Some lessons learned:

- 1- **For a face-to-face class, use a variety of methods such as debates, trigger forms and change things around in lectures to make the class more interesting and interactive.**
- 2- **Carefully and thoroughly orchestrate an online class.** Plan it well and focus on making it clear and well structured.
- 3- **Set goals and be clear with each topic.** Be specific and keep it simple.
- 4- **When teaching an online class, always operate with safety nets.** Always remember that technology fails and the system may go down and let the students know that as well. Embrace the difficulty and have a plan in place in case this happens and be open and understanding to technical failures and difficulties from the system or from the students.
- 5- **Always check and recheck that the information is there and the students can access it.**
- 6- **High standards will produce a high quality course.** Always have high standards and expectations from the students.
- 7- **Set clear participation guidelines.** It is difficult to grade discussions and participation; however, a good way to get students to participate in class is to have them write a post and reply to at least two others on the discussion board.
- 8- **Use online books and other materials in the lesson.** The teacher can use many online sources but must always be careful and consider copyright issues and laws.