LESSON PLANNING

Index

Right at the beginning of the Lesson Planning strand the teacher asked us to criticize a given lesson plan in small groups –finding the good points and things to improve-. Most of us were quite harsh, as we were searching for the perfect lesson plan. The result of such strategy was this: raising the level of our expectations about our own lesson plans –which is not always a good idea, it can sometimes get you stuck- and making us aware of how important is to give feedback in a nice way.

First of all ***there is not a perfect lesson plan****. Teachers cannot spend hours preparing every single lesson; it should be effective, and well-structured and personal. Effective, in this sense, means enough work to get clear ideas of what to do in each stage of the lesson, leaving space to change things if necessary. It's meant to be a useful tool for the teacher, not something to show off.*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Choose only two or three per lesson and differentiate between **knowledge** (*to learn something*) and **skills** (*to learn how to do something).*

Have clear objectives and differentiate between the **teachers' objectives** and the **student's objectives** –what they must achieve at the end of the lesson-.

And most important of all: **share those objectives with the students** at the beginning of a lesson. By doing this, you are getting the students involve in their learning and making them aware of it. Besides, by showing them the whole picture you are not treating them as kids, they also know where are they supposed to get at the end of the lesson. If you really think

about it, not sharing the aims is either a bit patronizing, as if that information were just meant for the *captain,* or a bit thoughtless, as I now think I have been every time I didn't do it.

- Define the **key vocabulary and key questions.**
- **Raise awareness on WHAT is being done, WHY and HOW.**

SOME PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Curriculum approaches

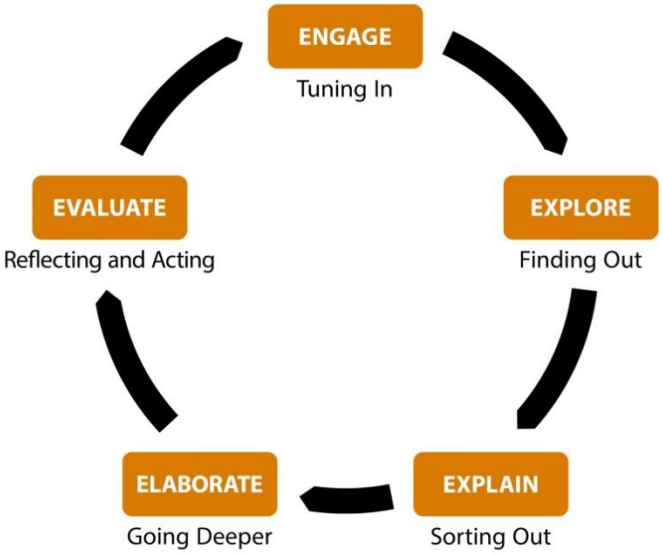
We have three types according to the importance given to these three elements: content, process and outcome in the design of a lesson plan. No one is more effective than the others, but we have to be conscious about, which one we are using and why.

- **Forward design**. Contents come first, then, process and outcomes. It is the classical, linear way.
- **Central design**. When methodology or activities, the process, go first.
- **Backward design**. Learning outcomes are at the core of the design; then, come the content and the process.

The 5 E's method

The 5 E's is an instructional model based on the constructivist approach to learning and describes the five phases of the learning process. It allows students and teachers to use prior knowledge, to construct meaning, and to continually assess their understanding of a concept.

These stages appear as well in the ***Integrated Inquiry planning model*** of Kath Murdoch, intended as a framework to support teachers.



Engage. An engaging activity should:

- Make connections between past and present learning experiences
- Focus students on the concept, process or skill to be learned.

Explore. Here students identify and develop concepts, processes and skills. During this phase, students actively explore their environment or manipulate materials.

Explain. In this phase students have opportunities to verbalize their conceptual understanding of concepts. Here may be introduced formal terms, definitions, and explanations for processes or skills.

Elaborate. This phase extends conceptual understanding and allows students to practice skills and behaviors. Through learning by doing the learners develop deeper understanding of concepts and improve their skills.

Evaluate. Here learners are encouraged to assess their learning and abilities and teachers evaluate students' understanding of key concepts and skill developed.

These are as well **stages of a lesson**. They are cyclical and the order depends on the needs in each lesson. Obviously, in each stage we will use different types of activities.

- **TI -Tuning in** - this is all about engagement and gathering prior knowledge.
- **FO- Finding out**- it consists on gathering information about the topic.
- **SO- Sorting out**- this is about meaning making and it involves organizing and analyzing.
- **R- Reflection**- students are expected to going further and personalize the learning.

High and low order thinking skills

I learnt some interest concepts about **thinking skills**: **HOTS & LOTS**, this is directly related to Bloom's Taxonomy.

HOTS, standing for *high order thinking skills*; activities that imply HOTs would include getting main ideas, making connections between concepts, talking about opinions or **fat questions -** those that makes you think beyond like why and how.

LOTS, standing for *low order thinking skills*; simple or **skinny questions** like those that can be answered without understanding, like yes/no questions.

Use of questions in the class: CCC & ICQ

Questions are one of the most powerful tools for learning. We have mainly two different types of questions according to two different objectives:

CCC- Concept Checking Questions, for content.

ICQ - Instructional Checking Questions.

After any instruction given, the teachers asked us to repeat them, to check everybody had understood them. That kept us focused and made us practice language.

Here are some good **tips** for **giving instructions**:

- Make sure all students should are looking at you while giving instructions. Eye contact.
- Be where every student can see you, desk can be a barrier.
- Keep instructions simple, logical and understandable.

- Don’t forget to make good use of body language.
- Use appropriate intonation and rhythm. Speak in a calm, firm manner.
- Use the present tense, when possible, for those students with a low level of English.
- Make questions specific and check understanding of all relevant aspects of the task.
- They may contain two options so students can respond with *x* or *y.*
- They can sometimes be used instead of giving instructions, if the task is very obvious and/or already familiar to the students.
- Show rather than tell, when possible. Rehearse the activity after giving instructions!
- To make sure they pay attention, give instructions before handing out the activities!

Avoid the ineffective *Do you understand?* If the teacher asks directly this, the answer could be yes, just to avoid a bad feeling in front of their classmates and the teacher would never be sure if the students really understand a concept or know what to do next. Try other things like ***Does it make sense to you?***

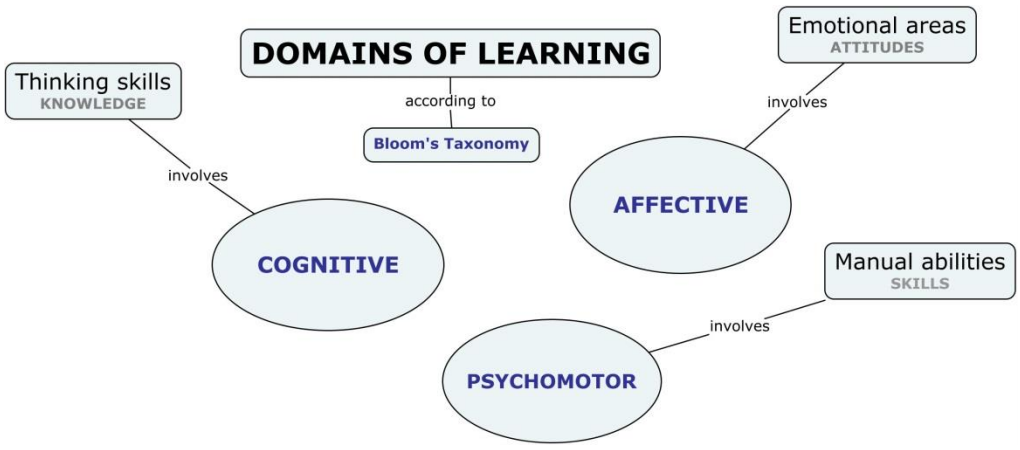
When asking questions, **if you want all your students to pay attention**, ask first and only then call out the name of the student you want to answer. If you do it the other way round, the rest will probably disconnect.

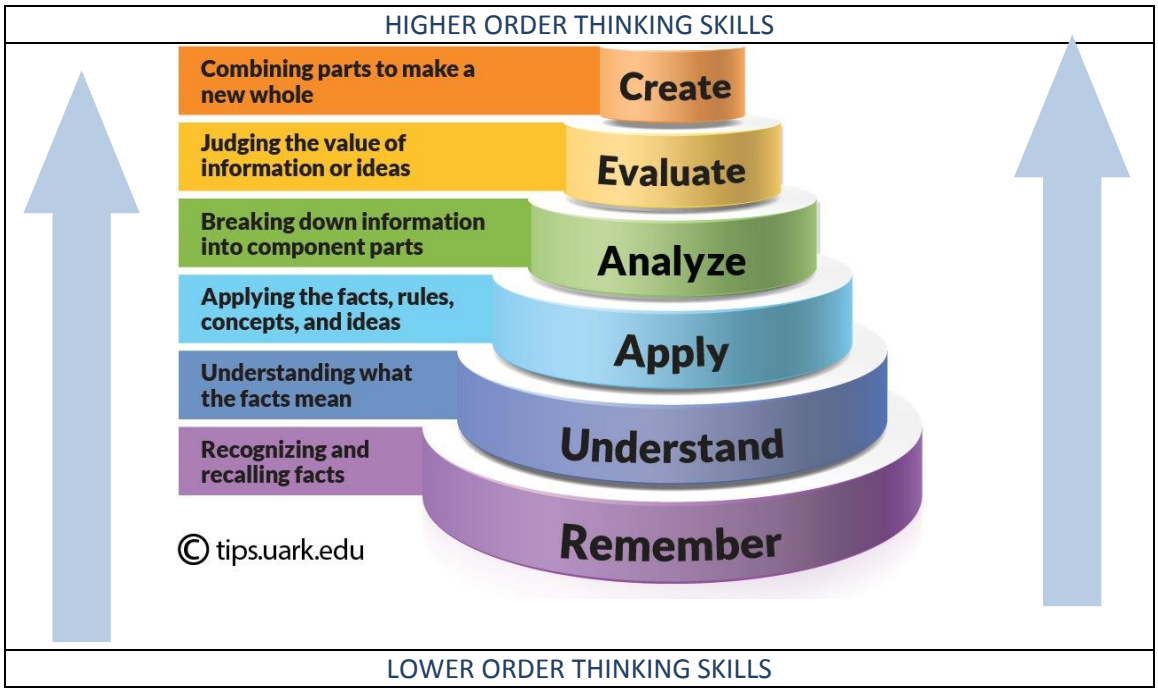
Let another student answer the students’ questions. Try giving someone else in the class the opportunity to explain it.

After asking questions, give thinking time!

Bloom’s Taxonomy

These concepts are related to **Bloom’s Taxonomy** of learning objectives, one of the most widely used ways of organizing levels of expertise. It was created in 1956 under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Bloom in order to promote higher forms of thinking in education, such as analyzing and evaluating concepts, rather than just remembering them. It is most often used when designing educational, training, and learning processes. According to this theory, it is more effective not to address higher levels until covering those below. Higher levels depend on knowledge and skills at lower levels. You can read more about Bloom's taxonomy at Learning and Teaching, UNC Charlotte and University of Arkansas.



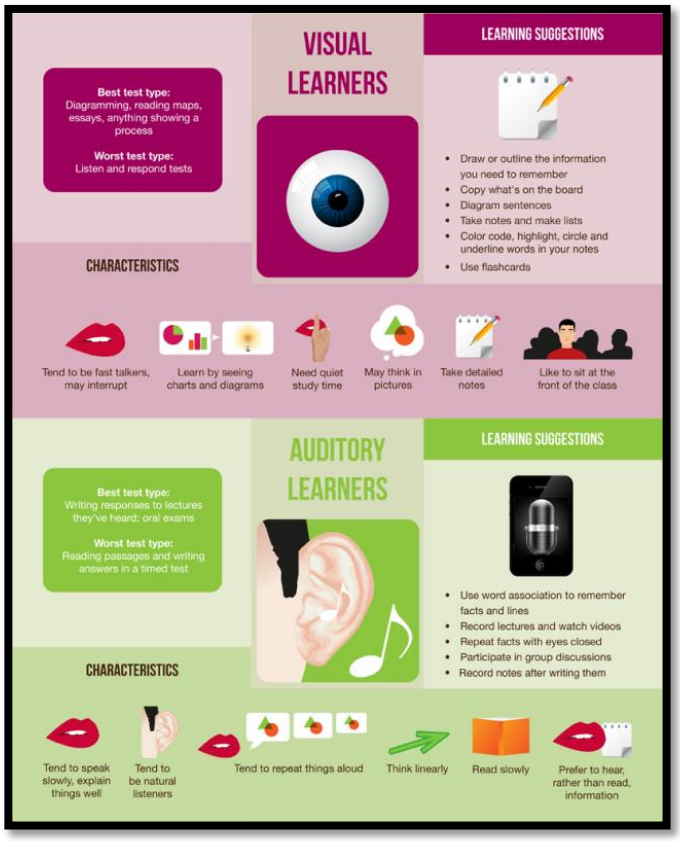


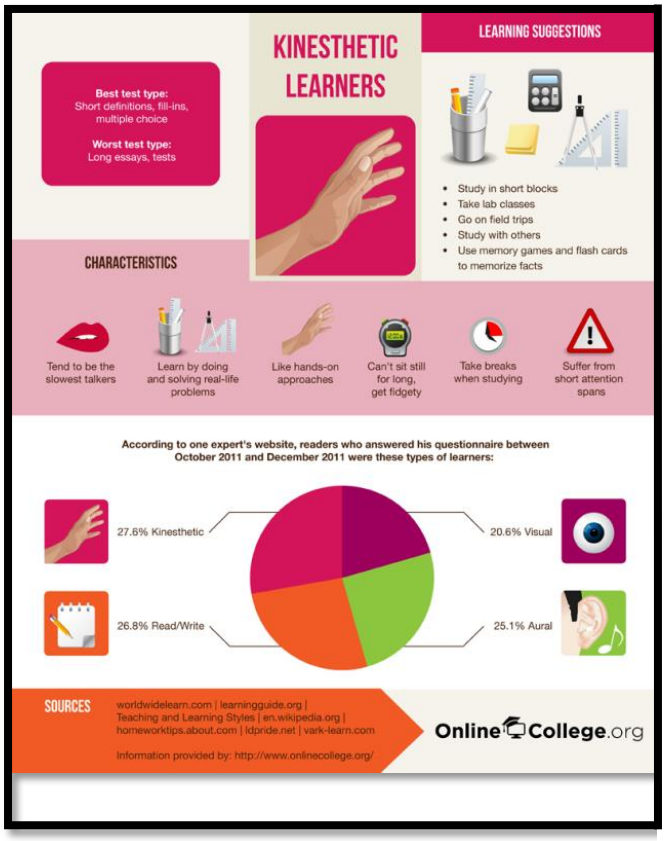
Another interesting concept is a catchy acronym that Francisco introduced by saying: "I like kisses, give me a **KISS"** –which stands for "Keep It Short and Simple!"-, *less is more*, what also applies to what the **teacher should talk in class**. A student centred approach makes any class more motivating and effective.

What type of learner are you? I found this cute graph in onlinecollege.org.

learning styles and multiple intelligences

These two concepts, are relatively new in education. **Using multiple activities we ensure we will address to all our students better**. People with multi-potentialities are out of the box thinkers, rapid learners, flexible and adaptable.





Differentiation

The teacher introduced this topic through a controversial question from an advert *Always like a girl*: "What does it mean to run like a girl?" The whole class got involved easily. We were focus on the advert; I was thinking that it was a tricky way of still using women: by defending them. There is a flaw in the question, said even a classmate… Girls are exactly the same as boys, all agree on that today, but it was not always like that. At one point of the debate the teacher said that if we are still far to reach the equality in terms of women and men, we are farther from find a solution in terms of differentiation. No one was expecting this shift in the topic. And it was clever!

Differentiation is quite challenging for teachers as every child has to make progress from the less able to the most talented. The teacher has to make clear for students what is expected from them to achieve C, B, A and A* marks, step by step, as specific as possible.

He told us about an experience he had some year ago with two students with special needs and how he used the **Design Thinking Methodology** to find a solution for them. This is a

practical method to find creative solutions to resolve problems, with the idea that a solution for one person can benefit the rest.

Actually this is transferred from designers' way of thinking and it has the following steps:

- **Developing empathy**, you need to know and care.
- **Define** the situation.
- **Turn problems into opportunities.**
- **Ideate.** Come up with a wide range of possible solutions.
- **Prototype**, implement it.
- **Test** and draw conclusions.

Include cooperative learning, with different learning styles and **learning by doing** (hands-on activities) this will help students with learning difficulties.