

Post Seminar 3 Assignment

Class observation

Luciana Pajecki Lederman

Last time, I did the video investigation with the professional team of the Hebrew School at the synagogue where I run a havruta project. The staff was so receptive of the idea of turning their actual practice of teaching into learning moments, that after that video investigation, one of the teachers asked to be observed, and together with the Hebrew school coordinator, we observed her and had a conversation around her concerns about balancing her posture as a teacher and as a friend.

The second observation served not only as an opportunity for me to keep practicing, but also for them to keep learning and experiencing with this tool. This time, I observed the Hebrew school coordinator herself, who teaches introduction to Cabalah to adults.

Because she lives in Brazil, she taped the class. I watched it and met with her through skype, with her staff observing. She also made the video available to her staff, so 1) they would know what I was referencing to, when I talked to her, and 2) they could also train with turning their observations into curious inquiry about some of her pedagogical moves.

Her class was very conversational and allowed for a lot of student participation, which on the one hand was great, but it also made it hard sometimes to follow the flow, specially when the student speaking was far from the camera, or when the student went on a tangent.

At first I was a little anxious about having this conversation with her. I didn't want to sound judgmental, nor to put her on a defensive position. So as I prepared for our meeting, I tried to write a detailed script, which eventually made me even more nervous. But the meeting ended up flowing much easier than I expected. She has been teaching this class for many years now and through our conversation, we realized together that it has been awhile since she has devoted thought and energy into how she was going to teach the material. So while she is a gifted and engaging teacher, together, we did find places where she could improve, not only for the sake of the students, but also for her own sake, so this class can again be challenging and exciting for her to teach.

Another positive aspect of our interaction was the intervention of some of the staff. Two of them took their time to carefully watch the video of the class and make observations, but they had a hard time transforming their observations into curious inquiry. Most of the time they would transform them into positive feedback. So we spent sometime together brainstorming questions and trying out these questions to see the different exchanges they could produce.

However, looking back, I don't think what made our conversation fruitful was my performance at all. I wasn't always successful in phrasing my inquiries in the best way possible. I think that if I was successful in anything, it was in conveying to the staff the potential power of this tool and also in making them aware that I was no expert on the tool, but that I was also learning to apply. So there was a

predominant feeling of trust and a predominant attitude of benefit of the doubt in the room that allowed for mistakes, rephrasing, doubt