

TEACHING

A Critical analysis of my classroom practice



Classroom footage #1

Painting technique Demonstration



Painting Demonstration Critical Incident

A Painting Technique Demonstration with

NO QUESTIONING

Incident Description

- The footage shows just my hands doing a short demonstration of a painting technique using acrylic paint, a palette knife and some masking paint. The technique in question was to show how a layer of wet paint onto wet paint can create a light sheened window effect.
- I can be seen pouring out some blue paint and some cream paint. I go on to apply the blue paint first, to a rectangle shape that represents a window that I have outlined with masking tape, next I apply some cream paint on top of the blue with the knife while it is still wet. I then remove the masking tape to leave the painted shape.
- Students can not been seen in the footage but they were surrounding me at the table and watching on as I gave the demo
- **As I give the demo you can hear me describing the process but at no stage do I question the students on what they are watching**



OBSERVING THE FOOTAGE

- Watching the footage I felt embarrassed and irritated by the way in which I conducted the demonstration. The demonstration felt quite rushed with a fast pace looking back.
- I remember that I did not want to spend too much time on giving the demonstration because the students needed plenty of time to paint.
- Though I realise now watching the footage back that I neglected to seize a prime opportunity to conduct some useful formative assessment. Rather than just simply showing students a painting technique there was opportunity to check on students understanding of many aspects of painting we had been studying up until this point.

“The emphasis in the questioning-style lesson tends to be on understanding rather than simply knowing. In a teacher-talk lesson, the students are simply told what they have to know; they are not encouraged to understand it, and are less likely to remember it.”

(G.Petty - Teaching Today A Practical Guide 4th Ed.pdf)

Footage Audio Transcript

Me – “Ok guys I just want to show ye this painting technique, because most of ye have windows in your photographs, you can see here on my painting that I have this effect on the window of the light bouncing off it, I’m just going to show ye how I did that – could one of ye pass me the masking tape please”

Me – “So guys remember to consider the element of *perspective* that we have discussed when you are planning out your windows and other features, as they go back they will be getting narrower but will stay in a straight line”

Me – “So what I do first is a get this blue colour, and I apply this down with the knife like ye have been doing...And then what I will do is get this other colour, and I apply it straight on top of the blue while it is still wet. And you can use the knife to scratch it down wards to create this light streaks to get that effect.

Me – **Does that make sense to ye lads?**

Students - **Yeah**



My Point of View

- I want to show students how to achieve this effect that I discovered while working on my own painting, when I layered two wet colours on each other with the palette knife it created this really cool effect for indicating the sun bouncing off the windows. I know a good few of them have windows in their photos so would be good for them to see how its done.
- I position myself and the end of a table and gather all students around me so that all can see
- **I proceed to demonstrate how I block the shape of the window with the masking tape, it occurs to me that perspective is an important element here when including features like windows so I mention it briefly to remind the students.**
- I complete the demonstration by layering the wet paints and removing the tape to reveal the results. **Content that all the students witnessed the process I tell them to get back to work on their paintings as they have a lot of work to get done**

Students Point of View

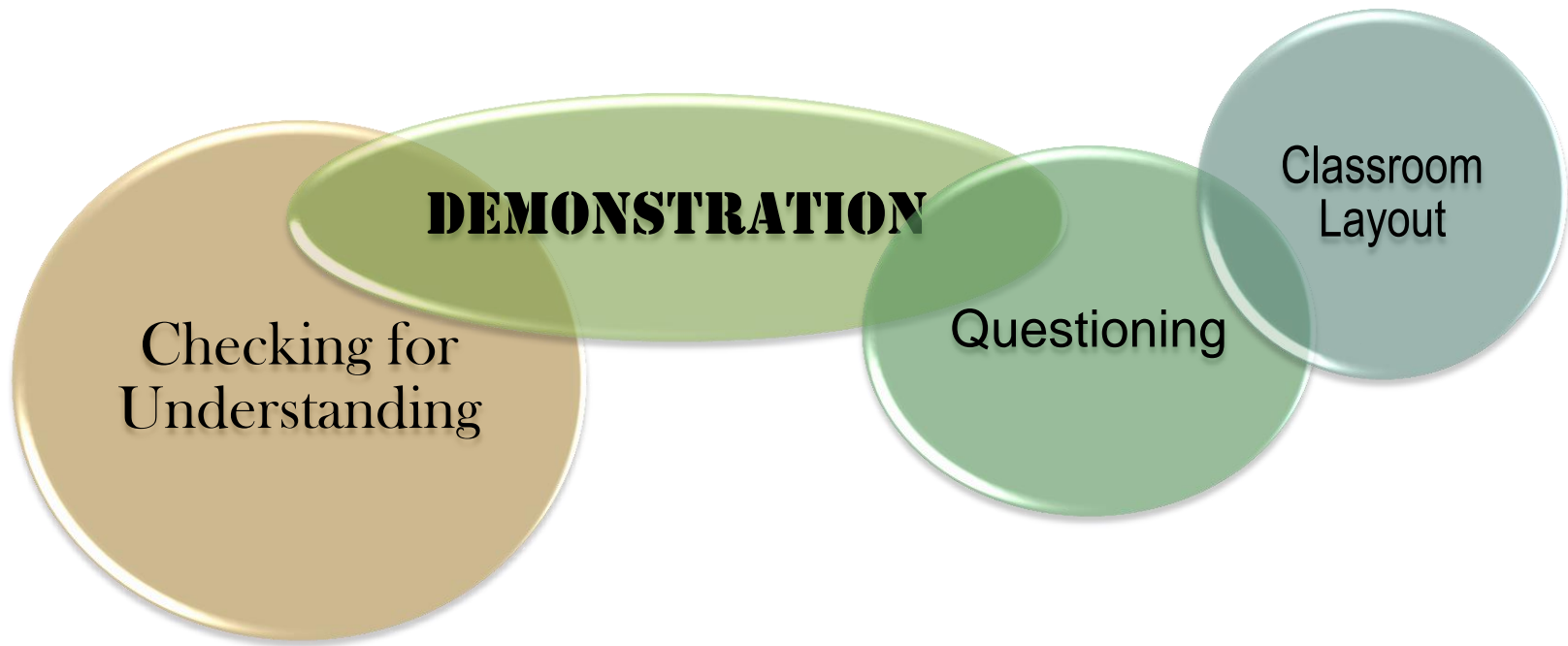
- I heard Mr Egan saying this thing he is going to show us will be useful for painting the windows in our pictures and I have a good few windows in mine.
- I can see him using the masking tape, I understand how to use that its really good for making straight lines
- **I just heard Mr. Egan mention something about perspective? I know he talked about that before in another class but I still don't really understand what that means?**
- I just watched Mr. Egan put two different colour paints on top of each other while they were still wet. When he took the tape of it did look really cool
- **But I'm not sure about if I do the same thing will the two colours not just mix together and make another colour?**
- **Can I use any two colours to do this?...**

Detail of Painting technique I was demonstrating



Incident Analysis

- Aspects of Teaching & Learning highlighted in this incident



Chris Kyriacou on Questioning as a Teaching strategy

- *“What makes questioning such a useful but complex skill is that it can be used in a number of different ways, ranging from a simple and quick check that a particular pupil has been paying attention, to an integral part of developing a dialogue and genuine discussion with a pupil about the topic in hand”* (Kyriacou, Chris. ***Effective Teaching In Schools***. 1st ed. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes, 2009. Print.)

A Missed Opportunity..

- Chris Kyriacou mentions how questioning is highly useful and complex skill. I have to agree with him there. Before going on placement in our pedagogy lectures we discussed the many ways questioning can be used to check for understanding, enhance learning and trigger deeper critical thinking.
- Analysing this incident I recognise that by failing to ask any questions in that moment of teaching, I missed a valuable opportunity to check for students understanding of many aspects from the scheme.
- The principle of perspective was a fundamental concept and skill students needed to understand throughout the project. In this incident I can be heard mentioning and explaining the notion, but I fail to check for any students genuine understanding of it. In fact looking back now, I recognise that entire demonstration could possibly have been used as a valuable tool to check and fortify their understanding of the concept.
- Similarly in regards to the painting technique itself, I simply showed students how I do it, here I missed an opportunity to question students of their understanding of how paint itself works, and how students may intend on experimenting with the technique themselves.

Questioning

Checking for
Understanding

Students Feedback - Questionnaire

How would you rate the explanations and demonstrations I provided throughout the project over all?

Very Clear! Somewhat useful A little unclear Completely Confusing

Are you able to comment on this?

I understood all the explanations and demonstrations

Is there any aspect of the project you would like to explore further in the future?

What is your understanding of *subject matter*?

I don't know

What aspect of this project did you find most difficult or confusing?

Subject Matter

How would you rate the explanations and demonstrations I provided throughout the project over all?

Very Clear! Somewhat useful A little unclear Completely Confusing!

What is your understanding of *subject matter*?

That it is what the piece in question is about, what it represents and is composed to express

NEXT TIME...

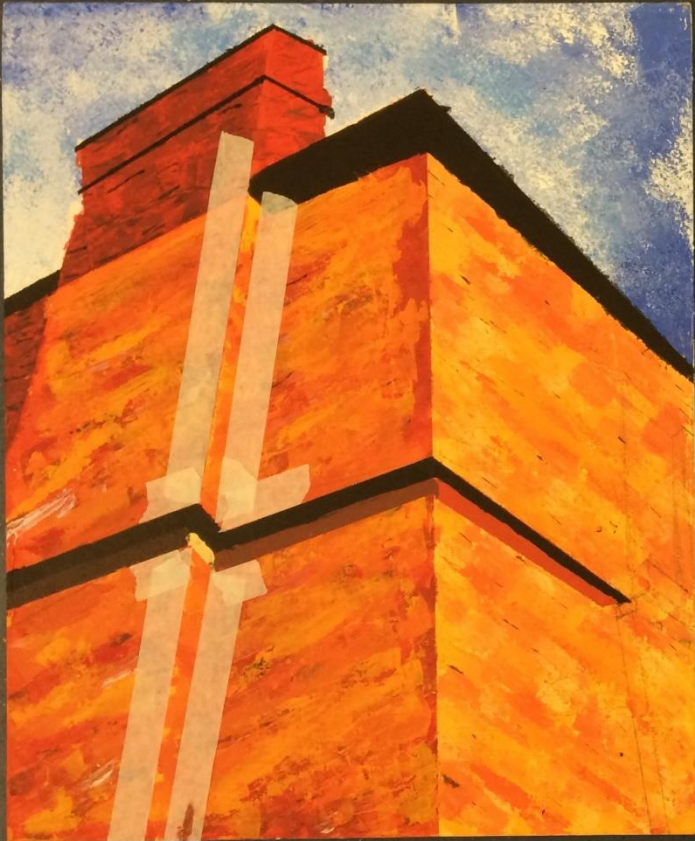
- ❖ In the future when planning out a demonstration for students I will also remember the importance of planning the questioning that needs to go with the demo. I will need to carefully consider what to ask in order to achieve maximum teaching and learning opportunity from the demonstration

Checklist for demonstrating a physical skill

- Did you ensure that the students could all see?
- Did they know what they were seeing and why it was done that way?
- Did you involve students by question and answer?
- Did you do it slowly enough and a sufficient number of times?
- Did you get feedback to check their understanding?
- Did you consider safety?
- Did you give performance indicators so students could self-check during their practice?

Classroom Footage #2

Student Painting Analysis & Review Discussion



Group Discussion Critical Incident

- An analysis activity followed by a class discussion with

Lack of Higher order questioning

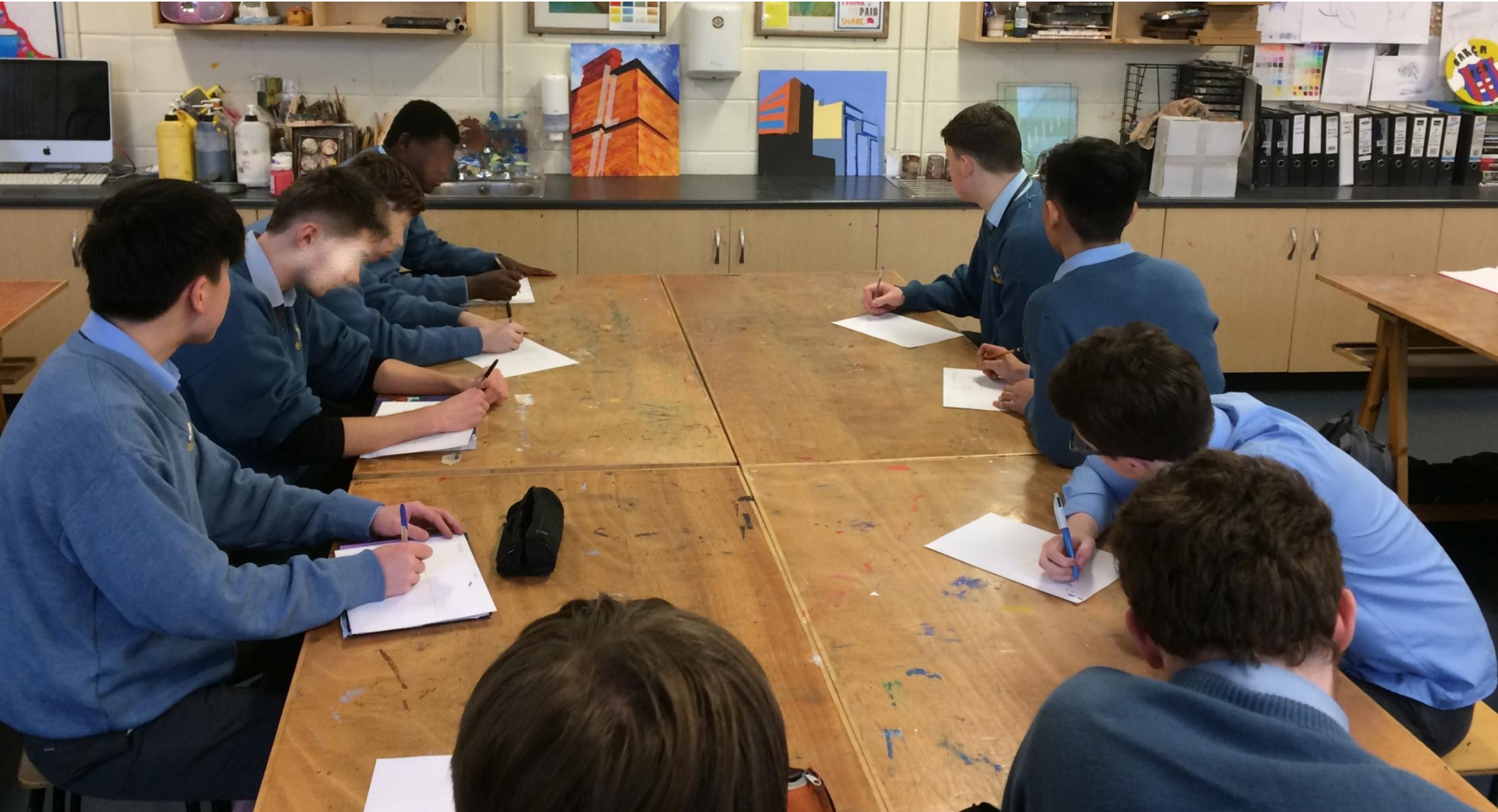
Incident Description

- ❖ In the footage you can see the students are directed to seat themselves around one table together facing two paintings displayed against the wall. There has been a4 sheets of paper laid out for students to use for writing on
- ❖ In the footage you can hear me instruct students that I would like them to observe the two paintings on display. I go on to say that I want students to compare and contrast the paintings writing down the differences between them on the sheet of paper in front of them. Students are told to do this under the headings of paint application and colour use.
- ❖ Students take around 5 minutes to write down their points individually. Once done I call on 3 different students to call out their findings. **In the footage you can hear me accepting the answers students call out, though I do not seek much more elaboration from them.**
- ❖ After this I ask students to consider what they found in their comparisons and to write down possible subject matter for each painting. Students take around 5 minutes to do this and I ask them to call out answers again.
- ❖ **In the footage here you can hear the students call out their answers on possible subject matter, students elaborate more on their answers, though I fail to prompt some deeper discussion.**
- ❖ **As well as this I can be heard talking about how students could interpret the paintings rather than taking a back seat and prompting students to develop their own interpretation skills and discuss.**

OBSERVING THE FOOTAGE

- Watching the footage I felt disappointed that I had not been aware at the time of how I was not leading the class into a more thought provoking discussion. Listening to the footage it is very obvious to me now that I was talking far too much and not giving the adequate time or proper prompting questions to hear the students voices.
- I remember feeling like I needed to explain certain things to students to develop their understanding. Though looking back now, I know that students would have understood more than I gave them credit for. I should have used better questioning to draw it from them and allow them to develop a discussion.

Footage of classroom setup for review and group discussion activity



“Well-managed discussions are interesting, absorbing and active. They produce a safe environment for students to examine their opinions, and where necessary change them. There is an opportunity for students to use high-order cognitive skills such as evaluation and synthesis.”

(G.Petty - Teaching Today A Practical Guide 4th Ed.pdf)

Footage Audio Transcript

Me: - “I want you to think about how the subject matter could be different for each of them. So write down a possible subject matter for painting #1 and a possible subject matter for painting #2.”

Me: - “Ok so, Cillian what did you write down for the different possible subject matters?”

Cillian: - “I said that that one is like an old traditional kind of building, and that on there is very modern”

Me: - “Yea that’s good! Did ye all hear that? He said that this one here looks like an old traditional building and that this one looks like a more modern building. And that really comes down to the different way the paint has been used, the way he has applied the paint on this one gives it the effect of the old red brick and he has included the corner details that you see on the Georgian buildings. Then this one has large flat windows and looks quite modern yeah? Ok ...Mohamed what did you say?”

Mohamed: - I said in that one the colours are more lively and the other one looks dead.

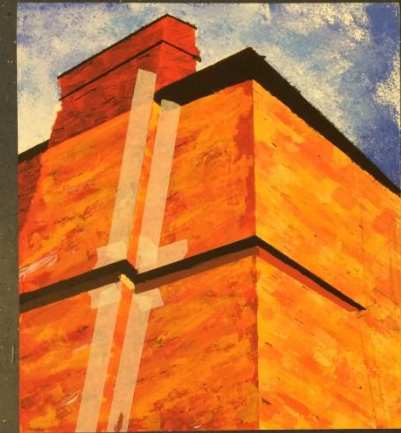
Me: - Ok what do you mean by that?

Mohamed: - Like that one looks more like a town, more urban. And that one looks more like somebody’s house...

Me: - Ok yea that’s a good point, and I think what you could mean is that #2 looks colder than #1? Like in terms of subject matter you could say that #1 is more nostalgic, a warm depiction of somebody’s home maybe. And that #2 is a more cold urban industrial depiction...

Me: - **Does that make sense to ye?**

Students: - **Yeah**



Painting #1



Painting #2

My Point of View

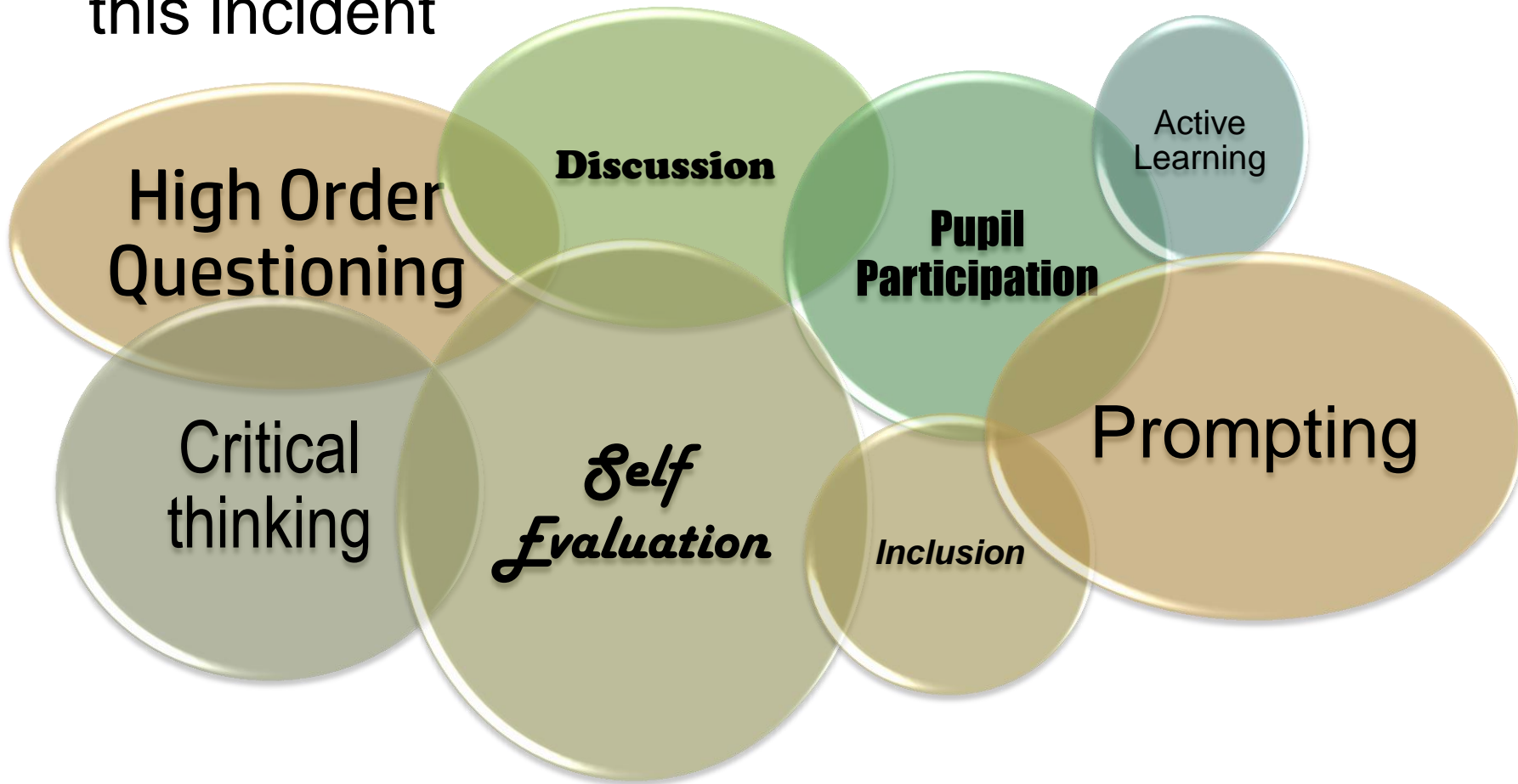
Students Point of View

- I have been attempting to develop these students understanding of subject matter through out this project. We are coming to the end of this project and I want them to review their painting techniques and also check for their understanding of subject matter.
- I have asked the students to come up with subject matter for the pictures, I've given them about 5 minutes they must be done.
- I'll ask Cillian first, he is always willing to discuss in front of the others so should get the ball rolling
- Cillian has given an ok answer, but I feel like he could elaborate more, I will elaborate for him to demonstrate for the class
- I ask Mohamed next (another reliable contributor) His answer is interesting, I like the way he describes one image as "Dead"
- Mohamed also does not elaborate much, I continue to explain to the class how they can use vocabulary to describe what they see and then ultimately interpret subject matter

- I just have to write down what differences I can see in the two paintings displayed. I mean the differences are kind of obvious one is a close up of an old building and the other is larger more modern building.
- I only had a few minutes to do this so I only need to write down a couple of words – Old & Modern
- I am supposed to write down what I think the subject matter is, ***but sure what is the difference?***
- **I'm probably not going to be asked and Mr Egan is going to just explain what it means anyways so I don't think I need to worry.**

Incident Analysis

- Aspects of Teaching & Learning highlighted in this incident



Geoff Petty on Higher Order Questioning

“Some questions simply require that students recall facts. Such questions certainly have their uses: reinforcing earlier learning, practising recall, ‘pointing’ to the most important facts in a topic and informing the teacher of what students can and cannot remember....
However, there is more to learning than remembering
Fact questions do not by themselves develop understanding, and they do not let students apply their knowledge, let alone practise the higher-order thinking skills.”

(G.Petty - Teaching Today A Practical Guide 4th Ed.pdf)

A Missed Opportunity

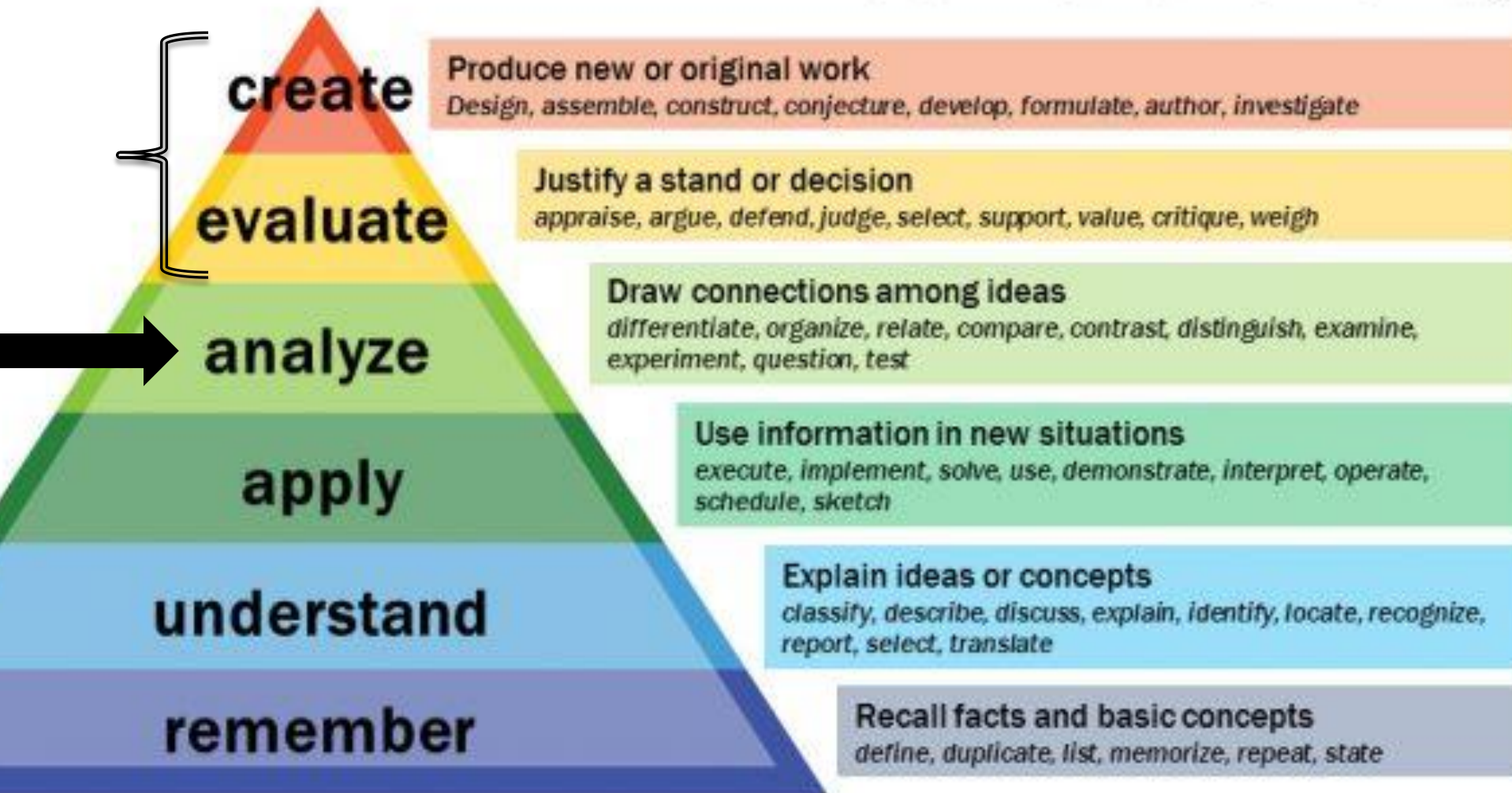
- Geoff Petty points out, that higher order questioning needs to be used by teachers if they seek to support students in gaining a deeper understanding of topics. Also in order to learn how they can logically apply the knowledge they attain. From my own experience as a student and from my research for teacher training, I agree with Petty in the sense that higher order thinking first require some higher order inquiry.
- Reflecting on the critical incident I recognise that I missed a perfect opportunity to pose some higher order questioning to my students. I wanted students to interpret the images they saw, develop an opinion and gain a deeper understanding of what subject matter is.
- For students to achieve this higher level of thinking, the right class room climate needs to be in place and the right sort of questioning needs to be implemented.
- When Cillian gave his answer, first I should have paused and waited to see would he elaborate, then I should have been ready with higher order questions planned for.
- Similarly in this incident when Mohamed gave an interesting answer, I should have also allowed him time to elaborate further. What I could have also done was pose a question to somebody else in the class regarding the interesting comment he had made. This approach I feel would have been more likely to strike up a valuable discussion between the students.



High Order
Questioning **Discussion**

Blooms Taxonomy is an effective diagram showing the levels of questioning educators can use and what they can achieve. I believe in this critical incident students reached only as far as analysing, and missed out on achieving higher levels of thought

Bloom's Taxonomy



NEXT TIME...

“Discovery activities are usually carried out in groups. They require high-order thinking skills in order to puzzle them out, and because learners are developing their own meanings, learning is of a high quality. Each member of the group can provide their part of the ‘jigsaw puzzle’ of understanding for the topic being investigated.”

“However, it must be stressed that if the activities are poorly thought out, or ineffectively managed, the result can be lack of learning, confused and frustrated students, and a waste of time and goodwill.”

(Geoffrey Petty. 1998, *Teaching today*, UK, Stanley Thornes)

Petty describes higher order discussion as ‘discovery learning’. The next time I want students to successfully respond to this kind of activity I know now that I

need plan plan plan!! They require an established high order working climate in the class and then need well planned, thought out questions and questioning strategies. The next time I will think more carefully about what I want to achieve and how I will achieve it.