

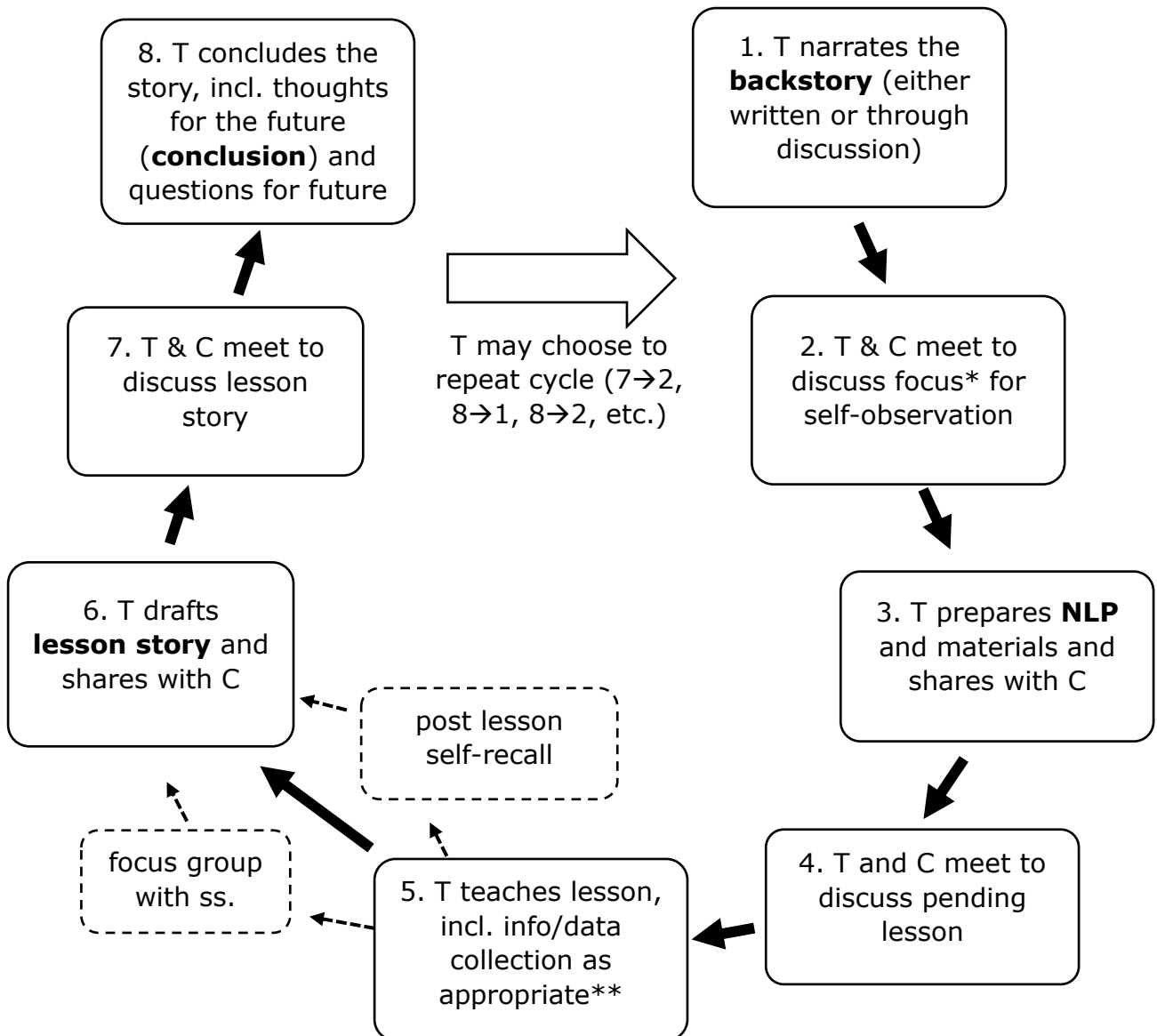
Guide for facilitating narrative self-observation

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Narrative self-observation cycle, version 1 (Sep. 2024)

Based on the unseen observation cycle (O'Leary, 2022), but with narrative focus, including backstory and conclusion. Cycle may repeat as many times as desired.

T – teacher; C – collaborator; SS – students; NLP – narrative lesson plan



* As O'Leary & Cui (2023) note, this should be chosen by T, but may also involve suggestions from C or themes that emerge from the discussion. It may involve a change of some sort, but always under the T's control.

** info/data collection will depend both on T's preferences and institutional regulations. Two examples are given: post-lesson self-recall (e.g., through audio recording) and focus group discussion with selected students.

Detailed guidance for NSO stages

Note: The modality for storytelling can be decided by the teacher and can vary at different points. They may prefer:

- a. to write the story
- b. to 'tell' the story verbally, with the collaborator listening and asking questions, as per the prompts below.
- c. to tell the story to an audio or video diary (vlog)

The teacher can also 'style' the story as they see fit (e.g., a descriptive account, a novel-like treatment, a stream of consciousness).

The teacher should always seek to ensure that the identities and privacy of the participants are protected (e.g., anonymisation, secure file storage, etc.).

Stage in cycle	Prompt suggestions
<p>1. Teacher narrates the backstory (either written or through discussion with Collaborator)</p>	<p>The backstory can include whatever you feel is important. The aim is to provide your collaborator with a detailed understanding of who you are as a teacher and how the class community and the observation fit into your personal history. Here are some prompt questions you may want to address:</p> <p>You:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are some of the major events or experiences of your teaching career? b. Who has had an important impact on you? c. How have these experiences and people shaped your teaching philosophy and contributed to your growth as a teacher? d. How would you characterise yourself as a teacher today? <p>Your class community:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> e. What is your personal history with this class and how does it relate or compare to other classes you have known? f. Who are the people in your class and how do they contribute to the community? g. Are there any interesting anecdotes or stories about this class that give insights into what it is like to teach them?
<p>2. Teacher and Collaborator meet to discuss focus* for unseen observation</p>	<p>The aim of this meeting is for your collaborator to understand both your backstory and what the lesson story will focus on (e.g., an aspect of your teaching, relationships in the class, a recent or pending change or a puzzle that you are facing). The collaborator may begin by expressing interest in aspects of the backstory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. I have read... That's interesting. Can you elaborate more...? etc. <p>Then the discussion can move onto the story focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What would you like this story to be about? b. Why have you chosen this focus? c. Are you planning anything special to help you to understand the focus more? (e.g., keeping a diary, adopting a different way of planning, annotating the lesson plan as you teach, getting some additional feedback from the students, etc.)

	<p>d. At this stage, can you envisage an ending to the story? Or maybe several different endings?</p> <p>e. How do you see the role of your collaborator in the story?</p>
3. Teacher prepares lesson plan and materials and shares with collaborator	The lesson plan should be one that you are comfortable with. We recommend the use of a narrative lesson plan (NLP), in which you write about your learners, intentions and activities in continuous text, rather than separating these out into boxes and bullet points. If a standard pro forma is required, find out if you can adapt it to suit your needs for this observation. You may choose to highlight elements of the lesson where your chosen focus becomes important.
4. Teacher and collaborator meet to discuss pending lesson, or collaborator offers feedback on lesson plan	<p>The aim of this meeting is for the collaborator to understand how you have planned the lesson and why. Particularly important are any areas where the chosen focus of the observation becomes important:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How will this plan enable you to understand more about your chosen focus? Are there any 'unknowns' as a result of the chosen focus? Do you have any concerns or hopes for the lesson that you would like to discuss? Are you planning to collect any information or data to help you? <p>The collaborator may offer help with info/data collection tools and also offer specific observations on the LP. In the event that a meeting is not possible, the teacher may forward answers to the collaborator to read and respond to (e.g., via email).</p>
5. Teacher teaches lesson, incl. information/data collection as appropriate	<p>What happens at this stage will depend on the focus and the info./data collection. One useful way to collect information to do is an immediate post-lesson 'self-recall' (audio, written or video notes) that will help you with the future stages of the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk yourself through the story of the lesson: what happened and how did it go? Feel free to tell it as if it is happening now or in the past, and include your emotions, concerns and puzzles as much or as little as you want to. <p>You may also want to do a focus group meeting with the students in which you discuss aspects of the lesson focus with them to help inform your lesson story. You may want to ask them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you find the lesson? Did you notice anything different or unusual in the lesson? In the lesson I was focusing on [explain your chosen focus]. What did you think/notice about this?
6. Teacher drafts lesson story and shares with collaborator	This should happen when you have time, but should be at least a day after the lesson to enable you to distance yourself from it and revisit the information you collected. This 'lesson story' can be drafted as you like, and can be as short or as long as you like. You may choose to recount it in chronological order, or to zoom in to specific moments, or a passage of the lesson that is particularly insightful. While it is expected that the observation focus will be evident in the chapter, you may also want to focus on other areas of the

	<p>lesson. It may include insights from your self-recall or focus group interview.</p>
<p>7. Teacher and collaborator meet to discuss the lesson story</p>	<p>The aim of this stage is to explore further the lesson story to enable both parties to understand it. Discussion may include only the lesson focus or other areas also (depending on teacher preference). The collaborator may have specific observations or questions they want to ask based on the story they read. And the teacher may have questions regarding the collaborator's response to the story. For example:</p> <p>Collaborator:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I found the story... I get the feeling from the story that the lesson went... Is this true? Regarding the observation focus, it sounds like... Did I understand correctly? I notice you mentioned/didn't mention... Can you share your reasons for this? <p>Teacher:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What did you notice upon reading/listening to the story? Did it remind you of any of your own stories? <p>To conclude:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What have you learnt from this story? Has it had any impact on the topics that you discussed in your backstory (e.g., your class community or your beliefs)? Would you like to continue this story for another observation?
<p>8. Teacher concludes lesson story, including thoughts for the future</p>	<p>At this point, you combine all the documents you have written for your narrative self-observation cycle into one 'story'. Then, when you have some spare time, read through the whole thing and draft a conclusion, reflecting on the following questions or similar:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What have you learnt from this story as a whole? Has this experience changed you in any way? (e.g., your beliefs, values, practices or identity) If you could meet up with the earlier version of you – the one who wrote the backstory, what would you tell them? What advice would you give them? Finally, what will you be taking forward from this self-observation experience that will help you in the future? <p>Feel free to add further reflections if you would like to.</p>

References

O'Leary, M. (2022). Rethinking teachers' professional learning through unseen observation. *Professional Development in Education*, 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.693119>

O'Leary, M., & Cui, V. (2023). *Developing excellence in teaching and learning in higher education through observation*. Routledge.