

## Teaching Formats toolbox: Student Agency

### Activating teaching formats to help introduce student agency in the classroom

#### Background

The labour market is continually in flux: old professions disappear and change while new professions emerge. This calls for starting professionals who are flexible, agile and able to cope with uncertainty (THUAS Educational vision and framework, 2017). It is therefore important for a professional to be able to respond to these changes and to be able to purposefully steer and, if necessary, adjust their own career: lifelong development. Higher education can prepare students for this by devoting attention to how a student can purposefully manage their own learning process, i.e., student agency. When a student demonstrates agency, they are able to consciously influence their own learning behaviour as a means of achieving the desired learning outcomes by setting goals, making choices, planning, monitoring their own behaviour and reflecting on the effectiveness of their own behaviour (Bandura, 2018). Students who feel a sense of agency are involved in their own learning process (Matusov, Von Duyke, & Kayumova, 2016; Mercer, 2011), which can also have a positive effect on learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

#### Contents of the toolbox

connection with student success, it is important to include specific attention to *student agency* in your curriculum. But how do you do that? This toolbox offers a variety of activating teaching formats that can be used to support students to develop student agency. These teaching formats have been developed based on the characteristics described by Bandura (2018) as expressions of *agency*:

- *Forethought*: the ability to motive and guide yourself based on intentions, action plans and expected behavioural outcomes.
- *Self-reactiveness*: the ability to regulate your own behaviour by modifying it as necessary based on whether you feel the behaviour is in keeping with your personal values and standards.
- *Self-reflectiveness*: the ability to reflect on how effectively you are achieving your goals; the evaluation of your own competence (Bandura, 2018).

On the following pages, the teaching formats are elaborated in a lesson preparation template for the lecturer and are an interpretation of the practical application of student agency in education. In each teaching format, we will make use of the [Wave model from the THUAS Blend](#).

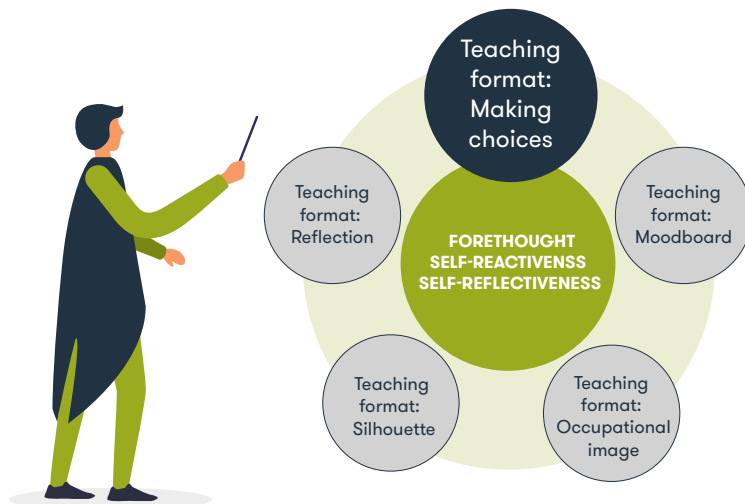
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## TEACHING FORMATS: STUDENT AGENCY



### Teaching format: MAKING CHOICES

*Student agency* begins with wanting something, envisioning something, choosing something. This teaching format makes the student aware of how they make choices and what they need in order to do so. Students reflect on the choices they have made and learn about their style of decision-making.

#### Learning objectives

After applying this teaching format...

- the student will know which style of decision-making is preferred;
- the student will know which styles are appropriate for use in which contexts;
- the student can consciously use a decision-making style for a study choice (such as internship or minors), leading the student to a (correct) choice;
- the student will be able to make choices that are in keeping with their wishes for the future.

#### Before class

Make the TEDx videos about decision-making available to the students. In this way, students deepen their understanding of what decision-making is and at what times and how they do it. This deeper understanding is a first step to self-knowledge about decision-making and they can take away and use it during class.

#### During the class

Have the students sit in an open circle (no tables) and review the following five components:

- 1. How did you decide which study programme to enrol in?**  
Each student will pick one word that matches the moment they made their study choice. Which word best represents that decision for them (for instance: parents, Open Day, challenge, doubt)? Each student writes the word on a label and sticks it on themselves. Next, the students will take turns explaining what their word means to them in relation to the study choice. This will help the students get to know one another while also activating the decision-making theory.
- 2. Reflecting on choices made by asking questions afterwards**  
The student learns to recognise their own motivations, which form their choices. The lecturer presents the following statements to the students. The students stand on one side of the classroom and (silently) cross to the other side if they agree with the statement. The lecturer then asks if anyone wants to explain their response.

- So far, <opleiding> has been what I expected it to be.
- I know which professional field I wish to work in.
- In my future career, I see myself <vaardigheid voor een specifiek beroep>.
- In the past, I have made a choice that I later regretted.

#### 3. Decision-making styles: which is right for you?

The student will become aware of their own preferred style and will familiarise themselves with other styles. The students read a list of decision-making styles and tick the one(s) they prefer (it is possible to identify with more than one style). Then, in a group discussion, ask whether the student thinks this is also the most effective style for them to use when making decisions during their academic career. If that is not the case, ask which style might be more appropriate.

#### 4. Visualisation exercise: your future self

The student visualises their future and gains awareness of possible choices. This may prompt new or different choices.

#### 5. Summary

Conclude by having students write down (silently and individually) what they have gained from the workshop.

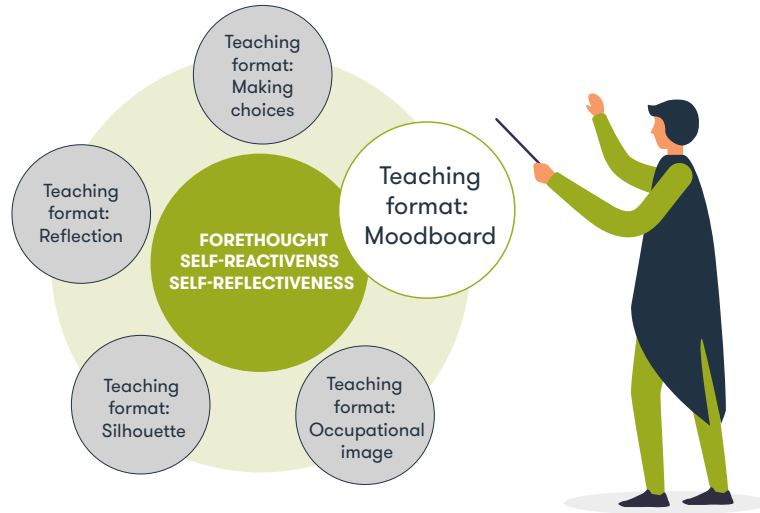
#### After class

Discuss study planning with coach. Insights gained through this teaching format can prove helpful when choosing a minor or internship. The student discusses their study planning, attempts to uncover what motivated them to pursue this particular study and (together with the coach) determines which decisions they need to make and how they will make those. If the degree programme includes a portfolio, the insights gained through this teaching format can be included in that portfolio.

**Material (can be requested via Sandra Koens: [s.koens@hhs.nl](mailto:s.koens@hhs.nl))**

- The decision-making styles
- Visualisation exercise
- TEDx material
- The first lecture by Ruth Chang is a great testimonial that describes how, by making difficult decisions, we stand to gain so much in terms of self-knowledge and clarity as to what you want to achieve. Which is pretty important in this stage of your studies.
- Another lecture about 'choice, happiness and spaghetti sauce' by Malcolm Gladwell yields entirely different perspectives. Discover for yourself...

## TEACHING FORMATS: STUDENT AGENCY



### Teaching format: MOODBOARD

When you want or choose something, you have a picture in your mind of what it will be like. You have an image of the future in mind. In this teaching format, each student will make a moodboard about their future and, as they do, they'll ask themselves and each other the question: 'what do I feel it's important to do/be in the future?' On the basis of the moodboard, students can design an (action) plan, for example in a personal conversation, to realise the intention.

#### Learning objectives

After applying this teaching format...

- the student will be able to create a visual representation of their vision for the future;
- the student will know which decisions they must take in order to progress towards achieving their vision of the future.

#### Before class

Students are assigned the task of looking for job vacancies, images and magazines, etc. They are asked to bring anything they find appealing with them to class

#### During the class

The students will work on the following two components individually. That being said, the students can also sit in groups while they work, so they can help each other, ask questions, etc.

#### 1. Analytical stage

In the analytical stage, the students will prepare their moodboards. They will do so by brainstorming about the (ideal) future, attempting to identify their own patterns (destructive thoughts), their own motivations (factors for success), and so on.

A few questions that may be useful to them during the analytical process:

- What is your dream image of the future?
- Where do you see the dream image reflected in the occupational images?
- What are your qualities?
- What obstacles can you identify?

#### 2. Development stage

During the development stage, students will create individual moodboards: first, they will make a rough outline, then they will collect images and assemble the actual moodboard. If there is time, the moodboards can be presented during class.

#### After class

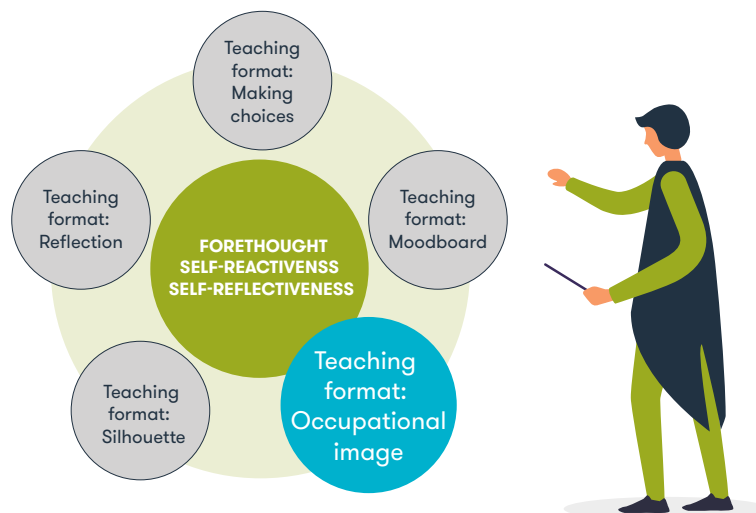
Each student will discuss their moodboard with a coach/ counsellor based on the following aspects:

- Evaluating the moodboard;
- What occupational image corresponds to this dream image?
- What actions must I take (making choices, developing knowledge and expertise) in order to fulfil that occupational image?

The moodboard can also be used during the Occupational Image workshop.

If the degree programme includes a portfolio, the insights gained through this teaching format can be included in that portfolio.

## TEACHING FORMATS: STUDENT AGENCY



### Teaching format: OCCUPATIONAL IMAGE

Once the student has a clear picture of how they envision their future (Teaching format: Moodboard), it is important to check their assumptions about the profession or professions (summarised as occupational image(s)). So, once the student has asked themselves how they see their future, they will then evaluate whether that is in keeping with the (future) labour market. This is a way for the students to seek 'alignment' between what they want and what is possible. Having a concrete occupational image to work towards is helpful in taking steps to achieve that future.

#### Learning objectives

After applying this teaching format, the student will have...

- insight into which profession is a good fit for their vision of the future;
- insight into the aspects that make up a complete occupational image: not only knowledge and expertise, but attitude, values, passion and pride as well;
- an up-to-date image of the occupation that is in keeping with the vision for the future and an idea of the domains in which this profession can be practised.

#### Before class

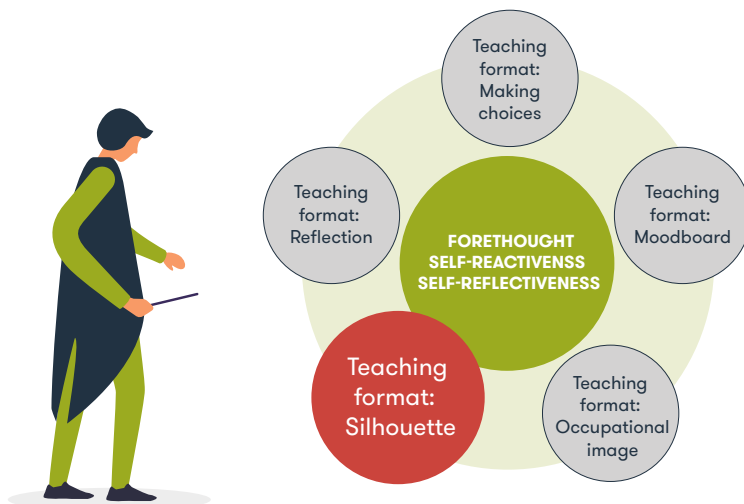
- Prepare a brief explanation of how the labour market is relevant to decision-making and the role that realistic occupational images play in this. Tailor this preparation to the specific degree programme in which you are teaching.
- Ask students to bring their moodboards with them to class.

#### During the class

1. Offer a brief explanation of how the labour market is relevant to decision-making and the role that realistic occupational images play in this (speaking to the whole class). The following will be addressed:
  - Why it is important to compare and contrast your goals for the future against what the labour market expects of a professional.
  - What occupational images are.
  - Why it is important for occupational images to be realistic
2. Reflection on the moodboard: the student explains how the moodboard shows where they want to be in the future and what profession they have in mind for themselves (in pairs).

3. research into occupational image: the student checks whether their assumptions regarding the profession are correct and adds/adjusts information as needed (individually).
  - The student will complete the worksheet below in three steps:
    - based on the moodboard.
    - based on what they already know.
    - Based on their research, the student will check whether the information they gave was correct and adds/adjusts information as needed. This can be done in several ways: an interview with someone who practises that profession, reading job vacancy postings, watching videos, insights gained from internship, etc. Due to time constraints, this could also be given as a homework assignment and then picked back up in a later class.

## TEACHING FORMATS: STUDENT AGENCY



### Teaching format: SILHOUETTE

When actually taking steps to achieve your intentions, it is important to continuously evaluate your own behaviour based on what you feel are relevant standards, including moral standards. Are you (still) acting in accordance with your own standards and values? Then you can either choose to adjust your behaviour or make a conscious choice to continue. In this teaching format, students will work in pairs. Taking turns, one student will lie down on a large sheet of paper in a pose that describes them. The other student will then trace their partner's silhouette. The students will also ask themselves (and each other), 'what are my/your abilities?' and 'what is important to me/you?'. They can refer to the moodboard and action plan during this discussion.

### After class

The silhouette can be used in a meeting with your coach/ counsellor about the plan in relation to the silhouette: are you actually doing what is important to you? If the degree programme includes a portfolio, the insights gained through this teaching format can be included in that portfolio.

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### Learning objectives

After applying this teaching format...

- the student will be aware of their own abilities, actions, emotions, thoughts, etc;
- the student will be able to evaluate their own actions based on their personal values and standards (moral compass).

### Before class

- Students read information on ethics (moral action), doing what you enjoy and what is important to you and (possibly) core qualities;
- Students are asked to bring the following to class: coloured pencils, markers, chalk, etc.
- The lecturer brings large sheets of paper (flipchart or butcher paper) and tape. .

### During the class

Students will work in pairs. Taking turns, one student will lie down on a large sheet of paper in a pose that describes them. The other student will then trace their partner's silhouette. Each student will then 'fill in' their own silhouette, for instance based on:

- What is in my head (cognition, what am I thinking of)?
- What is in my heart (what do I think is important)?
- Where are my feet headed and what are my hands doing (behaviour/actions/what can I do and what am I doing)?
- And so on.

Student walk around and ask each other questions.

## TEACHING FORMATS: STUDENT AGENCY



### Teaching format: REFLECTION

While working towards a goal, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of your behaviour: are you still doing the right thing(s) and will your actions ensure you achieve your goal? It is possible, through reflection, to assess your own actions based on the stated goal and to adjust or modify them if needed for the next time. In other words, the point is to reflect on your own competence. This teaching format helps students learn the theory concerning reflection and to practise reflecting on their own behaviour.

#### Learning objectives

After applying this teaching format...

- the student will be familiar with the methods for reflection;
- the student will be able to apply the methods to situations involving their own behaviour;
- the student will recognise their own reflection level and areas for development;
- the student will be able to apply self-reflection in order to formulate SMART learning objectives for their own development.

#### Before class

- Prepare the exploration of the reflection models (see also the 'PowerPoint reflection models' materials).
- Ask the students to choose an object in their room that matches their identity and says something about who they are. Have them bring that object with them to class.

#### During the class

1. Offer a brief explanation of the theory concerning reflection models, possibly by referring to/explaining the PowerPoint (see materials).
2. Reflection exercises with application of the reflection models (you could potentially demonstrate in front of the whole class with one student as an example, for example by going through the steps of a reflection model, and then have students practise in pairs/groups of four).
3. Evaluation of student's own level of reflection: what are they already able to do effectively and what needs work? This can be done based on a [website](#) -> reflection/step 2.

#### After class

- If the degree programme includes a portfolio, the insights gained through this teaching format can be included in that portfolio.
- Meeting with lecturer, with help of a reflection model:
  - Work together to identify an area the student wants to improve;
  - To what extent/at what level is the student now talking about change?;
  - At what level must the change occur in order to succeed.

#### Materials (can be requested via Sandra Koens [s.koens@hhs.nl](mailto:s.koens@hhs.nl))

Supporting PowerPoint presentation including theory on the reflection models.

a. What might a typical workday be like for a [insert kind of professional]? What tasks does the [professional] carry out?

What do I already know?	Additions:
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b. What does the [professional] need to know (knowledge)?

What do I already know?	Additions:
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c. What does the [professional] need to be able to do well (skills/talents)?

What do I already know?	Additions:
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*Examples of domains are healthcare, construction, education and so on. Many professions can be practised in more than one domain. For example: someone who has a degree in Communication could work for the Red Cross, where they might design a campaign to promote CPR training courses. But that same Communication graduate could also work for a university of applied sciences as a Communication lecturer. In the first example, they work in the 'healthcare' domain. And in the second example, they work in the 'education' domain. At the same time, working within a given domain often requires you to be knowledgeable about that domain.*

What do I already know?	Additions:
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d. What would make the [professional] feel proud?

What do I already know?	Additions:
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e. What might be important to the [professional] (values)? To what goal(s) does the [professional] contribute?

What do I already know?	Additions:
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#### 4. Sharing insights: the student discusses the insights with a peer (in pairs).

- The student discusses the insights with a peer based on the following questions:
  - Which parts of your vision for yourself as a future professional are still the same in your mind after this lesson?
  - Which parts of your vision for yourself as a future professional have you felt a need to adjust?
  - Which parts of your vision for yourself as a future professional have you expanded on?

#### After class

- It is possible that the research into occupational images and the sharing of insights can be continued after class (in the form of a reflection assignment).
- If the degree programme includes a portfolio, the insights gained through this teaching format can be included in that portfolio.
- The insights from this teaching format can be a good input for internship orientation.