**Case Study Two  
Soft teaching in the darkroom.**

### Background

During one of the workshops sessions the table I was sitting on had a group discussion about the benefits of soft-teaching / informal learning. We discussed how difficult it was to qualify the importance of these conversations within the formal structures of higher education institutions.

*“Informal learning plays an important role even in formalized student education, because ‘it is hard to imagine a formal learning context in which only explicit learning of explicit knowledge takes place.’”* (Decius et al., 2022, p. 4)

Decius, Dannowsky, & Schaper assert that these students acquire knowledge not just through formal coursework but also through peer interactions, trial and error, and reflective practice. I am attempting through this case study to allow peer-to-peer learning between student and teacher.

I have been reflecting on the conversations I have with students in the darkroom while I am printing my own work alongside them. When I am in these spaces, to some extent, the traditional power dynamics between student and educator have shifted. We are more equal in that space.

A collage of a house

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

*Figure 1 – darkroom print from this session*

### Evaluation

I recorded a conversation between myself and two students in the darkrooms while we are printing.

Max: what are you printing today? Those colours are so nice.

Student 1: Thanks they’re from a job for a fashion student? There’s a preflash on them. I’m using two of the booths today.

Max: cool, they’re really nice. What was the job?

Student 1: it’s from their final fashion project, they need to make a lookbook.

Max: did you get paid for it?

*Student 2 arrives at this point*

Student 2: No and I assisted her!

Max: Did you get paid ahah? I guess it’s other students you’re supporting, but how much did you spend on the film and paper?

Student 1: Quite a lot. I didn’t want to ask though?

Student 2: It’s so difficult.

Max: It’s hard but it’s a good time to learn. I think you can be clear with people about what your expenses are. But you probably need to do that upfront next time. It’s always hard with students but if this was an outside client you should account for all of your costs, including your time when quoting.

Reflection

This is a small account of one of the countless conversations I have with the students in these spaces. I would like to further examine the relationship between learner and educator in these informal education settings. It’s difficult to formalise the relationship here because this type of learning relies on informal conversations.

Sources

Decius, J., Dannowsky, J. & Schaper, N. (2022). The casual within the formal: A model and measure of informal learning in higher education. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 25*(1), pp. 3-24.