



Observation: WTF?

Not watching you, watching the students.

Professional development

Constructive feedback and reflection

Sharing best practice, ideas, reflections

Troubleshooting and teacher support

Quality assurance for major stakeholders – the students

Context

- 5 schools run by Dynaspeak: Queen Street, New Lynn, Albany, Manukau, Botany
- Around 50 teachers
- 4 - 5 months
- My thanks to the teachers and students who participated

Observation: what to observe



Some points of focus

1. The students
2. The patterns of interaction
3. Levels of engagement and participation
4. Logical progression
5. Achievement of aims
6. Level of challenge for the students
7. Variety
8. Pace

Before

A session with teachers on **what a lesson observer might typically look for**: aims, staging, pace, engagement of the students, etc.

Standardised lesson plan/feedback format with aims, anticipated problems/solutions, timing, interaction, stage names/aims, procedure, as well as a space for written feedback.

Schedule a time to observe for up to an hour

During

- Have a copy of the teacher's lesson plan from the start
- Watch the students
- Make written comments on aims, stages, engagement, pace... both +ive and -ive
- Focus on constructive suggestions
- Write an overall comment
- Thank the teacher and the class at the end

The students

- Are the students given lots of opportunities to contribute, speak in pairs, groups, confer on tasks, etc.
- Are they engaged and involved? Bored?
- Are the students clear about the lesson aims?
- Are they sufficiently challenged by the lesson?
- Are tasks set clearly for them?
- Is the material and the approach suitable for the level?

Patterns of interaction

- Draw a sketch seating plan and add lines for interactions
- Is there a lot of pair work?
- Group work?
- Static pairs or dynamic pairs?
- Open pairs? Closed pairs?
- What's the balance of T and S fronted activity?

Engagement and participation

- Some points of focus:
- How well has interest been raised in the topic?
- How motivated are the students to do the tasks?
- Are the students actively engaged in the process through elicitation of prior knowledge, etc.?
- Are activities and tasks set, paced and concluded in a motivating way (e.g. task feedback approaches)?
- Are there ways that the teacher can further work on motivating and engaging students?

Logical progression

- How does the lesson start?
- Do the stage transitions work smoothly enough?
- Do the stages fit together appropriately and logically according to the lesson type and the lesson aim?
- Are stages for key procedures such as task management for receptive skills followed correctly?
- Is there a logical progression in the stages of the lesson?
- How does the lesson finish?

Achievement of aims

- Are the main aims clear to the students?
- Do the stages support achievement of the aim?
- Is the timing of the stages realistic in terms of achieving the aim?
- Do the activities bring out the aim?
- How well has the aim been achieved?

Variety

- Is there a good variety in terms of:
- - Tasks?
- - Activity types?
- - Changes of focus?
- - Pace?
- - Material?
- - Interaction patterns? etc.

Pace

- (Not frenetic pace!)
- - How well are the stages paced in relation to achievement of the aims?
- - Are there changes/is there variety of pace?
- - What suggestions can you make to improve pace?

After

- 1-1 Verbal feedback
- No modal verbs
- Written feedback
- Report on the lesson overall
- Identify 3 positive points
- Suggest 3 action points
- Session with the whole group to summarise: main focus on spicing up dynamics, and student-fronted activity in lessons

Attitudes to shift?

- Observation WTF
- It's spying
- I know I'm a good teacher and I don't need it
- I am being observed LOL
- OMG it's the inspectors, better spruce up my act
- Dust off the old favourite second conditional 'If I won lotto' lesson
- Panic, photocopy, photocopy
- Not watching you, watching the students