
Peculiarities of classroom observation

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Observation is an important part of learning how to teach. Much of what beginner teachers need to be aware of can not be learned solely in the university class. Therefore classroom observation presents an opportunity to see real-life teachers in real-life teaching situations. In their reflections, many of our teacher friends mention their observations and how these observations influence the way they plan and teach. Teachers are forever reflecting and making decisions, and when they see someone else in action, in as much as they are seeing someone else, they are almost simultaneously seeing themselves. This means that observation is important at every stage of a teacher's career. In this section we will discuss the importance and value of observation, not only for student teachers, but for ALL teachers

A classroom observation is a formal or informal observation of teaching while it is taking place in a classroom or other [learning environment](#). Typically conducted by fellow teachers, administrators, or instructional specialists, classroom observations are often used to provide teachers with constructive critical feedback aimed at improving their [classroom management](#) and instructional techniques. School administrators also regularly observe teachers as an extension of formal job-performance evaluations. [36, P.78].

Classroom observation describes the practice of sitting in on another teacher's class to observe, learn and reflect. Various aspects of the class can be examined, such as routines, use of time, schedule, participation, teaching strategies, management strategies, learner interest, and much more. A teacher will naturally look for support on an issue that is difficult for him or her, but it is often a great method of being exposed to a new and different approach to teaching.

Observation is important at every stage of a teacher's career. In areas of Asia, professional development has for a very long time included what is known as demonstration lessons; a master teacher, who has perhaps prepared students with some new strategies, invites many local teachers into their classroom to observe, and following the lesson a question and answer period takes place. All of the teachers involved, regardless of whether they are master teachers or beginning teachers, have the opportunity to dialogue together and learn from one another. This is a more recent trend in North America; schools are now trying to create opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers in their subject area, either in their own school or in other schools. For a teacher at the beginning of their career, there are some general issues that the teacher would need to observe and identify. The focus would be on general pedagogic knowledge, which includes issues such as classroom management, differentiation and instructional strategies.

Classroom observation can often help expose teachers to new methods of teaching that might not have occurred to them beforehand. It may be threatening to be subject to peer observation since teachers might feel territorial and defensive in their classroom and protective of their resources and ideas. However, when it is done in a considerate and respectful fashion, observation can be beneficial for both the observing teacher and the teacher being observed. Below are some benefits of observation in the classroom. One of the main challenges for observation is knowing what to look for. Some teacher education programs offer checklists for observation but it is often difficult to find specific checklists for subject areas, such as second language teaching. Some specific things that one can look for when observing include how the teacher structures an activity; what the actual instructions are and whether they

are given in English or the target language; if the teacher use synonyms for those basic instructions, or uses the same words, and what were those words; does the teacher give some visual cues to accompany those instructions; are the instructions divided into three or four steps with a visual icon visible on the board.

Increasingly, educators are conducting and recording classroom observations using digital and online technologies—such as smart phones, tablets, and subscription-based online systems—that can provide educators with observational functionality and data analytics that would not be possible if paper-based processes were used. While classroom observations are conducted for a wide variety of purposes, they are perhaps most commonly associated with job-performance evaluations conducted by school administrators and with [professional learning communities](#)—groups of teachers who work together to improve their instructional skills.