

5.4: Additional Content

Observation schedules

An observation schedule provides a structured framework for recording classroom behaviours. Observations should be carefully planned so as to cause the least disruption to the lesson. Unit 2.1 provides information about observation schedules. It is not possible to record everything that happens in a classroom, so you need to focus on, for example, a particular group or pupil or aspect of the teacher's work and record activity over time; here you may need to devise your own observation schedule to suit your particular purpose. Video recordings also provide an additional way of recording data about classroom activities.

Paired observation

This is a streamlined procedure that enables you to obtain feedback on aspects of your work that are difficult for you to monitor. Paired observation works in the following way: Two colleagues pair up with the purpose of observing one lesson each and then giving feedback about particular aspects of the lesson or the teaching of the person observed. The person giving the lesson decides the focus of the observation. The three stages of a paired observation are:

Step 1: you both agree the focus of the observation and what notes, if any, are to be made;

Step 2: you each observe one lesson given by the other; your observations and notes are restricted to the area requested;

Step 3: you give each other feedback on the issue under consideration.

The cycle can be repeated as often as you wish. If finding the opportunity to visit a peer's classroom is difficult to timetable, making a recording of the session and using that as a focus for discussion can be a useful alternative.

Research diaries and other documents

Diaries provide valuable data and useful records over a period of time. The researcher and also those involved in the research, such as pupils or teaching colleagues, could keep them. They can be designed in different ways; for instance, a decision may be made to write under specific headings giving short, relevant pieces of information such as the subjects that give homework each night, the particular tasks set, and the length of time spent on each. For example, 'Pupil Learning Logs' can provide useful data over time. For example, asking pupils to answer four

questions via an online survey platform allowed one beginning teacher opportunity to gain a different perspective on their sequence of lessons. At the end of each lesson during a half-term topic they asked pupils to comment on:

- What did you learn today?
- What did I do to help you?
- Could you use this learning in any other lesson?
- Do you have any other comments?

The resulting information allowed the beginning teacher to reflect more deeply on the impact of their teaching, resulting in improvements being made to planning moving forward.

Alternatively, the diarists could be allowed to express themselves more freely; for example, explaining how they feel each day's lessons have gone and the reasons why they think this. In addition, analysis of pupil work, asking pupils to write about or draw images of a topic/issue being researched, biographical accounts written by participants all provide useful insights into life in school and the learning that is taking place.