Gathering evidence of learning: the lesson observation

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Session aims:

• Explore what observation of learning can and cannot capture in relation to pupil learning
• Find out about a range of techniques from Japan and beyond, to improve the data gathering process for research lessons
What is observation?

- Listening to children’s animated voices as music and appreciating their hearts and minds as the harmony of orchestration (Kurahashi, 1951)
- Observation means to see ‘invisible things’, using ‘visible things’ as clues; ‘interpretation of the child’s behaviour in front of you’ means ‘how to accept the child’s behaviour’ (Tsumori, 1974)
- Observation where an observer can relate intersubjectively with a child and become a child is required (Kujiraoka, 1999)
Nuthall (2007) argues that the process of learning occurs at three levels; one being wholly visible, the public- and teacher-led elements of learning; the second a semi-visible layer that is characterised by student interaction; and the third an invisible layer constituted of mental processes including prior learning and working memory. As a consequence, any attempt to observe the process of learning will only ever be partial, as important elements of the process will, according to Nuthall, not be open to observation. This can result in somewhat vague descriptions of learning…or leads to a reliance upon the external behaviours associated with the process.

Illeris (2007) on learning

Can be observed? Can be observed? Remains hidden?

Adapted from Wood, P. (2016). *Lesson study: an opportunity for considering the role of observation in practice development.*
Gathering evidence for discussions:

‘Three lesson study methods developed in Japan with their characteristics and pedagogical implications’ Yoshizaki, S. World Association of Lesson Study Conference 2016
Mizukoshi (1987): model of anticipating student’s thought processes:
Advantages of the Mizukoshi method:

- Teachers develop the ability to anticipate students’ thought processes
- Teachers can plan the lesson to better meet student needs
- The post-lesson discussion can explore the differences between what was predicted to happen and what actually happened
Subject knowledge

Pedagogy

Knowledge of students

A

B

C

D
Illeris (2007) on learning

- Cognitive learning: Remains hidden
- Emotional learning: Can be partially observed?
- Social learning: Can be observed

Adapted from Wood, P. (2016). Lesson study: an opportunity for considering the role of observation in practice development.
Yoshikazi (1991): stimulated recall procedure:

- A group of students is taped during the lesson
- They watch the video at the end of the lesson and are asked to talk about the cognitive and affective processes they are experiencing
- Students usually answer a set of written questions
- Their responses are discussed in the post-lesson discussion
Sample questions:

• What were you thinking about at that moment?
• Why were you thinking that?
• How were you feeling about your learning at that moment?
• Why did you feel that way?
Advantages of the Yoshikazi method:

• Helps teachers know how students felt about their learning, what they enjoyed and found challenging
• Can see the lesson from students’ point of view
• Can discuss any discrepancy between students’ and teachers’ points of view
Illeris (2007) on learning

- Can be observed
- Remains hidden
- Can be partially observed?

Adapted from Wood, P. (2016). Lesson study: an opportunity for considering the role of observation in practice development.
Murakawa (2010): workshop style lesson study

- Observers record their key observations on postits
- Postits are colour coded according to whether they note a success, a problem or a puzzle
- Observers divide into small groups and compare their thoughts using the postits
- The postits are often organised or classified into some sort of frame
Advantages of the Murakawa method:

• Every teacher is encouraged to contribute, regardless of their experience or confidence
• Works well for larger groups
• Can help to identify patterns in observations without lengthy recounts
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Pedagogy

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Illeris (2007) on learning

- Cognitive
  - Can be observed
  - Can be partially observed?
  - Remains hidden

- Emotional
  - Can be observed

- Social
  - Can be observed

Adapted from Wood, P. (2016). *Lesson study: an opportunity for considering the role of observation in practice development.*
Bolstering observational evidence:

- Stimulated recall interviews: Interview pupils in possession of lesson artefacts, using these as a focus and stimulus for discussion.
- Participatory lesson study (Wood & Cajkler, 2016): Teachers discuss with groups of pupils what it is they struggle with and how they believe they might best be supported before the lesson is planned.

After the lesson, they are interviewed again about the degree to which the research lesson helped them overcome these challenges.

Illeris (2007) on learning

Adapted from Wood, P. (2016). *Lesson study: an opportunity for considering the role of observation in practice development.*
Which practice would enhance your gathering of observational data?

- Anticipating pupil responses (Mizukoshi)
- Pupils watching video clips (Yoshikazi)
- Workshop style post-lesson discussion (Murakawa)
- Stimulated recall interviews (Wood)
- Participatory lesson study (Wood and Cajkler)
Questions

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