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**Sample Document**

Effective Lesson Observation and Dialogue

to Improve Teaching and Learning

**1. Introductions**

**2. Learning intentions of the session**

1. **Appreciate the link between teaching and boys’ learning**
2. **Knowing how to prepare to carry out a lesson observation**
3. **Know what to look for during a lesson observation**
4. **Be able to complete lesson observation forms effectively**
5. **Be able to hold a successful dialogue with a colleague, helping you to improve your teaching**
6. **Reflect on one’s own practice so that one improves further**

**3. Learning theories**

An extremely large research base exists, which grows every year, of teaching and learning theories.

**Much of this we ignore but it has relevance to us all if applied judiciously.**

Some, possibly important, examples which we could take note of…..

**1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** is a theory concerning *Human Motivation*

Morality / Creativity / Spontaneity / Problem solving / Lack of Prejudice / Acceptance of Facts

*( dwelling on things)*

Self esteem / Confidence / Achievement / Respect for Self and Others *(you know yourself)*

Friendship/Family/Sexual intimacy *(realising you need others, relationships)*

Security of Self/Employment/Resources/Health/Property *(looking after yourself)*

Breathing/Food/Water/Sex/Sleep/Excretion/Homeostasis *(the basics to survive)*

The pyramid represents **the more primitive needs at the bottom.** The basic concept is that the higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus once all the needs that are lower down in the pyramid are mainly satisfied. Has this any relevance to T+L?

What has this got to do with learning at the school/college?

Think of **breakfast clubs in deprived areas** and the billions being spent on the **environment of schools**, resulting in more contented pupils and staff who feel they are **respected and valued**.

**2. Piaget** famous for his theory of cognitive development of children. C**hildren think differently from adults because of biological maturation of their brain**. **They can't think and problem solve like adults**. Children go through stages of cognitive development

* ***The sensorimotor stage (birth - 2 years old)***
* ***The preoperational stage (ages 2-7)***
* ***The concrete operations (ages 7-11)***
* ***The formal operations (beginning at ages 11-15)***

So …Do we take note of **pupils’ conceptual levels**?

Do we **differentiate work** to meet the varying needs of pupils of different ‘ability’? We try!

## 3. Pavlov and Skinner, behaviourists who believe in stimulus – response theory.

## The jumper who can only jump if the crowd clap towards a crescendo, We generate stimuli that result in particular responses.

## Pavlov introduced the idea of ‘weighing anchors’, that is introducing a stimulus that would result in a response.

## Pavlov conditioned dogs to salivate before they were shown and given food just by ringing a bell.

## When you see a red light at the traffic lights, what do you do?

## The fact that you automatically stop is a conditioned response (it would not be normal behaviour if you had not learnt it).

**Don’t we use techniques such as this, knowingly or not, in behaviour management?**

**How do headmasters and the Queen control situations**

**How do you control your little joys!**

**4. Vygotsky, a social psychologist, focused on thinking and speaking, believing that inner speech and outer speech are different, with inner speech or thought developing from external spoken speech.**

He also introduced the idea of the **zone of proximal development** , often abbreviated *ZPD*, the difference between what a learner can do alone and what he or she can do with help.

‘**Scaffolding’ work** is perhaps a development of this theory?

Small steps help pupils to learn.

How do you seat pupils and why?

**5.** **Bloom’s Taxonomy** – the **classification of learning objectives within education.**

Learning objectives for pupils are seen to be in **three domains – Affective, Psychomotor and Cognitive**.

Learning at a higher level is seen to be possible having attained prerequisite knowledge and skills at a lower level. Educators **should see all three domains at once** and think holistically responding to the three needs of the pupils.

**(i)Affective domain**.. awareness and growth of attitudes, emotion and feelings (happiness lessons perhaps!)

**Five levels, from receiving** (just paying attention, passively) **to holding a belief which influences the pupils** actions (called characterising)

**(ii) Psychomotor domain**.. the ability physically to manipulate tools or instruments – the development of skills

**(iii)Cognitive domain**.. built around knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking.

**Six levels, from**

* ***Knowledge* of facts** (what are the health benefits of eating fruit?) .. to
* ***Comprehension*** (comparison of health benefits of different fruit). to ***Application****..*(what fruit could be used to make a pie and why?) to
* ***Analysis***  (finding evidence for generalisations) to
* ***Synthesis*** (combining evidence in a different way to solve a problem) to
* ***Evaluation*.**.(presenting and defending opinions, making judgements, appreciating validity)

There is debate about the hierarchy, but not about the value of different levels of thinking.

How does this impact on learning?

**Are they all equally important in different subjects?**

6. **Dehaene, a** mathematician, who researches in neuroscience and psychology.

He suggests that doing mental calculations out loud has a powerful effect on learning.

Seeing it on the board, **speaking it out loud so you hear yourself**, as well as doing the work, involves several areas of the brain, which is helpful in developing memory of what is learnt.

**‘Drilling’ pupils in tables, uses a different site in the brain to strategies of multiplication**. Things that are memorised are consigned to the back of the mind, which can be thought of as freeing more of the front of the mind (the learning area) for more learning.

This work could be read to suggest that wrote learning, using three areas of the brain – visual, auditory and reasoning - facilitates memorising, which facilitates application of what has been learnt, (because it is at the back of the mind, leaving more capacity at the front for ‘doing it’!)

Does this have implications for academic success?

**Learn it rigorously and then apply the knowledge.**

**How do you ensure learning, not just presentation of information?**

**7. Black and Wiliam, Assessment for learning**

Deciding where learners are, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Key characteristics include:

* *Sharing learning objectives with pupils;*
* *Helping pupils to recognise the standards they aspire to achieve;*
* *Questioning pupils so work builds on prior knowledge and understanding;*
* *Involving pupils in peer and self assessment so pupils reflect and talk about what they think they know;*
* *Providing positive feedback and identifying next steps.*

**To summarise**

**1. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs…..**make sure the basics are right, such as…….

**2. Piaget’s conceptual leaps…**accepting that pupils have different cognitive abilities and try to match work to their needs…achieved through….

**3. Pavlov and Skinner, stimulus response work….**being consistent, developing positive behaviour and learning experiences…. You do this through……(your presence and voice?)

**4. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development……and talking things through ..**enabling pupils of similar ability to communicate together, and setting work pupils can ‘just do’…possibly scaffolding You do this through

5. **Bloom’s Taxonomy…** thinking about pupils’ learning, where attitudes, kinaesthetic and cognitive skills matter and work needs to be matched to these

Do you ensure learning of facts before moving onto comprehension…analysis.. synthesis..

**6. Dehaene’s use of multiple sites in the brain, and the value of rote learning**… accepting the value of learning facts and ideas, enabling problem solving

Do you use choral repetition.. talk partners.. learn it techniques before

**7. Black and Wiliam Assessment for Learning …** finding out where the pupils are, sharing intentions, using questioning to develop understanding including extended oral responses.

**Do you build on where the little joys are, through questioning or carry on regardless…**

**So do these theories and many others impact on T+L?**

**Which are the most helpful to you?**

**I would suggest that knowledge of them all is helpful…..**

**4. The link between Teaching and Boys’ Learning – criteria by which teaching is judged (best fit)**

Look at your lesson observation form….

When we are in lessons making judgements we MUST base our views on **boys’ learning**, not our predilections/prejudices about what constitutes good teaching.

There is NO single set of characteristics which results in a judgement of excellent teaching.

Characteristics come together which lift **enjoyment, motivation and achievement** to an exceptional level; this is what results in excellent teaching and progress/achievement.

**The observer MUST look for the links between teaching and learning, how the former leads to the latter.**

How important are mini-plenaries and plenaries during a lesson.

The observer summarises near the end of the session by recording

**+ Particular strengths**

**- Areas for development**

**You may agree in your preliminary discussions that you are not going to judge the quality of teaching, but you may decide that you wish to,** at least in your mind so you know how serious the strengths and weaknesses are.

What is the observer looking for?

In the notes below, **teaching characteristics** are linked to the **boys’ learning**.

When we observe we note the Quality of Teaching by judging its **IMPACT** on learning.

**5**. **Preparing to carry out a lesson observation – style and approach!**

**You make contact with a colleague to be observed at least a week before** the event, agreeing points such as: the lesson to be observed, the focus (?), meeting the observed before the start of the lesson so the observer is early, the role of the observer, the context and details of the feedback.

**So what style is acceptable to you?**

+ positive, friendly approach, smiling but not grinning, eye contact, well prepared. You are working together!

**Carrying out a lesson observation; your approach and skills in recording**

Lesson observation **can be stressful for both ‘sides’** even with the confidential and developmental approach you are using, because the process is always **judgemental.**

Observers are not present as schoolmasters**, learning from the experience.**

Observers must be: thoroughly prepared, highly focused, and be aware that the task is **very demanding**.

If one might add – **humility, and the privilege** one feels in being able to observe a colleague teach, are good attributes for successful lesson observation and feedback!

You **are there mainly for your own benefit** to learn from those observed.

Observers need to develop the skill of becoming **invisible,** not interfering with the lesson, but spending their time speaking to pupils about their work,

(only when they are not interrupting the lesson) looking for challenge/understanding.

Observers need to come to terms with the fact that they are not team teaching or working as teaching assistants. **Observers are observers**!

When in the classroom, the observer will have agreed with the observed where (**s)he will sit.**

The observer will know **what is to be taught.**

**The observed will know that the observer does speak to boys where possible, not testing them but very quietly asking pupils about their work.**

- please can you explain to me what are you trying to do?

- please can I see your book? please can you show me what you have written today?

**The observed will know that boys’ work will be looked at when possible.**

The observed will know the observer will be completing a form.

The observed will know that there will be a discussion at a prearranged time (usually within two days of the observation**) led by the observed, who will explain who did what to whom and why!!!**

**6. Observing a lesson…30 mins**

Use bullets.

Try to use language on the form that is helpful to you in identifying teaching strengths that lead to improvement/progress and perhaps any less strong areas…and why they were less effective in promoting progress

**When you look down to write**, when watching a video you can miss key aspects. Don’t worry about it, living lessons are rather different, and longer!

**It is important to contextualise your judgemental commentary with subject exemplification**.

I find it helpful to underline key strengths and areas for improvement, or to record **a +/ - in the margin** to remind myself.

As the lesson nears its close, or perhaps throughout, try to record the key strengths and any development points in the two boxes at the bottom of the form.

If you feel it is helpful to judge the quality of teaching and pupils’ achievements, do grade them on a 1 – 4 scale where 1 is excellent, 2 is good, 3 is sound and 4 is unsatisfactory.

**7. After the lesson**

**Read through** what you have recorded and note the points you want to raise in discussion with the observed.

Focus on the positive aspects of teaching, but also **identify techniques** that could improve learning further.

**8. Discussion of the lesson observed**

We discuss our findings, together.. about the process and the lesson….

Difficulties in writing?…

Identifying the strengths and areas for improvement?

What is important and what is not?

The subjective nature? (building up experience so the observer is ‘right’)

Do we agree on the main strengths and possible areas for improvement?

What are the key messages on how to record lesson observations?

What are the key teaching and learning messages from the lesson?

**9. A second lesson observation 30 mins**

Complete a lesson observation form.

**10. Discussion of the lesson observed**

A few minutes reflection

Strengths and weaknesses, have you recorded them?

Are they correct?

How does the second lesson differ from the first?

**11. Discussing with a colleague what has been observed**

Have you agreed the format.. the person observed leading the discussion

**As the teacher I explain what I did and why, pointing out strengths and possible areas to improve.**

**As the observer – you are not there as an inspector – your task is to ask questions about the techniques used and why they were selected**

**These will vary from subject to subject**

Different subjects need different emphases but there are many important common threads

**Think about the application of the learning theories**

* how was good pupil learning behaviour achieved?
* how did the teacher meet the differing learning needs of the pupils?
* how did the teacher know what progress/learning the pupils were making?

**12. Practical aspects of discussion following observation**

**- When**?  **- Where? - How?**

1. Feedback in a confidential, unrushed situation at an agreed time as soon as possible after the observation.
2. Sit at 120 degrees to each other in the feedback.
3. The teacher will describe what is taking place but will enable you to ask questions in the discourse
4. Focus on the strengths, what worked and why
5. Recap two or three key development points for YOU based on what you have seen.
6. Thank the observed for giving you the opportunity to see what took place**.**

**13. An observation discussion..**

**Hold a discussion on the observed lessons, working in pairs**

One person as the teacher, the other as the observer.

Prepare yourself for 2 minutes, re-read the feedback notes and your own lesson Ef notes.

Take about 5 minutes for the discussion.

**In ‘real life’ it may take 20 minutes**

**Repeat the process reversing roles and using the second observed lesson as the basis for the discussion if we have time.**

For early finishers.. go onto self review next…

**14. Self-review**

**What have we learnt?**

**Self-review to determine a focus for improvement**

Can you identify any points in your practice, just two or three, that you could improve, which would result in better/higher achievement for your pupils?

Dwell, reflect for a moment!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relative strengths** | **Development points** |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |