



Observation Tasks

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1. Introduction

You are about to embark on your teaching practice, where you will meet the day-to-day reality of life in the classroom. Observation of other teachers is an excellent way of helping oneself to become more aware of options and possibilities. This workbook has been designed to aid you in your observation of your mentor teacher.

During the course of your teaching practice (work integrated learning) coursework as well as your disciplinary (i.e., subject specialization) coursework you will be presented with the most significant theories and basic principles underlying teaching. Theory alone, however, will never produce competent teachers, just as experience alone is insufficient as a basis for development. Theory and practice will have to go hand in hand for you to be able to develop a critically reflective approach to teaching that can be used with any teaching method. This material is, therefore, intended to serve as a link between the more theoretically based university coursework and the hands-on experience of everyday teaching at schools during your teaching practice.

Please note that you will learn and develop most from your own reflections and from discussion with your mentor teacher, your peers and the learners in the class. I very much hope that the tasks in this workbook will help you to become more aware of how you work as a teacher, to develop skills to reflect on your practice and to become the best teacher you can possibly be.

Please note that all observation tasks should be completed in no more than FIVE typed pages.

2. Guidelines for lesson observation

The observation of classroom teachers is serious business; it should not be approached casually. Learning how to observe in an acceptable manner takes time, careful reflection, personal tact, and creativity. An observer is a guest in the teacher's classroom, who is there thanks to the goodwill of the mentor teacher. A guest's purpose for visiting is not to judge or criticize the classroom teacher or to offer suggestions, but simply to learn through observing.

Procedures

You should arrive in the classroom a few minutes ahead of time. If something unexpected comes up and you are not able to observe the class, you should notify your mentor teacher as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to keep your mentor teacher informed.

Once you have entered the classroom, you should be as unobtrusive as possible, sitting where directed by the teacher. It is important to bear in mind that you are not a regular member of the class. You should take your written notes as unobtrusively as possible and you should not initiate or pursue a conversation unnecessarily.

Any notes you take during a classroom visit should be made accessible to the teacher if he or she requests. It is imperative that you keep impressions of the class private and confidential. Any direct references to teachers, in either formal or informal situations, must be kept anonymous.

Source: Murphy, J.M.1991. *An etiquette for the non-supervisory observation of L2 classrooms*.
Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Teacher Education, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.

EMBEDDED SIGNATURE ASSESSMENT 1

Professional Identity

Task 1: Professional Identify

Critically evaluate the way the teachers in the school dress.

Does the school where you are observing have a dress code for teachers? Please get a hard copy of the dress code to submit.

Critically evaluate the way teachers in the school handle stress.

Critically evaluate the way the teachers manage their classroom.

EMBEDDED SIGNATURE ASSESSMENT 2

Context (School and Learning Environment)

Task 2: The School as Community

Observe the school as a community, discuss any questions you may have with your mentor teacher and record all your information on no more than THREE typed pages.

A school community is made up of many individuals, each with an important role in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for learners.

- Identify the key roles and responsibilities for the administration, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, and parents/guardians?
- How are these responsibilities communicated to parents and learners?
- How is the relationship between the school, parents/guardians and learners maintained and supported? What roles do parents have in the school community?

You can use the table below to record your notes.

Role	Responsibilities
Administration	
Teachers	
Non-teaching staff	
Learners	
Parents/Guardians	

An additional aspect to consider.

Code of Conduct

- Is there a school "Code of Conduct"? How do learners learn about the Code?
- What routines in the school do learners seem to be aware of and (usually) follow, without requiring explicit direction?
- How do the teachers or administration deal with mildly inappropriate behaviours?
- What are the consequences for more serious and disruptive behaviours?
- How do the teachers or administration reinforce appropriate behaviour?

Task 3: The teacher's action-zone

"Jackson and Lahaderne (1967) found that some learners are twenty-five times more likely to be called on to speak in class than others. In language classrooms, where learners may be of different levels of ability, the fact that some learners have much more difficulty answering questions than others, may lead the teacher to call on only those learners in the class who can be relied upon to answer the questions in order to maintain the momentum of the class. This reinforces the teacher's tendency to direct questions to only certain learners in the class." (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

Another tendency is for teachers to address their questions to the few learners within their *action-zone*. This action-zone is indicated by those learners with whom the teacher regularly enters into eye contact and who are nominated to take an active part in the lesson. Learners seated in the middle front row seats and to the right hand side, girls, learners whose names are easy to remember, and brighter learners are more likely to participate in the lesson.

Strange as it may seem, the two tendencies tend to occur together. Who are the learners who prefer to sit within this zone? Which learners choose to sit outside of it? The purpose of this task is to raise your awareness of these issues.

Source: Richards, J.C. and Lockhart, C. (1994): Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms. CUP

Draw a seating plan of the classroom and enter the learners' names next to the seats. Put a tick against a learner's name every time he or she is addressed.

When they are engaged in pair work or groupwork, put a circle around the names of learners who are working together.



- To what extent did the teacher succeed in involving all the learners in the lesson? Where was the teacher's action-zone?
- How were the learners called upon to respond to questions? Did any volunteer?
- Did the seating facilitate better group dynamics?
- What other areas are there in the class, aside from their desks, where learners can go to work or interact?
- What elements of the classroom environment would you identify as “welcoming” or “learner-friendly?”
- Add any questions you would like to discuss with your mentor teacher.
- How will these findings influence your future teaching?

Task 4: Conditions for learning

Observe one of your mentor teacher's lessons and consider the following questions:

- What is there about the classroom, the activities, the teacher and the learners that helps create conditions for effective learning?
- What aspects of the lesson might hinder learning?

There may be questions that you yourself would like to ask the mentor teacher about the various decisions taken before and during the lesson. Make a note of these for post-lesson discussion.

Positive factors	Negative factors
The classroom	The classroom
The activities	The activities
The teacher	The teacher
The learners	The learners

Note down what you would like to “take from” your mentor teacher to incorporate into your own teaching. This could include personal qualities, teaching skills and techniques, activities, the way the teacher creates a good classroom atmosphere, etc.

Source: Scrivener, J. 1994 .*Learning Teaching*. Heinemann

EMBEDDED SIGNATURE ASSESSMENT 3

Technology

Task 5: Blackboard Work

The blackboard is the teacher's most traditional resource. Organised blackboard work is a basic skill which helps learners learn and organise their own work.

At two points during the lesson, copy the board's contents in the tables below:

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- What did the teacher use the board for?
- Did he or she use it effectively? Motivate your answer.
- How did he or she organise her work?
- What were the learners doing while the teacher was writing on the board?
- What have you learnt from this observation?

Source: Wajnryb, R. 1992. *Classroom Observation*. CUP

EMBEDDED SIGNATURE ASSESSMENT 4

Planning & Preparation

Task 6: Classroom and Learner Profile for Planning

In order to present lessons that are tailored to the needs of all learners, teachers need to **know their learners**. Construct a classroom and learner profile of the learners in the class where you are placed for teaching practice. Ask your mentor teacher to provide you with information you cannot complete on your own.

CLASSROOM PROFILE					
Focus	Description				
Grade					
Medium of instruction					
Teacher's home language					
Home language of the majority of learners					
Other languages spoken in the classroom. (Write down and state the number of learners who speak each of the additional languages you have identified)					
Mode of transportation by number of learners	Walk	Taxi	Car	School transport	Other (specify)
Condition of the classroom (Complete the detail for each aspect.) (Note that you may take pictures to add to your portfolio as supporting evidence. You MUST NOT include pictures of learners).	Desks/tables				
	Chairs				
	Technological resources				
	Computer				
	Storage space				
	Teacher resources				
	Learner resources (stationery)				
	Walls and what learning material is on the walls				

	Chalk Board			
Does the class have classroom rules and a specific code of conduct				
Is this different from the code of conduct of the school				
Type of in-school support available to learners				
Technology available in the classroom				
Are there books available for learners to use in the classroom				
Are textbooks kept in class or can learners take textbooks home				
“Homework”	Daily	Often	Rarely	Never
(Comment on whether learners take tasks home to complete.)				
Add any other relevant information with supporting evidence.				

PROFILE OF LEARNERS IN THE CLASSROOM				
Focus	Description			
Number of learners by gender	Gender	Female	Male	
	Number			
Learners with barriers to learning	Type of Barrier	Auditory (Hearing)	Sight	Other
Family profile	Lives with		No. of learners	
	Both parents			
	Mother only			
	Father only			
	Siblings only			
Extracurricular activities in which learners are involved.	Activity			
	No. of learners			
	Activity			
	No. of learners			
<p>Overall strengths of learners in class</p> <p>(Identify what most learners are good at doing, e.g. completing tasks on time, love story time, can respond to questions, etc.)</p>				
<p>Overall weaknesses of learners in class</p> <p>(Identify what most learners are struggling with in class e.g. following instructions, discipline, completing puzzles, working independently, etc.)</p>				

Mentor Teacher Observation Report for EDCC 116

Mentor Teacher (MT) Name, Surname and Signature:	
Grade:	

Student Teacher (ST):	
Student Number:	

To the Mentor Teacher:

Towards the end of the Observation Period, please check one box and indicate whether the observation period was overall satisfactory or not satisfactory.

	Overall, this observation period has been satisfactory.
	Overall, this observation period has not been satisfactory.

Please provide formative feedback to the student teacher on the aspects mentioned below. Mark with an X along the continuum where you assess the student teacher to be.

Category and description:	Needs improvement	Making progress	Very good	Outstanding
<p>Active Observation: About the School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes initiative to learn about the school (e.g., uses Observation templates): <p>Active Observation: In the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes initiative to learn about classroom, classroom and learner profiles needed for lesson planning (e.g., uses Observation templates): <p>Assisting and Participating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assists MT with classroom activities (e.g., handing out materials, etc.): • observes and supports individual and small groups during MT's lessons and other classroom activities, as requested by the MT: • assists MT in out-of-classroom supervision, if required (e.g., playground duty, etc.): 	●	●	●	●
	●	●	●	●
	●	●	●	●
	●	●	●	●