

Unseen Observations

PINPOINT



One of the central aims of unseen observations is to encourage the teacher to engage in a process of reflection and analysis of their theories.

Matt O'Leary

References

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Definition

- ▶ As unlikely as it seems, unseen observations are exactly as described. There is no observer entering the classroom. There is no disturbance to the dynamics so that the students and the teachers are not adversely affected. All the work happens in the pre-and post lesson conversations.
- ▶ *"It is the teacher's perception of the taught lesson that provokes the basis for the supervisors work in their interaction with the teacher" (O'Leary, 2014).*



Origins

- ▶ Unseen Observations are not a new idea, nor need the use of them be seen as only 'Covid necessitated'
- ▶ Rinvoluci (1988) seems to have adopted the term 'unseen observation' to describe a situation where a supervisor listens to *the teachers' version* of the lesson after the event, seeing the class through the eyes of the teacher and responding to the teacher's observation
- ▶ The world of therapy introduced this practice as observers directly affect the session. One early educationist adoption of this approach was in a language school that was the subject of a study by Matt O'Leary and reported on in his book on classroom observations (2014)
- ▶ "*Through the process of explaining these theories to others who hold different views, what is known is made more explicit*" (Earl and Timperley, 2009)

Considerations

- Emphasis on the observee's experience of the lesson
- Emphasis on the observee's 'storying' of the lesson – both predicted through the lesson plan and as recalled after the lesson
- Emphasis on 'professional dialogue' rather than 'feedback'
- No feedback taken from class teacher or school-based mentor who was in the lesson (no '*this is what really happened*' element)

Benefits

- ▶ In Matt O'Leary's study, he found that teachers responded very favorably to his approach. They were highly professional in seeking to learn within this more trusting atmosphere.
- ▶ One teacher reported *"it just pushes you to think things through. And also to have someone to ask about things is really good because you are not simply passive"*.
- ▶ This echoes Danielson (2009) who rates teachers talking in this way over managers' feedback: *"Conversations about practice constitutes a critical vehicle for professional learning"*.



- P Teacher identifies focus lesson.
- R Teacher prepares and sends supervisor a copy of the draft lesson plan to comment on.
- O Teacher and supervisor discuss lesson.
- C Teacher produces final draft of the lesson.
- E Teacher writes up reflective account of the lesson.
- S Teacher and supervisor meet for professional dialogue to discuss lesson.
- S Teacher writes up a series of free forward actions



Questions for learning:

Asking the right questions, with the right tone, ensures the conversation is an exploration and not a test

