

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF OBSERVATION

Khakimova D.

*Khakimova Durdona – Teacher,
DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL ASPECTS
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGES,
ENGLISH LANGUAGES FACULTY 3,
UZBEKISTAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY,
TASHKENT, REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN*

Abstract: *direct observation of classrooms is the best methodology available for studying how teachers teach — the central focus of this inquiry. Moreover, teachers may report that they engage in instructional practices thought to be desirable more than they actually do. For both reasons, teacher self-reports (for example, teacher surveys and interviews) are unlikely to represent teacher behavior accurately.*

Keywords: *observation, interview, observers, data collecting tools, questionnaire.*

Observation overcomes one of the key disadvantages of interviews and questionnaires, i.e. that the responses provided may not be accurate. Student surveys may capture students' attitudes toward what teachers do but are unlikely to provide a complete and accurate picture of teachers' actual behavior. Such inaccuracies occur due to the respondents:

- o Lack of an accurate memory of what they did
- o Deliberate lies to make them appear better than they are
- o Desire to tell the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear.

Observation can be used where it is not possible to collect data using interviews or questionnaires, such as when the study participants are animals, babies, young children, persons who do not share a common language, or persons with some forms of disability.

Observation of behaviour may affect the behaviour the researcher wants to observe, e.g. children in a classroom may

behave differently if there is an observer present than when there is no observer in the classroom.

Many events are not open to observation.

- o Behaviour that is private, e.g. activities that take place within private homes.

- o Events that are unpredictable, so the researcher does not know when and where to be present, e.g. mob riots.

- o Events that are unsafe for the researcher to attend, e.g. tsunamis, bush fires.

As noted above, observations were conducted in English/language arts classes and in math classes. Teachers were assured that the observations were being conducted solely for the purpose of research, that the observers were not there to evaluate them, and that the observations would not be shared with school or district personnel.

Essentially, observers were simply asked to observe as many classes as possible. Although initially they were instructed to observe each math and language arts teacher two to three times, the limited time available for observations made this infeasible, and the large majority of teachers were observed only once. No effort was made to observe equal numbers of English and math classes.

Neither was an attempt made to select classes at random for observation. Even if this had been done, it is likely that the researchers would have confronted problems actually conducting such observations. Even when they set up advance appointments or sent memos informing teachers and principals that observations would be conducted during a certain time frame, some teachers claimed to be unaware that an observation had been scheduled and asked that it be rescheduled.

Some observers opined that they encountered resistance especially from teachers who were hostile to the First Things First reform. The observers also suspected that teachers did not want them to visit classes in which students often misbehaved or for which lesson plans were poorly prepared.

The observers reported that it became easier to conduct the classroom observations over time. Initially, it was hard for observers to concentrate, since classrooms were active places in which many

things were happening simultaneously; gradually they learned to filter out extraneous subject matter. Observers also figured out how better to deal with the volume of information to be recorded. One observer found that she was writing so much that she developed hand cramps and ended up buying a laptop computer.

Also, during later rounds of data collection, observers came to school with several classrooms in mind, so that if one class was not suitable, another could be observed. In such circumstances, the observers were likely to choose a nearby classroom, since they had only limited time to get to the next class and prepare for the observation. Thus, their task also became easier as they got to know the physical layout of the schools better.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the behavior of both students and teachers was somewhat altered by the observers' presence. There were several instances of teachers remarking that students were better behaved because a visitor was there; the observers felt, too, that students sometimes "acted out" more because they were being watched. At least one observer suspected that teachers acted in a friendlier way toward their students than was normally the case.

References

1. *O'Malley, M. & Valdez Pierce, L.* (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
 2. *Perkins, D.* (1992). *Smart schools: from training memories to using minds*. New York: The Free Press.
 3. *Plavin S.* (1998). Questions you always wanted to ask about portfolio but were afraid to ask. *ETAI Forum*, IX(3): 44-46.
-