Classroom observation of teaching and learning

Introduction

The series of observation sheets which follow are designed to help you focus on different aspects of teaching and learning IT. <u>Making the observations is not the whole task</u> - for each one you are asked to reflect on what you have learnt and to share in discussion with your subject co-tutor.

Remember to discuss what you will be doing with the teacher concerned before the lesson and seek permission. You must share your observations with the teacher as soon as possible after the lesson.

Combining observations with teaching

Your ability to make significant observations will increase immensely the more you work with pupils and take over teaching. You will start the observations early in your PTE, but should continue with them as your own teaching skills develop.

You will find it helpful to make a few copies of each observation sheet. Date and file completed observation sheets and your reflections on them.

Tailoring observations to fit your professional development

Once you have been teaching for a while, you will find that you need to focus your observations to match your development. Discuss this with your subject co-tutor. Here are three examples of focused observations from a previous group:

BT1 was having difficulty introducing topics and 'talking round' a subject. He tended to tell classes what to do, but not why they were doing it. He therefore focused observation on the start of lessons and watched teachers who were good at making the introductions interesting and at involving pupils in the discussion.

BT2 was good at introducing subjects and getting pupils working, but often found it difficult to draw lessons to an end, both in terms of summarising the content with the class and in organising the clearing up smoothly, and dismissing the classes properly. He therefore went into other teachers' lessons for the last 15 or 20 minutes to pick up as many ideas as possible.

BT3 could organise routine 'instruction following' work but had difficulty in knowing how to handle open-ended activities where pupils were expected to make many of the decisions about design and procedure themselves. She focused her observations on lessons involving open ended work - making notes particularly of interventions teachers made, when they worked with groups and individuals.

Choosing how best to use observation time can be part of tutorials with your co-tutor.

Observing classrooms is a highly skilled operation. The more you know and understand, the more you will notice and this in turn raises more questions which necessitate more observations!

Observation of phases of lessons

Observe a lesson using the schedule to list the activities which occur.

Class_____ **Topic**_____ **No. of pupils** _____ **Date**_____

Time	Teacher activity	Pupil activity
0 -10 min		
10 -20 min		
20 - 30 min		
30 - 40 min		
40 - 50 min		
50 - 60 min		
60 -70 min		
70 - 80 min		
80 - 90 min		
Follow-up task: from your notes write a lesson plan for the lesson. Ask for critical comment on it from your subject co- tutor.		

Observation of management strategies

Observe a lesson and concentrate on the teacher's management. The schedule below provides a framework for your observations; add extra categories if you wish.

Class_____ **Topic**_____ **No. of pupils**_____ **Date**_____

Management skill	Observation notes
Starting lesson i) settling class / registration ii) starting topic	
Materials/computers include position, distribution, completeness, working order and collection at end	
Changes of activity	
Awareness of whole of the class i) when talking to the whole class ii) when the class is working individually	
Involvement with pupils' work	
Response to behaviour issues	
Ending of lesson including i) room condition ii) content consolidation	
Setting homework	
Other	
Follow-up task: start a list of the ways in which teachers change from one activity to another. Add to this list through the year.	

Observation of a computer-based activity: teacher focus schedule

Focus	Observation
Setting the task How is the work set? Are there written instructions? Is a textbook used? One common task or variety of tasks? What guidance are pupils given about recording results?	
Purpose of activity Is the purpose clear? What is the point of the activities? e.g. developing skills / knowledge / understanding?	
Materials/books/worksheets How are these distributed? How are they collected up?	
Pupil management How are pupils grouped? How does the teacher use time during the activity? How is misbehaviour dealt with? What noise level is acceptable?	
Intervention Does the teacher have to stop the activity for any reason? Note reasons for intervention.	
Timing What proportion of the lesson is used for the activity? Is this enough / too much?	
Application How are pupils' results used? What consolidation/discussion follows?	

Follow-up task: BTs often think of 'working on the computer' as a single kind of activity, when it can have many purposes. Start a list of the variety of purposes of computer-based activities (e.g. developing skills, investigating, following instructions) and add to it during the year.

Observation of a computer-based activity: pupil focus schedule

Focus	Observation
Setting the task In what ways do pupils find out what they have to do? Did they read any instructions?	
Purpose of activity Is the purpose clear to pupils? (Identify and note uncertainties) Are they able to apply prior knowledge? Do pupils work carefully? What writing is done **about** their activity?	
Materials/software Do pupils know where to get materials? Do pupils understand how to use the software? Note problems they experience	
Pupil grouping Are pupil groups collaborative? Do boys/girls share equally in tasks? Are some pupils passive passengers? Do pupils stay on task? What misbehaviour do you see?	
Intervention Do pupils seek teacher help? Do pupils seek peer help?	
Timing How much of the work do pupils complete?	
Application Do pupils obtain results? Are pupils able to interpret results? Are pupils engaged in consolidation / discussion ?	

Follow-up task: What ways do the teachers use to ensure that the pupils know **why** they are doing a specific activity – and what they have learnt during it?

Observation of a demonstration

A demonstration normally occupies only a small part of a lesson but its importance may far exceed the time it takes. Watch the demonstration carefully and try to monitor both the teacher and pupils. Alternatively concentrate on the teacher on one occasion and on pupils on another.

The schedule is designed to give you some guidance but may need to be varied according to the nature of the demonstration.

Demonstration topic_____ **Duration** _____**min. Date**_____

Focus	Observations
Pupil positions Seated/standing Visibility of demonstration	
Safety How is safety ensured?	
Presentation by teacher Introduction Commentary	
Pupils' engagement/response Was interest aroused? Was interest maintained? Any expectancy/surprise?	

Pupil participation
Are pupils spectators or participants?
 	
Are pupils active through
   i) Q & A?
   ii) working at the computer?	

Place in lesson/topic How does the demonstration fit the rest of the lesson / topic?	
How is the demonstration followed up?	
What record of the demonstration did pupils make?	
Question for reflection: Was a demonstration the best teaching strategy for this aspect of IT? Summarise the reasons for your answer	

Observation of question and answer sequences

Observe and record your observations on question and answer sequences of lessons using the schedules to focus your observations. You may find it helpful to concentrate on different aspects on different occasions.

1. Open or closed questions

Question type	How many of these questions?
Closed (Pupils feel only one answer will be acceptable)	
Open (Pupils assume many answers are acceptable)	

2. Demand on the pupils
What kind of thinking is expected of the pupils?

Question type	Score each question	Total
Recall information (e.g. What is…)		
Make observations (e.g. What do you see on the screen when…)		
Apply reasoning / hypothesise (e.g. Explain…)		

3. Effect on pupils
Sometimes pupils reveal their feelings about the way their answer was received.

Effect	Score each question	Total
Pupil encouraged		
Pupil discouraged		
Effect not apparent		

4. Distribution of questions

i) by gender

It is often claimed that in mixed classes boys dominate the oral parts of a lesson. You may monitor the responses to questions by using the schedule below or you could score the first schedule under girl / boy headings.

Question answered by	Score	Total
Girl		
Boy		

ii) position in the room

It is easy for a teacher to concentrate more questions on a particular group of pupils. This may be intentional or an unconscious response to particular circumstances. Make a sketch of the seating arrangement and then monitor the teacher / pupil interactions by a simple mapping device such as the one below.

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B                              Teacher                              G
G                                                                   B
B                                                                   G
G                                                                   B
B                                                                   G
G                                                                   B
B                                                                   G
G                                                                   B
B                                                                   G
G                                                                   B
B                                                                   G
G        B        G        B        G        B        B
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Reflect on the pattern you find and consider making a second observation with the same teacher and class if there appears to be some special factor operating. With a difficult class you might consider plotting answers to questions on one classroom plan and plotting the teacher's speaking to pupils as part of their discipline and control on another.

Do these findings help to explain the questioning distribution?

Discuss the significant features of your findings with your co-tutor. **Follow-up task**: in term 2, ask your co-tutor or a class teacher to use the schedules while observing your teaching, to give you information about your own questioning.

Teaching strategies checklist

Use this chart to keep a record of the teaching strategies that you have observed and tried.

Teaching Strategy / Task	Observed (Date and topic)	Tried (Date and topic)
Organising a computer-based activity - skills-based planning evaluating investigation problem solving other		
Organising a non computer-based activity – planning evaluating investigating problem solving other		
Demonstrating using a projection screen/single monitor using an interactive whiteboard using the pupils' monitors (e.g. RM Tutor)		
Explaining - skills/procedures - concepts - capability - social aspects of IT		
Extended question and answer session		
Using a video		
Independent learning from book resources from computer-based resources from other resources		
Discussion whole class small group		
Role play		
Out of school activity – for example an IT-based visit to a local firm		
Lesson to develop IT capability in the context of another curriculum subject		

Lesson planning and the Standards

Aspect	QTS Standard	1: Very good with several outstanding features	2 Good with no significant weaknesses	3 Adequate but requires significant improvement	4 Poor quality. Does not meet standards
Learning objectives	A1i, iii, v B4ai, iv A1vii B4f B4ki,ii B4m	Clearly differentiated learning objectives set Learning outcomes are met and clearly show progression	Objectives set in terms of learning outcomes Learning outcomes are met in most lessons	Mix of learning and procedural objectives Learning outcomes usually but not consistently met	No learning objectives, only procedural ones Learning outcomes are not stated or not met - above or below level of members of the group
Key questions	B4kvi,viii	Key questions consistently match objectives and delivered by planned activities	Key questions consistently match objectives and usually delivered by planned activities	Key questions are appropriate	Key questions do not match objectives
Review of prior knowledge	A1vii, x, xi B4aiv B4kvii	Prior knowledge reviewed and used as a basis for lesson planning plus evidence of adaptation of lessons	Prior knowledge reviewed and used as a basis for lesson planning	Prior knowledge reviewed but not consistently used	Little or no review of students' previous knowledge
Evaluations	B4f B4n	Evaluations show critical reflection in terms of learning objectives with points for development	Evaluations distinguish between learning outcomes met and not met, with reasons	Evaluations assume learning has occurred	Evaluations show no evidence of focus on learning; no evidence of development or critical reflection
Differentiation/ SEN, gifted	B4av B4kxii	Differentiation clearly specified, acted on and effectiveness reviewed	Differentiation clearly specified and is not always by outcome alone	Differentiation limited to outcomes	Differentiation not apparent
Student activities	A1ix B4aii B4kiv,ix	Activities are challenging and demanding; mostly novel or adapted; wide variety of strategies used	Activities have high level demand; some novel; little copying; variety of strategies used	Activities show a mix of demand level; are taken only from the school SoW; limited range of strategies	Activities involve extensive or regular copying; limited range of strategies
Homework	B4aii B4kx	Evidence of extensive imagination and creativity in homework tasks	Homework demands matched to level(s) of pupils	Homework appropriate to level of most pupils but undemanding	Homework not set or not appropriate.