

Live observation

Live viewing is increasingly happening via a link to a classroom (see Marsh et al. 2010, Mitchell et al. 2010). This is also called 'live observation' where observation is happening remotely in real time.

This is an emerging and potentially interesting area. The beneficial effects of live video classroom observation have been shown in teacher professional development and school improvement case study research (e.g. Liang 2015). Live video classroom observation enables the formulation of development plans for the observee that are based on accurate observational data and are therefore more credible to participants.

The main function of classroom observation is to provide observers with information such as teaching skills, subject knowledge and attitudes towards teaching. They can then work with the observee in terms of professional development and/or appraisal. These two possibilities would be very different and so 'live observation' needs to be distinguished from 'live coaching'. See Rock et al (2013) for an account of virtual coaching.

One benefit that has been suggested is that the presence of an observer in a classroom has an impact on the performances of teachers and their students and therefore there is a 'hawthorne effect' which affects the credibility of the information observational (Wragg 2002). Live video classroom observation has been introduced to reduce the influence of an observer.

Despite claimed benefits it is not yet clear how 'live' video classroom observation is substantially different from a recorded video. Both can reduce any observer effect (as with any kind of camera the observer does not have to be physically present). In either case, mentors, school leaders, and teacher professional development members can in both evaluate and comment on a teacher's performance without being present in the actual classroom.

References

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