

* Conducting classroom research

Making the familiar 'strange'

TET 2018

h.e.lewis@uwstd.ac.uk



‘All researchers need to develop the capacity to see their topic with new and different lenses, in order to look beyond and transform their own current knowledge. Topics present themselves for research in different ways, and for all sorts of reasons. What distinguishes research from everyday interest or curiosity, however, is the opening up of familiar things to alternative ways of seeing.’

Clough and Nutbrown, 2007:49

* Making the familiar
‘strange’

Session aims

- To consider some key aspects of the research process:
 - ✓ refining research questions
 - ✓ ethics
 - ✓ observation
 - ✓ interpretation

New Deal for
the Education
Workforce

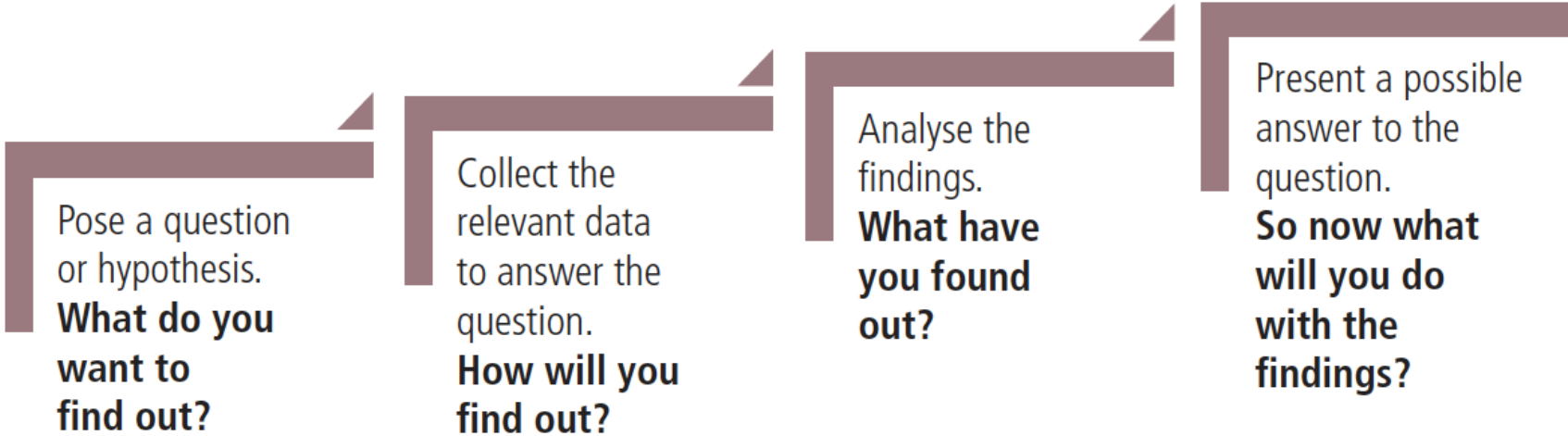
Effective use of data
and research evidence



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.gov.wales





Pose a question
or hypothesis.

**What do you
want to
find out?**

Collect the
relevant data
to answer the
question.

**How will you
find out?**

Analyse the
findings.

**What have
you found
out?**

Present a possible
answer to the
question.

**So now what
will you do
with the
findings?**

*Research Process



*1.

Research Questions



Goldilocks

Too big? Too small? Or just right – at this time, in this context by this researcher.

Russian Dolls

Breaking down RQs to get to the essence – the heart – of the question.



* Activity - Refining
research questions

*2.

Research tools

Research methods

Don't be put off by long lists of research methods, designs and approaches. The most important thing is to understand what you are trying to find out and which are the most appropriate methods

Eg.

Questionnaires

Interviews

Observations

Field notes

Documentary analysis

Focus groups

RCTs

Action research

Child-led research

Systematic reviews

Observation Defined

Observation can be defined as the systematic process of recording the behavioral patterns of people, objects, and occurrences.

Observations supply data.



* We are experienced observers

- * We observe all the time in everyday life.
- * These observations form 'folk theories'.
- * eg of Physical and social phenomena, people, patterns, associations etc.
- * Bruner (1990) suggests that these provide a system of connected assumptions and beliefs through which we make sense of the world.
- * Dewey (1991) suggests that these may lead to habitual, stereotypical thinking - 'lazy' thinking.
- * So - as researchers we need to improve our observational skills.

*Observation in research

*Without observation

- * Piaget and Bruner would not have been able to formulate their theories on cognitive development
- * Bowlby and Ainsworth would not have been able to recognise the importance of human attachment
- * Atthey would not have developed her ideas on schema
- * etc...

* Purpose and benefits of observation as a data collection method

- * It is part of a teacher's role, and you have experience already
- * You can see things in their natural context
- * You can see things that may escape conscious awareness
- * You can learn about things people may be unwilling to talk about
- * It can be inconspicuous and part of normal classroom routine
- * It can be the least intrusive of all methods
- * You can be creative - flexibility to yield insight into new realities or new ways of looking at old realities

*What can be
observed ...

- ◆ Human behaviour and physical actions
- ◆ Verbal behaviour
- ◆ Expressive behaviour
- ◆ Spatial relations and locations
- ◆ Temporal patterns
- ◆ Physical objects
- ◆ Verbal or pictorial records

***What can be observed**

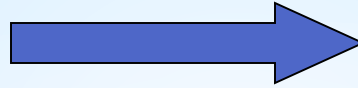
*How can we
observe?

Observational Situations – How we can observe

Situation	Example
People watching people	Observers stationed in supermarkets watch consumers select frozen Mexican dinners. The purpose is to see how much comparison shopping people do at the point of purchase.
People watching phenomena	Observer stationed at an intersection counts traffic moving in various directions.
Machines watching people	Move or videotape cameras record behavior as in people-watching-people example.
Machines watching phenomena	Traffic-counting machines monitor traffic flow.

*Types of observation

Structured



Unstructured

Looking for

Sometimes we have something specific we want to observe – leadership skills; level of participation; etc.

We use a structured, preset guide of what to observe or a checklist.

Looking at

Sometimes we want to see what is naturally occurring or exists without predetermined ideas. We use have an open-ended approach to observation and record all that we observe

Observing what does not happen may be as important as observing what does happen.

*Your role in observation

- Nonparticipant observation. Researcher is not part of the activity taking place, but simply observes. May be identified as observer/research.
- Participant observer. Researcher takes part in community, organization, or activity. Researcher attempts to learn what it is like to be part of the community, organization, or participate in the activity.
- In your study you will be a non-participant observer, but you will be overt - a 'fly-on-the-wall'. How will you deal with interested children?

Variations in Approaches to Observation

Role of the Observer			
Full-participant observation	Partial participation	Onlooker; observer is an outsider	
How the Observer Is Portrayed to Others			
Participants know that observations are being made and they know who is making them.	Some but not all of the participants know the observer.	Participants do not know that observations are being made or that there is someone observing them.	
How the Purpose of the Observation Is Portrayed to Others			
The purpose of the observation is fully explained to all involved.	The purpose of the observation is explained to some of the participants.	No explanation is given to any of the participants.	False explanations are given; participants are deceived about the purpose of the observation.
Duration of the Observations			
A single observation of limited duration (e.g., 30 minutes).		Multiple observations; long-term duration (e.g., months, even years).	
Focus of the Observations			
Narrow focus: Only a single element or characteristic is observed.		Broad focus: Holistic view of the activity or characteristic being observed and all of its elements is sought.	

 **Thinking critically**

Advantages of Observation Research

■ Advantages

- Observation research provides the researcher the opportunity to watch what people actually do rather than relying on reports of what they say they do.
- This approach can avoid much of the biasing factors caused by the interviewer and question structure associated with the survey approach.

Disadvantages

- Only behavior and physical personal characteristics can usually be examined. The researcher does not learn about motives, attitudes, intentions, or feelings.
- Observation research can be time consuming and costly if the observed behavior occurs rather infrequently.
- Interpretation of data may be a problem
- Possible invasion of privacy

*3

Behaving ethically

*Responsibilities towards participants

- * Voluntary and informed consents
- * Anonymity and confidentiality
- * Participants seen as subjects with rights not objects

- * Participatory approaches with distributed power in research process



On-going negotiated consent/assent



Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People

Catherine Shaw, Louca-Mai Brady and Ciara Davey



Code
of Ethics

Early Education
The British Association for Early Childhood Education

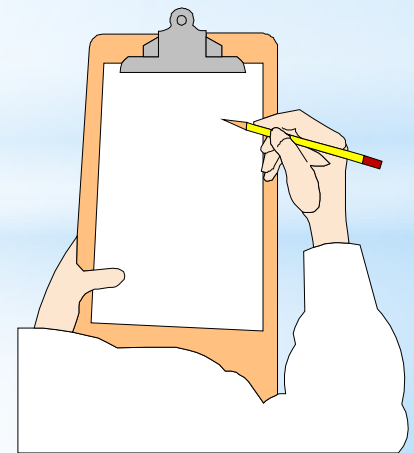


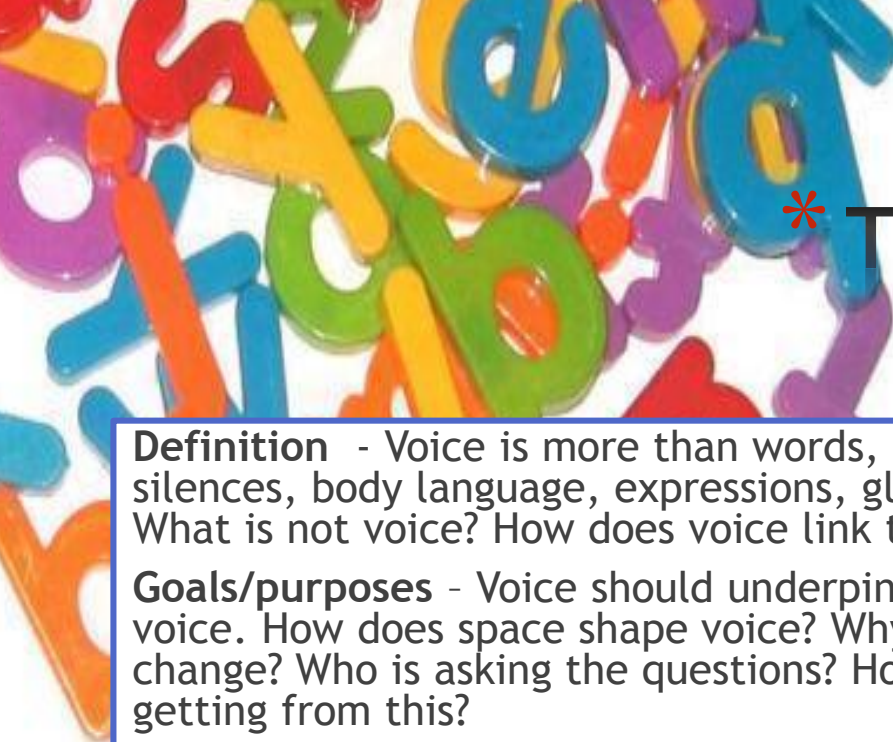
Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Yr Athrofa
Institute of Education
Addysg i Gymru Education for Wales

www.athrofa.cymru

*Limitations - the observer...





* The youngest learners - eliciting voice?

Definition - Voice is more than words, it includes behaviours, actions, pauses, silences, body language, expressions, glance and artistic expression. What is voice? What is not voice? How does voice link to rights? When is voice not appropriate?

Goals/purposes - Voice should underpin all structures to provide time and space for voice. How does space shape voice? Why am I doing this? Will voice work lead to change? Who is asking the questions? How will I evaluate this? What are the children getting from this?

Inclusivity - Everyone's is viewed as competent and rights holder (but can be competent and vulnerable at the same time). Being open to a wide range of different ways of participating. Does everyone have equal voice? Are some voices valued more than others? Is opting out a part of inclusion? How do I know when someone is excluded? What is the balance between collective and individual voices?

Approaches - Voice work requires listening with shared purpose, with everyone as attentive partners. Processes should enable voice. Listening is an active and responsive process which relies on tuning in to voice(s). What skills, tools and techniques support voice? How do I listen to conflicting/silent voices? How do I listen non-judgementally?



*4.

Interpretation - and
bias

* Observer Effect

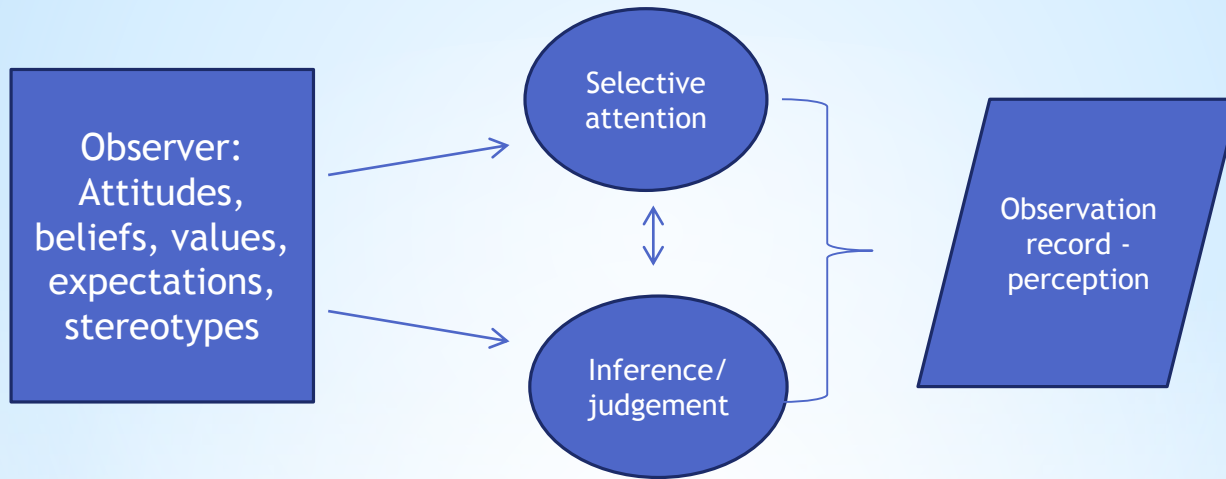
- * The presence of an observer can have a considerable effect on the behavior of those being observed.
- * Explaining to a child what you are doing may affect their behaviour (Hawthorne effect, Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939 - the mere presence of an observer increased productivity at the Hawthorne electrical works, Chicago).
- * Behaviour or 'act' ?
- * Ethical dilemmas

*Observer Bias

- * Certain attitudes may bias what you “see”
- * Observer expectations
- * Observer emotions
- * Dissonance theory - strive towards consistency in what believe and what see - selective eg Festinger, 1957
- * Congruity theory - if you perceive someone as good you attend to characteristics that confirm your initial perception eg Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955
- * Impression formation theory - some information is more important, and the order information is received in is important eg Ash, 1952

- * A is warm, intelligent, skilful, industrious, determined
- * B is cold, intelligent, skilful, industrious, determined
- * C is polite, intelligent, skilful, industrious, determined
- * D is blunt, intelligent, skilful, industrious, determined

* Do some stand out more?



* Interpretation

* Interpretation

- * Initial analysis
 - * Further reflection
 - * Interrogation
 - * Emerging themes
 - * Consider and reconsider meaning
 - * Noticing
-
- * Requires prior knowledge - theory provides a lens eg social constructivism

*How well do you observe?

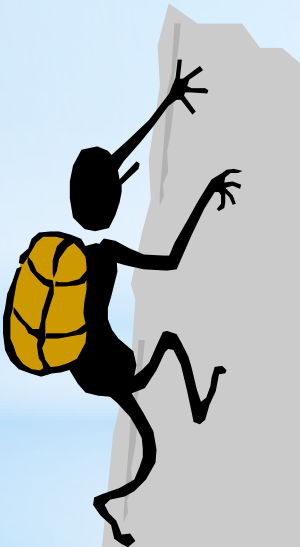
Take 15 seconds and look at the picture below. Turn away from the computer screen and write down everything you observed. Come back to the photo and see what you missed (or thought was there and isn't!).



 **What next?**

*Steps in planning for observation

- * **WHO** Determine who will be observed.
- * **WHY** Establish why they are selected
- * **WHAT** Determine aspects that will be observed (characteristics, attributes, behaviors, etc.).
- * **WHEN** Determine when observations will be made.
- * **WHERE** Determine where observations will be made
- * **HOW** Develop the observation guide
- * **HOW** Pilot test the observation guide
- * **HOW** Train the observers and have them practice.
- * **DO** Conduct the observations
- * **SO?** Analyze and interpret the collected information.
- * **SHARE** Write up and use your findings.



*Training - preparation/orientation/ piloting may be necessary

- *To learn what to look for
- *To learn how to record observations
- *To practice
- *To ensure that observations across sites are consistent: observers use the same methods, **rate an observation in same way**

*Ethical considerations

- * Implications for power/ dominance in the voices being heard
- * Ensure that the learner's voice is heard, valued and significant
- * Assent and consent
- * Anonymity, confidentiality, non-intrusion, honesty, respect, awareness.
- * Connect to ethics lecture

 To conclude

* Process of analysis of observation

- * What are the specific aims of the observation?
(Are they too narrow or too broad?)
- * What is the theoretical framework?
(Are there alternative or multiple perspectives?)
- * What is the evidence?
(What is the observer's lens? What were the methodological decisions?)
- * What is the content of the original observation?
(Are there critical events?)

*Checking in...



What do you think?

Answer **YES** or **NO** to each of the following

1. Observation involves “seeing” and “listening”
2. People may behave differently when they know they are being observed so it is better not to tell them
3. Structured observations provide more accurate and useful information
4. As long as you see it, it doesn't matter if you record what you saw
5. You, as someone who “knows” the program and the participants, are best suited to conduct the observations
6. The same principles of sampling apply to observation as to other forms of data collection

*Find out more

- *Fawcett, M. (2009) *Learning Through Child Observation* London: Jessica Kingsley
- *MacNaughton, G. et al (2010) *Doing Early Childhood Research* Maidenhead: Open University Press
- *Mukherji, P., Albon, D. (2015) *Research Methods in early Childhood* London: SAGE
- *Papatheodorou, T., Luff, P. (2012) *Child Observation for Learning and Research* Harlow: Pearson