

Four Eyes are Better than Two

An essential tool for teaching and growing as a teacher

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To what extent has education evolved/changed over the decades (centuries) ?



Why Bother? –The Importance of Observation 1

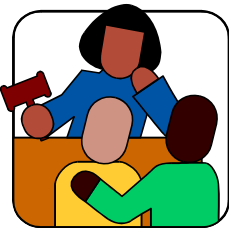
- **Variables beyond teachers' control include..**
 - **Big Brother Variables (e.g. curriculum, standardized exams, schedules)**
 - **Presage Variables (e.g. students' social-economic status, personality)**
 - **Physical Variables (e.g. desks, equipment, prescribed textbooks, class size)**
- **Variables within teachers' control include...**
 - **Classroom Variables (e.g. feedback strategies, wait time, error correction, question types)**

Why Bother?– The Importance of Observation 2

- **Inside the Black Box: We know precious little about what happens inside classrooms**
- **Seeing More and Differently: A second set of eyes- and not your own- provides additional input and another perspective**
- **We must “see” before we can “change”**
- **How students and teachers use language and interact is more important than anything else- lesson plans, activities used, exams, curricula, textbooks, etc.**

Prescribing the “right way” can be dangerous to one’s intellectual and psychological health

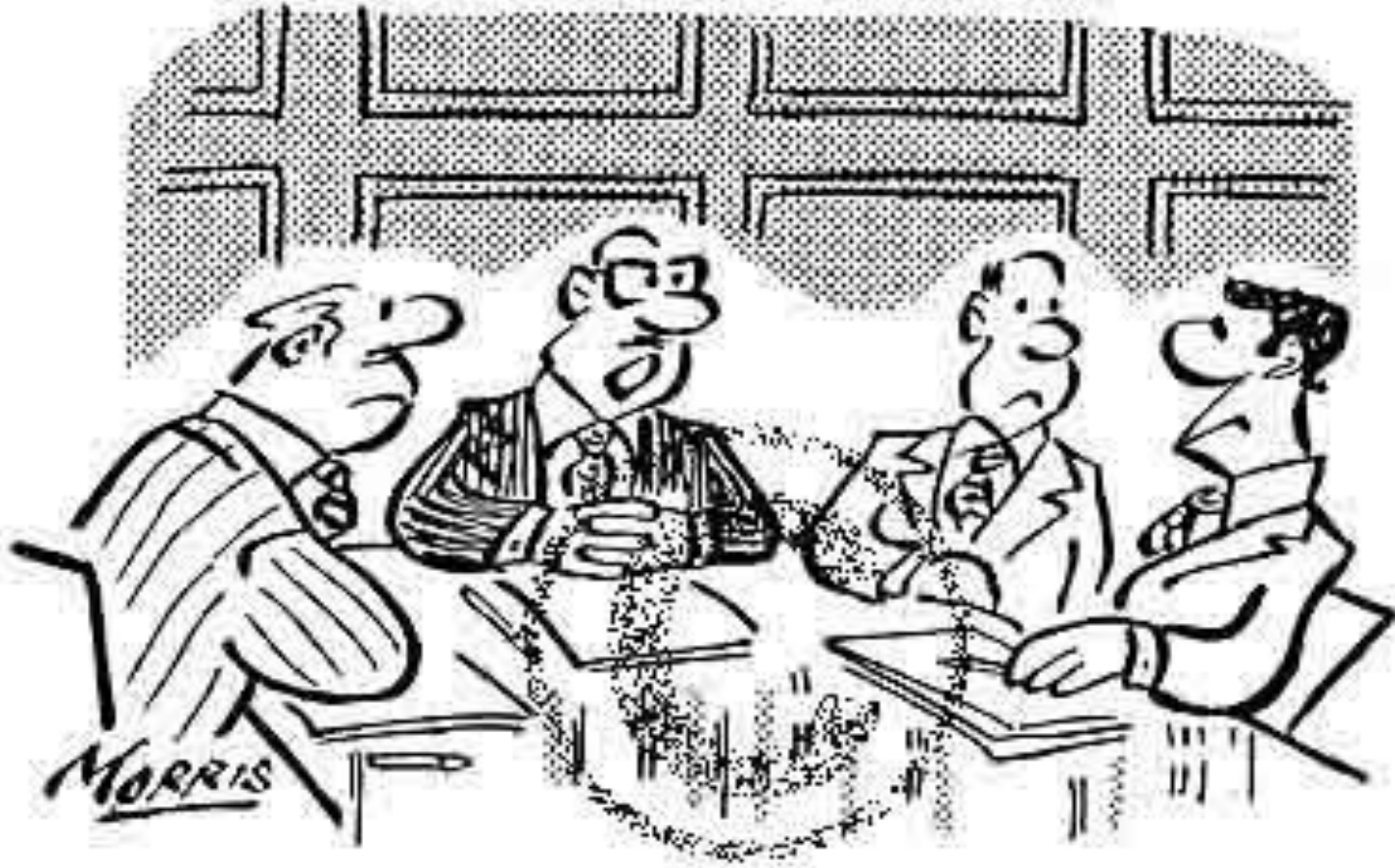




Observation Principle 1: Being Non-Judgmental

- **Observing and evaluating are incompatible and therefore can not be done simultaneously nor by the same person**
- **Judgments restrict the range of what we see**
- **Judgments are one of the primary reasons why teachers avoid being observed**
- **Self-judgment blinds one to “seeing” what’s happening rather than just feeling it**

What is the cost of imprecision?



"Can you give us a better price breakdown than 'it's going to cost us an arm and a leg'."



Principle 2: Describe, don' t Prescribe- and BE PRECISE

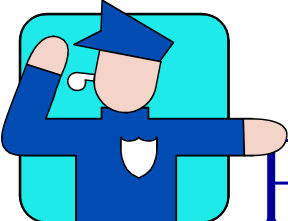
- **Classrooms are rich and diverse contexts which can, at best, only be partially described**
- **Behavioral patterns can only be discovered by focusing on one or two aspects of classroom interaction**
- **Precise description, by its very nature, is non-judgmental**

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Dare to be different!!!



! JUST HAD THIS SUDDEN URGE
TO STAND OUT IN A CROWD ...!



Principle 3: Look for the “Rules”

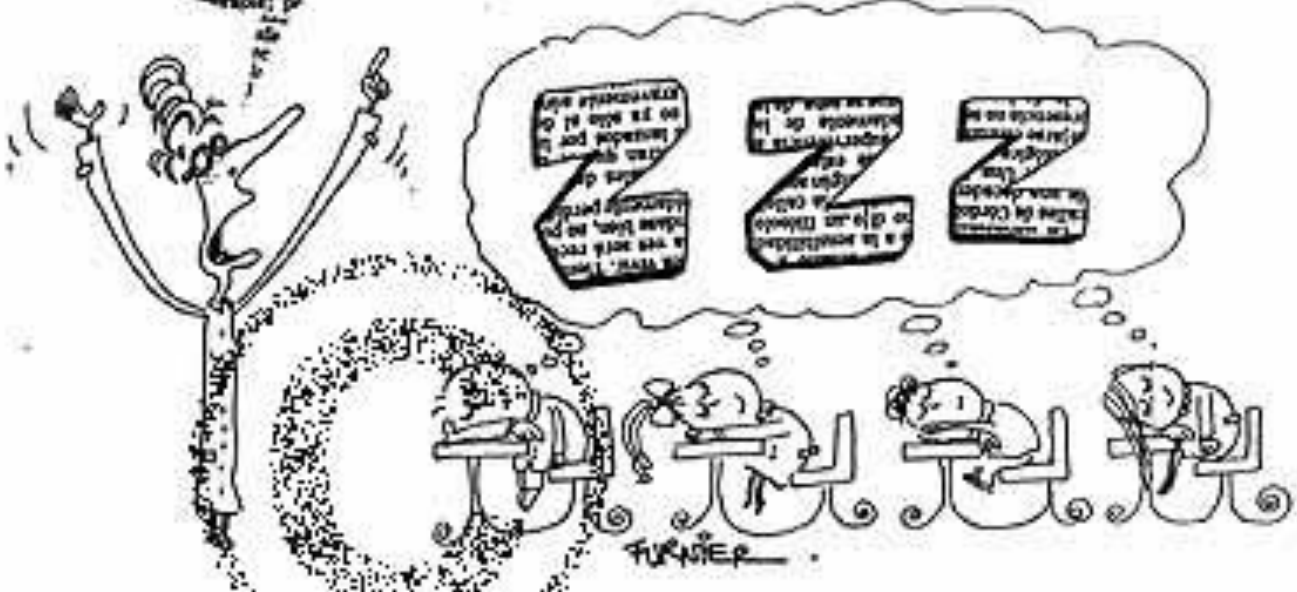
- **Most social behavior is governed by subconscious “rules”, “habits” or “conventions”**
- **Most rules are so obvious that they are generally overlooked**
- **Rules need to be discovered and broken in order for change to occur**
- **Breaking rules leads to greater control, not chaos**

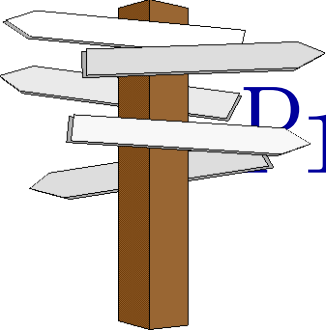
Examples of Classroom Rules (error correction)

- **Teachers answer students' vocabulary questions**
- **Teachers ask most of the questions and set tasks**
- **Teachers ask questions to which they already know the answer**
- **When a student answers a question incorrectly, the teacher will call on another student to answer**
- **Student errors are negatively characterized**
- **Teachers do the evaluating of student work or responses**

...y hasta mirar el...
 ...derrador de monedas...
 ...por el hiciere falta...
 ...los verbos objetivos de su existencia...
 ...contradicciones del progreso...
 ...que llamamos cauderos...
 ...configuramos) suelen despojar de la...
 ...de un...
 ...men de buvaria, o sea, de zagra...
 ...importa dilucidar en este caso...
 ...transfigurado, cómo riase social a la que pertenecen...
 ...a misma, sólo que...
 ...arase desdeos apaciblemente o por la procedencia de...
 ...línea de la época en bruen, digamos, en el proceso de nosotros para des...
 ...matante para que la producción) ¡O si reconocen...
 ...iones de estos singulares origen o biografías similit...
 ...os de "materia prima ser, pero, en todo caso...
 ...por el casco obitrici sería estadística recitabile...
 ...cual peligrano para elayar elusión de los sociólogos...
 ...cular. Lo suficiente...
 ...el espectáculo que praxidad viva. Y ya en esto una...
 ...parte desagradable...
 ...r hacer, que es un detalle...
 ...a la que pertenecen...
 ...procedencia de...
 ...por la posición...
 ...mas, en el proceso...
 ...¡O si reconocen...
 ...biografías similit...
 ...en todo...
 ...estadística recit...
 ...e los...
 ...que la...
 ...y en...
 ...Elo se...
 ...los...
 ...estraperdona...
 ...sino...
 ...diferentes...
 ...indigencia...
 ...en una...
 ...arables; p...

How predictable
 and monotonous are
 our classroom
 habits?





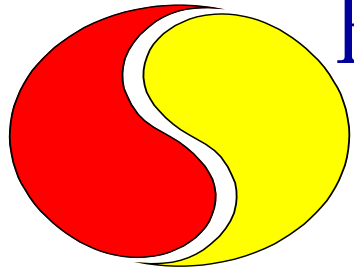
Principle 4: Vary your Ritual

- **Basic Premise:** there is no right or wrong way to teach- only ways
- **Variety is key:** Teachers should build up their repertoire of behaviors and vary them as contexts vary
- **Seeing is a prerequisite to changing**
- **Changing one's ritual helps incorporate a greater proportion of learners in the learning process**
- **Small changes can have big effects**

Are we who we think we are?



"I am so glad that I am not as judgmental as those self-righteous, pig-headed do-gooders I have to work with."



Principle 5: Learn about yourself and your own teaching via observation

- **The observer sees his/her own teaching in every observation**
- **Observers learn a great deal about their own teaching by observing others**
- **The ultimate goal of observation is to learn about yourself as you watch yourself in others' teaching practices**

Observation vs. Supervision

- **Descriptive**
- **Precise**
- **Non-judgmental**
- **Peer status- no “authority figure”**
- **Free from preconceived notions of “good” “bad” teaching**
- **Internally generated alternatives/changes**
- **Prescriptive**
- **Vague and general**
- **Judgmental**
- **Hierarchical- this is an “authority”**
- **Based on preconceived notions of “good” “bad” teaching**
- **Externally-based alternatives/changes**

Sample Foci for Observation

- Solicits/Questions:
 - Source-Target: Teacher, Student, Group, Class
 - Nature:
 - Pseudo vs. Genuine
 - Factual vs. Opinion
 - Yes/No; either/or; What/Where/When?, How? Why?
 - Elicits single word-phrasal responses, sentential responses or extended discourse responses

Sample Foci for Observation 2

- **Nature of Student Discourse**
 - **Length:** single word, isolated phrase, simple sentence, complex sentence, extended discourse
 - **Cognitive Complexity:** Factual-Personal, Factual-Descriptive, Opinion, Evaluative-Analytical, Synthesis
 - **Purpose:** Response to teacher solicit, request for information, structuring, negotiation of meaning, reaction to another's input

Sample Observation Foci

3

- **Content of Discourse**
 - **Structures, Grammar, Morphology**
 - **Lexical Properties- literal, non-literal, metaphoric**
 - **Life Personal, Past Experience**
 - **Participant Prior Knowledge**
 - **Language Function, Style, Register, Usage**
 - **Thematic or Topical as derived from materials**
 - **Pronunciation- sound system**

Sample Observation Foci

4

- **Language Usage:**
 - Presenting new information (e.g. responding to “What is the capital of Bosnia?”)
 - Characterizing input/information already presented by others (e.g. True/False: Tuzla is the Capital of BiH)
 - Explaining/Interpreting (e.g. responding to: Why did Sarajevo become the capital of BiH?)
 - Reproducing (e.g. Repeat after me: “the capital of BiH is Sarajevo”)

Goodlad's Classroom Findings

- Whole class configurations in which the teacher addresses the whole group dominate
- Each student essentially works and achieves alone within a whole class setting
- The teacher dominates, setting tone, tasks, materials, determining topics, rules, etc.
- There is a paucity of praise and correction of student performances and little guidance on how to improve

Goodlad's Classroom Findings

- Students generally engage in a narrow range of predominantly passive activities.
- Patterns of classroom behavior do not vary with grade level, subject taught (except for art, music, PE and vocational ed programs)
- Classrooms tend to be places where students display previously acquired knowledge and skills, not learn new ones
- Students generally did not have enough time to finish the lesson or the task given to them