



**PINPOINT**



*My research revealed that the prioritization of the performance management agenda over the developmental led to the nullification of observation as a tool for CPD in many institutions.*

Matt O'Leary

**Policy v Evidence**

Ofsted-type lesson observations dominate the scene currently. But Matt O'Leary's research shows they do not have the evidence basis one might claim. The managerial origins of many quality assurance systems are built around the assumption that gradings are objective and valid. And that more measuring promotes more improvement. Neither notions are substantiated by research.

**J** *There's this deceptive allure of the Ofsted four point scale. Because you use a number, people are seduced into believing these judgements have some kind of scientific basis.*

Matt O'Leary

**Belief v Reality**

The impetus for a heavy focus on lesson observation gradings comes from the misconception that visiting Ofsted inspection teams are expecting to see this data. But as Matthew Coffey of Ofsted says (see right), what they want to see is that managers know what their teachers need to do to improve, and base their CPD around this information.

**J** *We don't prescribe how people do it. We don't ask that they grade it.*

Matthew Coffey, Ofsted  
Director of Teaching & Skills

**Evaluative v Developmental**

Colleges have discovered the difference in impact of these two different types of observation. Evaluative lesson observations, based on the Ofsted experience, do not generate the degree or speed of improvement as first intended. They do generate data however. And it is this data that can dupe managers into thinking that they are *making a difference*.

That difference — improving the quality of teaching — happens through a different dynamic. Not within an atmosphere of anxiety and summative feedback in the form of a grade.

But in the context of learning, unsurprisingly. In fact, the very self same conditions teachers know work best for their students. Teachers need to know what excellence looks like, how near or far they are to it, and what they need to do to get there. Formative assessment no less.

**Problem v Solution centred**

Even in the context of evaluative lesson observations, there are missing elements that can delay improvement.

It's not in the nature of feedback. Just as with the best practice with students, receivers of the feedback can be primed to avoid an emotional response and to focus on the advantages of getting a reality check.

Instead, the problem lies with the lack of a focus on practical solutions. From a learning point of view (and how can that not be the only valid one), teachers need solutions. Every target needs to be accompanied by a set of practical methods teachers can easily understand and get down to implementing straight

**REFERENCES**

O'Leary, M. (2014)  
Classroom Observation,  
Routledge, London

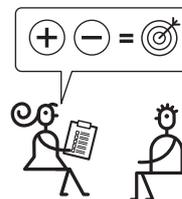
**Lesson Observation without HOW2 solutions**



OBSERVATION

+	-
1: .....	1: .....
2: .....	2: .....
3: .....	3: .....
4: .....	4: .....

DATA



FEEDBACK



ACTION

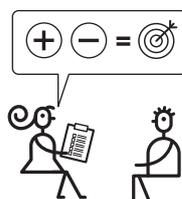
**Lesson Observation with HOW2 solutions**



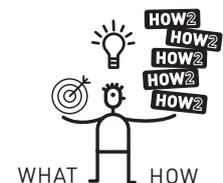
OBSERVATION

+	-
1: .....	1: .....
2: .....	2: .....
3: .....	3: .....
4: .....	4: .....

DATA



FEEDBACK



ACTION