DIGITAL OBSERVATION TOOL

dot

eLOO
interactive learning
“I am not going to wait for the inspection to tell me what is going on in our classrooms!”

(School director)

“One of the main clues for improving quality in education, is giving feedback on the way of teaching. Feedback is even more powerful if it is embedded in broader analysis of the students’ results on team level, if teachers also give feedback to each other, if checks are done to see whether previously set targets for improvement are reached, and if the feedback corresponds with the policy of the school or institution. For many teams this is still a challenging problem.”

AN APP FOR DIGITAL OBSERVATION OF LESSONS

Van Loo en Partners and e-Loo are often intensely involved in educational innovations and quality improvement in schools. This has given us a lot of insight in the practical implementation of this kind of projects. Lesson observations and feedback sessions are crucial in this process. Often a lot of energy is lost on red tape and then too much time may pass between a lesson observation and the feedback session. On top of that analysis and interpretation on a team or school level is often a cumbersome task. Using different evaluation methods doesn’t make it easier to look at staff members objectively in the long run. But that is required for development and judgment.

That’s why we developed a simple and user-friendly lesson observation app, that helps to observe lessons in an efficient and structured way. We have chosen to use indicators from the educational inspection and the Teachers Standard plus custom indicators formulated by the school. This web application makes it possible to analyse observations by team, by school, by age group, or by school level. Initially we only used the app internally for baseline measurements and as a monitoring instrument in our own development programs in schools, but soon our clients wanted to use the app themselves. With the addition of email functionality and implementation of a meticulous privacy policy a small pilot rapidly grew into a big project with excellent results.

The Digital Observation Tool (DOT) is available for primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK at the moment. The addition of an evaluation form for students and a self-evaluation form for the observed teacher enables the DOT to give you a complete image of a lesson.

DEMO

For a demo go to classroom.observationtool.co.uk

Username: demo@eloo.nl
Password: demo

You can do an observation and make an analysis in the demo. The names of the the teachers are fictional, of course.
ADVANTAGES OF A DIGITAL INSTRUMENT

The advantages of a digital tool are evident: it requires less paperwork, saves time, gives a good overview, and enables immediate and convenient storage of the information. But the main advantages of the DOT are the following:

1. Lesson observations: Working digitally enables you to save your observations and notes immediately – during the lesson. It is no longer necessary to write a report on your lesson observation.
   - Self-evaluation: After saving the lesson observation you invite the teacher observed to fill out a self-evaluation form via email. The teacher will get an email with a link to a self-evaluation form and the observer is informed when the teacher has filled the self-evaluation form.
   - Student evaluations: After saving the lesson observation you can also choose to invite the students from the lesson observed to fill out an evaluation form. This inquiry form is short and can rapidly be filled out by the students.
   - Feedback session: The most important aim of a lesson observation is the evaluation. You can invite the teacher for the feedback session (and attach the form) via email immediately after the lesson observation or after the self- and/or student-evaluations have been filled.

2. Analysis: You can quickly and objectively produce analysis about one teacher, about a subject group, about a department, about a team, or about the entire school, over short or long time periods. With the analysis you can assess, for instance:
   - whether an innovation is likely to be successful
   - whether the same improvement point occurs for multiple teachers
   - whether the classes in general comply with the demands from the educational inspection.
   In short: which relevant educational patterns can be observed?

The DOT works with indicators set by a school itself and the indicators from the supervisory framework. With the DOT the judgement of teaching process by the inspection becomes almost predictable. But also custom values and standards are very well catered for. For instance the teaching roles a school team deems important.
ASSUMPTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY

‘Moving schools’ have a common vision on teaching *
If a school team has a clear vision on education and students – and derives from that a clear image of what teachers in the school need to be able to do their work well, this can rapidly be translated into concrete indicators. This translation process involves formulating the objectively visible behaviour that you want to observe in the lesson. We will gladly assist you in formulating and validating, before deployment of the instrument. And of course there is the national benchmark with the indicators from the supervisory inspection. These supply a solid base for an analysis of the properties of the teaching process that are expected in all schools.

Development is more important than judgement.
A judgement is not what we need. It is important that a team agrees upon the direction and quality standard of a development. This creates an atmosphere in which learning is allowed. But still the result of a series of lesson observations over a period of time is a solid base for a performance review. As long as this is seen as a milestone and a starting point for development, there is nothing wrong with that. The DOT is not intended to document a lack of performance. No analytic instrument is needed for that.

Coaching
The DOT can be used in innovation or improvement projects, but also in coaching programmes. The coaching sessions are specifically designed to observe specific indicators, these (behavioural) indicators can also be further specified if necessary. The observations in this part are not incorporated as data in the preparation of performance reviews or in analysis and benchmarks. They are purely intended for personal development. These modules can also be used for peer consultation and intervision or for guiding starting teachers.


FEEDBACK IS CONCRETE

The observer records only what he/she has seen, objectively and tangibly. This means: no interpretation and never a judgment. Giving feedback is like providing a mirror: ‘this is what I have seen’. Analysis and interpretations may follow from this, but here we are talking about observations of factual behaviour. For this reason we work with a 4-point scale for every indicator:

4  = the behaviour can be seen often enough, and is visibly effective.
3  = the behaviour can be seen often enough, and there is space for improvement and tips to accomplish a better effect with it.
2  = the behaviour can be seen, but not often enough and it is not visibly effective.
1  = the behaviour cannot be seen, even though it was expected in the lesson observed.
n/a = the behavioural indicator does not apply in this lesson, because the behaviour is not relevant in this case.
OBSERVING A LESSON - HANDS ON

Open your tablet or laptop and log in when the lesson to observe begins. This takes 10 seconds. Fill in which teacher you are going to observe and start observing. During the first 20 minutes of the lesson grade all the indicators on a 4-point scale. After this initial registration go over all the indicators again. If an indicator is graded 2 or 3, take some time to record exactly what you have seen. When the lesson has ended you can add some general feedback if you want. After that you have a number of choices:

- Immediately mail the observation to the teacher observed, with an invitation for the evaluation.
- To get a complete image of a lesson it is also possible to send the teacher a self-evaluation form by email and / or to send the students in the lesson a student evaluation form. You will be notified when the teacher has filled out the self-evaluation form and then you can mail your own observation with an invitation for the evaluation.

To reach an optimal learning effect, the evaluation must be planned soon after the lesson has taken place. During the feedback session you will notice that the conversation is a lot more pleasant and effective now that you can talk about factual examples of behaviour.
**SECURITY AND PRIVACY**

e-Loo works with strict safety procedures, to prevent unauthorized people to access your personal data. For a safe connection with the server the systems makes use of a communication protocol with a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate. Such a protocol creates an encrypted connection between the server and your Internet browser. These connections guarantee that all data, that is exchanged between the server and the browser, remains confidential and cannot be stolen. SSL is a standard that is used by millions of websites for safeguarding on-line transactions involving personal data, like credit card and address details, by encrypting the communication.

The web application(s) run on servers owned by a hosting service provider in the Netherlands. Our hosting service provider also follows strict safety procedures to prevent access to your personal data by unauthorized people. With each school we make an agreement about the structure of access rights to fit the needs of the school. At e-Loo personal data is only manipulated according to the wishes of the customer or for technical processes like updates, all according to the law on protection of personal data.

**MANAGEMENT INFORMATION**

The DOT enables you to analyse the data from the lesson observations on several levels: by school, by type of education, by year or by subject group. The statistical operations that can be used are: average, dispersion, and median. With these analytic functions you can for instance visualize the effects of an improvement plan or the implementation of an educational innovation during a team meeting to show whether they have a positive effect on the quality of the lessons. In a meeting with a subject group you can discuss possible causes for problems spotted in relation to the throughput rates observed in the classes of the group. And of course you can use an analysis on team level for an annual report, an evaluation report, or a visit by the school inspection. Generating an analysis takes less than one minute of your time.

**The benchmark**

For the moment the benchmark is only valid for the Netherlands. In the UK we will start assembling a benchmark in 2017.
A one year license for a school (a team, possibly more than one education program) costs £1000,- excl. VAT. We will gladly prepare an appropriate quotation for groups of schools. The license includes: instruction and guidance during implementation, 5 days per week helpdesk (9-17h), continuous processing of feedback and requests, updates, server maintenance and server space, and information exchange in the user community, starting during the SSAT 2016.