PROTOCOL FOR DEVELOPMENTAL OBSERVATION OF ONLINE TEACHING – (DOOT)

Post-Observation Guide

For all guides and forms of the DOOT Protocol, refer to https://flora.education/doot.

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June 2021

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Mahdavi, F. (2021). Protocol for Developmental Observation of Online Teaching (DOOT). Retrieved from https://flora.education/doot

Audience: This guide is created with the person who observes the teaching – you – in mind. You may be an educational developer, a peer observer, a teaching mentor, or in other roles that aim to facilitate development of online teaching expertise of the educator you observe.

Terms and Definitions

CoI: Community of Inquiry (CoI) is a theoretical framework for online and other educational settings. It is based on social constructivism, where "a group of individuals collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding" (Athabasca University, n.d.). It entails three interconnected main elements of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence.

Within the DOOT Protocol, the CoI is used to define what can be observed as online teaching. Based on different dimensions of teaching presence (i.e. design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction) and their relevant indicators, a list of categories for teaching practices of an online educator is generated. These lists of categories are included in the DOOT Observation Guide and Forms.

Educator: For the purposes of this document, educator is anyone who teaches. The DOOT protocol is designed for post-secondary educators. Depending on their organizational culture and their rank and level of experience, they may be called professor, lecturer, educator, etc.

Educational developer: Educational developers are a group of professionals in higher education who provide a variety of services, such as training and support for educators and curriculum development, aimed at enhancing the quality of education for the learners (McDonald & Stockley, 2008; Shay, 2012). Given the right tools and expertise, a peer educator could take on the role of educational developers.

LMS: A Learning Management System (LMS) comprises of a set of tools to enable sharing of content, discussion and discourse among student, submission of student work and communication among students as well as with the teacher.

Post-Observation Overview

The post-observation meeting follows suit in strengthening your rapport with the educator. Prepare for the meeting to make sure you do not miss any points and use the meeting time effectively. At the beginning of the meeting provide an overview of what you are trying to achieve at the meeting, and a summary of your approach to observation of the focus area that you have agreed with them. This is a crucial step for the success of this meeting. You could adopt and use this script to clarify the purpose of the meeting and set expectations for the educator and yourself.

> *This meeting is meant to be an opportunity for you (i.e., the educator) to think critically about your teaching practices and consider why you do what you do, and what is the impact of your practice on student learning. In this meeting I (i.e., the observer) am a facilitator; by asking questions about what I have observed and providing examples of my observation, I will direct, guide, and focus your reflection towards areas that I have identified as possible points for clarity and/or improvement.*

Following this introduction, you have to accomplish two main agenda items in the post-observation meeting. First, through sharing of your observation, pose questions that trigger educator's reflection on their practices in that area. This is like facilitating a two-person inquiry that starts with your question(s) supported by specific examples you have noted in the Observation Form. The educator will have to reflect on their practices in order to respond to your question(s). You may follow up their response with another question to delve deeper into the matter or guide it to a different direction. The challenging and important part of an inquiry is reaching a consensus and resolution. Your facilitation of this inquiry should aim for a form of conclusion that can be used for planning further professional development activities, which is the second item on this meeting's agenda.

Ideally, the outcome of post-observation meeting is a plan for further developmental actions such as review of relevant resources, training, ongoing consultation and check-ins, requests for modifications to the course design, and/or plans for more observations.

To facilitate a post-observation meeting successfully, you need a combination of facilitation skills in general, and facilitation of reflection in particular, as well as subject matter expertise in online education and online teaching. You may already have these abilities or you may be intentionally developing them. Facilitating critical reflection, and considerations for observation follow-up plan are described next.

Critical Reflection

In reflection-focused strategies for educational development, the process of reflection is valued as learning (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012). Pallas, Neumann, and Campbell (2017) defined reflection as "instructors probing their own thoughts

about teaching – before, during or after engaging in it", and identified it as a key process in the college educator's learning (p. 21).

Teaching observation with the purpose of professional development is a form of reflection-focused strategy, where reflection needs to be *critical* to cause a change in conception and consequently change teaching practices. Reflection is critical when it moves beyond positive reflection; and **considers power** and its impact on the educational process, and **questions assumptions** and practices that seem to make teaching easier, but make it difficult in the long term (Brookfield, 1995).

During the post observation meeting, your role as the observer is to create opportunities for reflection, and to produce a productive discomfort that leads to critical reflection; you also encourage new ways of understanding and support change where needed (Peel, 2005). You can fulfill this role through asking the right questions and creating opportunities that the educator can problem solve through reflection. I'll try to explain this through use of a scenario.

Though determining the focus of observation during the pre-observation meeting narrows down the conversation at the post-observation meeting, you may have to delve deeper and center the reflection on an even more specific topic within that focus area. For example, if the observation focus area is Assessment and Feedback, you may notice that most of the feedback provided to the learners relates to their writing style and errors in their use of English language. You perceive this to be a problem when the objective of the assignment is 'to explore the link between home insurance claims in Alberta in the past 5 years and environmental/climate changes'. You see very few comments on whether a learner has achieved the objective of the assignment and areas that they have missed or demonstration of their understanding. There may be other areas within this observation of Assessment and Feedback that the educator can improve upon, but you choose to focus on providing feedback.

Start by providing specific examples of what you have observed and asking why-questions to establish the intention of the educator from providing feedback. For example you could start by saying "I noticed you had edited 2 pages of the paper that Joe Smith submitted. Why do you provide this type of editorial feedback to learners?" This is to find where the educator is and meet them at that point rather than starting at a different level, with your agenda (Handal, 1999). Teaching is informed by the intention of the educator, thus the precedence of the why- over the how- and what-questions of teaching.

As the ultimate goal of the educational process, keep student learning in mind and ask questions related to this ultimate goal. For example, the educator may say that they want to help the learner be able to communicate their ideas in writing. You can then ask how their purpose aligns with the learning objectives/outcomes of the course or this particular assignment. You may have to ask a few other questions to clarify the learning objectives/outcomes of the course and specific purpose of the

assignment, before the educator comes to the realization that this is not a communication course and the course objectives are about understanding the impact of climate change on home insurance claims. Once the educator gets to this point, you can change the course of questions towards how they could do this (i.e. providing feedback for this assignment) differently to align their feedback efforts with the objective(s) of the assignment.

You may divide the time of the meeting and get through one or more concerns depending on their impact and extent. It is better to be selective and allow enough time for conversation, than getting through every area for improvement that you have identified in a checklist manner.

To recap, you identify the problem(s)/concern(s) through observation and the notes you take. Then you may probe and ask questions to:

- Clarify the intention of the educator of a teaching practice
- Seek more details and information to explain and gain insight into the situation
- Evaluate the impact of teaching practice in question on student learning
- Explore alternative practices

When exploring alternative practices, the educator may request your advice and suggestions and it may be appropriate for you to provide it. However, this should not replace the problem solving effort of the educator through reflection. It is very likely that you and the educator agree that more training and intentional work is required to address an area of concern. You need to address this during the observation follow up planning.

Observation Follow up Plan

The observation process on its own is not enough to produce a change in teaching practices. "Teaching expertise is developed through a learning process that continues over time" (Kenny et al., 2017, p. 1). Consider this observation to be a diagnostic exercise through which the educator identifies an area of practice that they want to improve.

Use the Observation Follow up Plan form to support the educator in setting specific goals for practices they want to change. For example an educator may set their goal to be "including a short video in the course announcements at the beginning of the semester, to introduce themselves to the learners". This practice helps the learners to relate to the educator as the human behind the technology and can be the first step in establishing a learning community.

Then, help the educator lay out the type of support or training they may need in order to implement the change and achieve their goal. In the case of above example, the educator may need training in how to use the LMS tools to create such a video; or consultation on what should be included in an introductory video and what

should not be. If they do not need any further support, you could offer to check in with them at the beginning of next term to celebrate their new practice of "posting a video introduction".

Depending on the educator's level of familiarity with Community of Inquiry (CoI) in online education and expertise in facilitating online classes you may choose a combination of the following strategies or other approaches as the situation warrants.

- Introduce reference material: for example references on the CoI Framework of online education, or more specific topics within CoI, such as establishing social presence. It is important that resources provided to educators are in an accessible language and within an acceptable length for busy individuals. Avoid long scholarly papers written for specialized professional journals.

- Recommend participation in workshops or other forms of training that helps the educator develop specific skills they need, such as facilitation of discussions or use of technology. As an educational developer, you need to be aware of internal or external training offerings to be able to recommend the right offer(s) to the educators.

- Recommend a review and redesign of an area of the course that hinders teaching practices. Depending on the curriculum design process of the institution, educator may have to contact academic leaders within the department, school or program and seek approval for such changes.

- Set check-in points to review their progress and provide any additional support they may need. The educator may want to request more observations in other focus areas or the same area to discuss their progress and continue their growth.

These are examples; you may come up with other strategies to address and improve areas of concern. Make sure to set a timeline for each strategy or goal, and aim for incremental and manageable amounts of change.

Summary
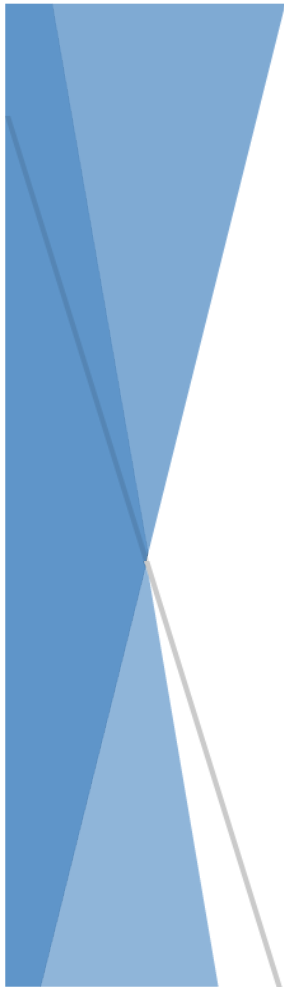
Your roles and responsibilities at this step of the process:

- Facilitate the post-observation meeting with the following distinct goals
  - Review the purpose of the meeting, its format and expected outcome
  - Share a copy of the Observation Form that you have completed with the educator
  - Referring to your notes on the Observation Form, ask questions and facilitate educator's critical reflection
  - Complete the Follow up Plan with the educator and give a copy to them

- At the timelines set in the Follow up Plan, check in with the educator on any of the plans that requires your involvement.

References

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