

Researching my own classroom

Read what a teacher says about this activity:

'I started researching my own classroom after talking to my colleague Ntabo. He used it to find out why some learners didn't speak in his class. It's really simple and I can't believe how much I'm learning! My learners are really happy too because I'm asking them to tell me what they think about how I teach. This seems to motivate them. Plus, listening to them gives me fresh ideas and that motivates me, too!'

Stage 1: Think of a focus teaching area

Think of a specific area of teaching you would like to focus on. Fatou's example was: **groupings – how learners work together**. Then make a question. Fatou's question was: **Do my learners work better alone, in pairs, in groups or as a whole class?**

Stage 2: Decide how you will find answers to your question

Fatou's example:

1. Talk to colleagues who teach the same class (their Maths and Geography teachers).
2. Observe how my learners work in different groupings and make some notes.
3. Discuss with the class.
4. Give learners an anonymous, short reflective writing task. Tell them they can answer in L1.

Do you prefer working alone, in pairs or in groups? Why?

Stage 3: Summarise the answers

Read the answers. Summarise the main points. Fatou wrote the following:

1. My colleagues said they think the learners like working in pairs and groups best.
2. I noticed that my class worked well alone and in pairs.
3. In the class discussion, my learners told me they don't like working alone; they prefer pair or group work.

4. Their answers to the reflective writing surprised me. Most of them said they prefer to work in pairs, because when they work in groups some do nothing and some do everything. A few prefer to work alone. Many said they like group work if they can work with their friends.

Stage 4: Reflect

Reflect on what you've learnt and make some notes. Think about any changes you should make in the classroom. Fatou reflected that:

My learners were really happy that I asked them what they think! It also helped me to see their perspective.

Pair work is probably best most of the time because they prefer that way of working. However, I need to find out more about how to manage group work too so that all of the group members contribute.

Researching your own classroom will not only help you to develop, it will also help you to build a stronger relationship with your learners. Asking what they think can also give you new ideas and motivate you to try them. The more you do it, the more you can work on different areas of your teaching.

Author: British Council