

Observing and Interpreting a Meeting

Observation:

How is the room set up? Who is sitting where? (Draw a rough diagram of the set up, noting where the chair/moderator, members, participants, visitors, etc. are sitting and the location of any kinds of presentation materials (white board, projector, newsprint).)

What is going on before the meeting? (Who is talking to whom? What is the mood? What kinds of interactions occur? Is there a written agenda? Did members have materials beforehand or did they receive them as they arrived? Are there refreshments? What are they? Who takes them?)

How does the meeting begin? (Who calls the meeting to order? How does it get started? What are the initial comments or items of business? Note both the official start to the meeting and any other comments and how this shapes the course of the meeting and the mood of the room.)

What happens during the meeting? (Note two or three significant events or decisions that were made. Describe the process by which those decisions occurred.)

Analysis:

What are your impressions of the meeting (Was it orderly? Was it worthwhile? Was there energy in the room? Were the people engaged in the meeting?)

What process was used to make decisions? Was there more than one?

What are the outcomes?

How did people treat one another?

Was there conflict? How was it handled?

What was the role of moderator/chair? (How did she/he function in the meeting?)

Synopsis:

Write a one page synopsis of the key dynamics of this meeting – both the overt decisions/processes and the underlying organizational issues that you observe. How well did the person leading do? What suggestions would you make? If you were the overall leader of this organization, what steps would you take after this meeting?