Observation and Peer Review

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26 May 2016
Aims

To introduce you to the practice of peer observation of teaching
To equip you with some tips and techniques related to observing and being observed
To discuss what effective feedback is
Learning outcomes

By the end of this session you should be able to:

• Describe the purposes and benefits of peer observations

• Describe the process of peer observation

• Explain what constructive feedback is
Overview

- Peer observation of teaching – what, why
- Anxieties
- Benefits
- Process
- Tips and strategies for observer and observed
- Feedback
What is peer observation of teaching?

Observing a colleague while they are teaching and providing them with feedback.
Why peer observe?

- Evaluation
- Development
- Peer review

“Observation is the most powerful tool for becoming better at teaching.” Sara Bubb, Institute of Education, London
Anxieties

What are the risks in being peer observed?
What are you anxious about?
Common anxieties

• The class won’t engage
• Timings
• Students might ask questions I can’t answer
• Murphy’s Law
• Consequences of observation
• Nerves
What are the benefits?

The observer
The observed
Benefits of peer observation

Observed

• Get feedback on aspects of your teaching
• Self-reflection
• Improves effectiveness of teaching
• Encourages collegiality and peer support
• Provides a plan for professional development
Benefits of peer observation

Observer

• Support peers/collégiality
• Learn something new
• Different teaching style
• Increased confidence
• Encourages debate and dissemination of good practice
Process

Pre-observation
Observation
Post-observation
Process - Pre-observation:

- Prepare lesson plan incl learning outcomes
- Reflect on what you would like observer to focus on
- Complete pre-session plan
- Practical arrangements: where, when, how long, report sheet
- Agree when debrief/feedback will take place
Process - Observation

Think about where observer should sit
Have copies of any handouts
Welcome and introduce observer to students
Process – Post-observation

• Debrief – immediately or soon afterwards
• Reflection – “hot” and “cold”
Two-way process

Observed is provided with feedback on session
Observer can learn from process
What should I observe?

No set criteria

Examples: innovative teaching method, classroom management, voice projection, student engagement, resolving problem, content, activities, body language, etc
Tips - observed

Choose your observer carefully

- Good rapport/trust
- Same subject area or different?
- More experienced?
Tips – observed (cont)

Set enough time aside for

- Pre-observation: preparation, briefing the observer
- Observation
- Post-observation: debriefing, reflection
Tips - observed (cont)

- Clarify expectations
- Agree on peer observation form
- Inform students that observer present
- Make it a learning experience
Tips - observer

• Try and stay objective, work within agreed format
• Try not to compare with your own teaching style
• Do not intervene
• Respect confidentiality
• Make it a learning experience
Observer

Sit at back

Make notes

- Directly on form
- Use time frame – every 10 mins check what students doing, interaction

Focus on requested points but also observe other aspects

No universal criteria
Feedback

• Most crucial part of observation

Exercise: 3 volunteers
Volunteer 1

Remain silent while volunteer is doing task
Volunteer 2

Non-specific feedback

“you throw like my brother”

“nice try”

“good shot” (even if it isn’t)

“The first throw was closer”

After 6th shot “ the second shot was really good”
Volunteer 3

Specific feedback
“throw a little further”
“more to the right”
“not as far as that”
What is good feedback

Work in groups to make a list
Feedback

• First encourage observed to articulate their experience of session
• Inform observed of strengths
• Discuss areas of improvement, encourage reflection on possible development areas
Constructive feedback

• Give positive before negative
• Describe rather than judge
• Be encouraging
• Praise strengths
• Be specific, give details
• Concentrate on what can be changed
• Offer alternatives
• Take responsibility for your feedback (I think that...)
References


• Pocketbook: Lesson Observation Pocketbook, Roy Watson-Davis 2009, Management Pocketbooks Ltd