

Peer Observation as a Professional Development Tool for Higher Education in Bhutan: A Case Study at RTC

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ABSTRACT: Peer observation and peer feedback are tools used by educators in their professional development. Using an instrumental case study, this study examined the effectiveness of peer observation and feedback in enhancing student-centred teaching-learning practices in Bhutan. It is important for educators to know what works to maintain students' interest in the class and what works best for a specific group of pupils. This requires constantly challenging one's own assumptions about teaching and learning, educating oneself on more tried and tested pedagogical theories, and critical reflection on classroom practices. Peer observation and constant peer feedback are a few tools to achieve these. In this study, six tutors at Royal Thimphu College who were participants in a peer observation programme shared their experiences of participating in the exercise through a focus group discussion. This study found that unlike the potentially evaluative nature of feedback from programme leaders and management, peer observation is more effective and favoured by the teachers because of its non-evaluative nature. The observed and the observers seemed to equally benefit from learning and adapting new teaching strategies acquired as a result of the peer observation. Receiving feedback and attending the classes of peers were perceived to be beneficial by all the participants. The study, therefore, suggests and encourages teachers to consider using peer observation and peer feedback as tools for professional development.

Keywords: higher education, teaching practices, peer observation, feedback

Introduction

Peer observation is considered one method to enhance the teaching-learning environment and professional development although it has not been used as much as some others (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). This paper aims to shed some light on peer observation as a tool for professional development for teachers and encourage the use of peer observation among teachers.

Peer observation is not just an evaluation tool for the one being observed but, as Donnelly (2007) notes, it also provides an opportunity to learn for both the observer and the

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observed. Similar views were shared by Hendry and Oliver (2012), that there is increasing evidence of benefits acquired by the teachers from observing a colleague teach and from receiving feedback. Peer observation as a professional development tool has not received much attention as a tool for helping teachers develop professionally in higher education institutions in Bhutan. This paper explores the significance and effectiveness of peer observation for teachers in their professional development and the strategies that best help teachers improve their teaching methods. To do so, this paper has analysed a post-peer observation focus group discussion conducted among a small group of faculty members at Royal Thimphu College (RTC).

At RTC, the Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) is a centre that encourages and works toward building innovative and effective teaching and learning culture at RTC. One of the programmes CITL conducts to achieve its goal of encouraging innovative and effective teaching and learning is peer observation. This paper is a by-product of one such peer observation conducted by the CITL. The study explored the experiences and views of six faculty members at RTC to understand if peer observation and feedback play a role in facilitating professional development. Participants in the peer observation programme were gathered together to reflect on their experiences and confirm their strengths and improve on their weaknesses with regard to their classroom practices. The critical reflections from their peers provided key insights into their classroom teaching and learning strategies. There is no doubt that teachers do not usually look forward to classroom observations with excitement and as Cosh (2002) suggests, there is no real evidence that people develop and improve through the judgments or comments of others. However, it was found through the discussion analysed in this study that peer observations have the potential to be an enjoyable process if the purpose of the observation is to reflect upon one's own teaching and for active self-development rather than to make judgments about others.

Literature Review

Peer observation is said to have a direct relationship with the professional development of educators (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). However, it is not a practice commonly used by most educational institutions because peer observation as a tool for professional development is not always popular among teachers. For a peer observation programme to be a success, it requires the observer and the observed to be reflective about their own teaching strategies and practices when they receive feedback from their peers. Feedback can play a major role in helping the tutors learn from their teaching experiences if the tutors are willing and aspire to learn and grow (Day, 1995).

It takes practice to be reflective and open to feedback (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). As educators, being reflective is equally essential if not more than being a subject specialist, and when peer observation is done right, it can help us reflect effectively. Reflective teachers don't just focus on being a subject specialist but reflect on other factors such as philosophies of teaching and learning (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). It is an individual's ability to reflect on one's own practices that distinguishes a teacher who can just

teach from a teacher who can also inspire and motivate the students. There are many ways in which a teacher can work toward professional development, and peer observation is one of the tools for teachers to help improve their teaching practice (Bell, 2005). When the teachers participate in peer observation, it not only helps them reflect on their own teaching practices but it also provides insights into the teaching practices of other teachers which can be helpful if one is open to learning. Peer observation will not only help the teachers foster their development and professional growth, but also help them adapt to the changing demands of the education system (Cosh, 1998).

Having said that, peer observation can easily seem like a burden to the teachers if not done right, or if the practice is flawed. It is important to find the best practices and implement as many good practices as possible to make the peer observation effective. There is no one right way to do it, and teachers will have to try different methods, constantly evolving and changing the process according to the current requirements. According to Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005, p.1), “the ‘best practice’ of peer observation is, to a large degree, dependent on the quality of the processes in place, and on the practices of those conducting observations and being observed”. When quality processes and a non-judgmental environment where participants feel comfortable having colleagues in their classrooms are in place, the observer and the observed are able to maintain confidentiality, which is a major factor for good peer observation and feedback.

When putting the process of peer observation in place it is important to be aware of the risk of the peer observation seeming to be intrusive and challenging academic freedom (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). One of the reasons why peer observation is underrated or underused as a tool for professional development is because in most cases the teachers are only observed for the purpose of advice or assessment, during inspections, or when they are new to the profession or the institution (Cosh, 1998). When peer observation is used by management with the intention to be evaluative it doesn't get the credit that it should and that leads to it not being used as intensively as it should be. The notion that peer observation is a practice of being observed by or observing those more experienced in order to learn can discourage many teachers from using it as a tool for their professional development. It is evident that most institutions use peer observation simply as a requirement for evaluation which can end up being just one of the ineffective and mechanical ‘to-dos’. According to Gosling (2014, p.18), “although the staff can be required to undertake a task (such as observing others or being observed) they cannot be required to benefit from the task, and arguably, as soon as a development task becomes a requirement its potential for development is reduced.” This is why peer observation can be more effective when it is done on a voluntary basis rather than making it a requirement. When peer observation becomes just a requirement instead of a tool to improve teaching and learning, the motive for the practice is driven more by compliance rather than the willingness to grow and become a better teacher. Peer observation is an effective tool for the professional development of teachers only if it is non-judgmental, non-evaluative, and not done under compulsion (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). So, as long as peer observation is safe from any direct cost or

consequences, it has the potential to be an effective tool for professional development for the teachers.

The other reason peer observation is perceived negatively comes from the notion that the observers' jobs are just to observe and give feedback. As noted by Gosling (2014), the outdated feedback model puts the reviewer in a position to make a judgment about the rights and wrongs of the teaching practice of others and expects the reviewer to give feedback to the teacher about ways of improving their teaching based on one or two classes they observe. Though it is expected that the observer remain sensitive and empathetic with their feedback, the underlying reality of the mismatch of the power dynamics between the observer and the observed holds. A major loophole in the traditional observation system is the power dynamics between the observer and the observed. It is usually assumed that the observer is in a position to make a judgment and offer constructive feedback on the basis of a class or two that they observe. Therefore, if the practice of peer observation is to be sustained, there is a need to move to a model of peer observation and assessment that is more flexible and more inclusive of the complete range of activities involved: designing, delivering, and assessing teaching and learning (Gosling, 2014).

The misconception that the observers should have a critical view gives peer observation a bad image. If we change the lens and view observers as equal partners in learning with the observed, it would be more beneficial and effective for both the parties. Peer observation is most effective if the motive of the observer is to reflect upon their own teaching and for active self-development, rather than to make judgments upon the observed (Cosh, 1998). Peer observation and peer feedback as tools for teacher development ultimately have an effect on the students' experience of learning (Bell & Cooper, 2013). So, irrespective of the flaws of peer observation, it still has a great potential to be used as a professional development tool for student-centred teaching and learning. Teachers should try the tool at least once before discarding it as ineffective. If it is done right, they might come to see the effectiveness of peer observation for their professional development.

Methodology

This research is an instrumental case study based on a focus group discussion among the six participants in a peer observation programme conducted at RTC during the fall semester of 2021. This is a purely qualitative research based on the focus group discussion among the participants in peer observation and the author of the paper was one among the six volunteer participants in the peer observation programme. The purpose of this peer observation was not for evaluation but for self-growth and learning and therefore, the participation was voluntary. The participants in the focus group discussion were part of the peer observation programme but they were not part of the research team. The author of the paper was both a part of the peer observation team and the researcher who used the focus group discussion as a source of data for the paper.

The focus group discussion was used in this research as its data and the discussion was conducted, recorded, and transcribed by the Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning

(CITL). The CITL lead Ms. Kencho Pelzom was the interviewer and the interviewees were the six participants of the peer observation programme.

This study seeks to investigate and improve on the practice of peer observation through the application of the personal experiences of the participating tutors.

Method of Data Collection

The data for the research was collected from six tutors of five different programmes at RTC who were teaching a common module, Orientation to College Learning (OCL), to first-semester students across different programmes in the fall semester of 2021. In this peer observation programme, each of the participating tutors observed the classes for a few of their peers and similarly, their classes were observed by a few of the other participants. In this cycle of peer observation each participant carried out two observations during the semester. The first observation was done for the shared OCL module. For the second observation, participants could suggest any of their other classes to be observed, and also request a specific area of focus. The observation arrangements were made by the CITL team. After each round of observation was complete the group sat together to reflect on values and lessons learned from their observations and to share feedback. These were done both in the form of dialogues and written responses in order for insights to be clarified and for good practices to be shared.

The participants in the group were of different age groups, from different departments, and with different years of experience, ranging from 1 year to 10 years. There was only one male faculty in the group. The data from the peer observation programme were collected using discussions, written documents, and class observations. However, in this paper, the focus group discussion with the participants has been used for the analysis. This is because the focus group discussion covered all the information required for this paper. The focus group discussion used for this research was held on 18th November 2021, led by CITL lead Ms. Kencho Pelzom.

Method of Analysis

The main purpose of this research was to understand and analyse the experiences of the tutors participating in peer observation. Though there were data in the form of written documents from the class observation, the researcher decided to use the focus group discussion as the only source of data because the information from the written documents was almost similar to what was discussed during the focus group discussion.

The discussion that took place during the focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed by the CITL team. The themes that have emerged in this paper have been inspired by the following focus group discussion questions that were discussed in length:

- i. What did you learn from being an observer in someone's classroom?
- ii. What did you learn from the feedback that you received from peer observers?
- iii. Would you volunteer for another peer observation? You are most welcome to say no (for any reason you might have). So, why or why not?

Though the written documents have not been used in this paper, the peer observation used five templates for observation and feedback. The following five templates were provided by the CITL to the participants:

- i. RTC peer observation partnership planning form: pre-planning self-reflection template
- ii. RTC peer observation partnership form: pre-observation planning form
- iii. RTC peer observation partnership form: templates for observation
- iv. RTC post-observation feedback form
- v. RTC peer observation partnership: post-observation self-reflection form

These templates have not been provided in this paper but they can be found on the CITL website (<https://www.rtc.bt/index.php/academics/citl>) and can be used with consent from CITL. The participants in the peer observation were oriented on how to use each of the templates which gave the observer and the observed clarity on the process of observation. Though the templates have a predetermined format, the tutors had the flexibility to make changes at their convenience if required. The templates used during the process of peer observation were filled in different stages of the observation. The first template was filled by the observed before the observers came to observe the class. It requires the observed to identify the area(s) of their teaching practices they would like to receive feedback on. This made the peer observation more interesting and friendly because the one who is to be observed gets to tell the observers what area of their classroom teaching they would like to be observed for and improve on.

Themes of the Findings

As mentioned above, the paper is specifically concerned with the focus group discussion. The following three key themes emerged from the discussion:

- i. Effectiveness of peer observation
- ii. Effectiveness of Feedback
- iii. Willingness to take part in future peer observations

Each of the themes will be further analysed in the following sections.

Analysis

Effectiveness of Peer Observation

The participants in the peer observation said that they got a new perspective on teaching and learned new strategies for teaching by observing their peers. At least three out of six participating faculty members felt that being an observer was helpful and effective because watching other faculty members in action was so much more effective and useful than attending workshops and learning passively. For instance, Participant 1 said:

When I was sitting in someone else's class, I felt like I was getting a different perspective and I could see things from different angles. It is very easy for me to sit on the other side of the table and say this is not working and students are being disruptive but I don't notice that disruption when I am teaching. So, getting this

different view of the classroom made me more mindful when I went to my class the next time.

Participant 4 said:

I feel like it is kind of useful to see it in action rather than just going to workshops. Workshops are great, they give you a lot of information but it is useful only if we immerse in someone else's class and see how it happens.

One common comment that almost all the participants made during the discussion were that they tried to adopt the good practices they learned from observing other classes. They said that they learned different teaching styles and different classroom management strategies by observing other classes. Participant 1 said that it is good to start with peer observation before being observed by a supervisor. In her words:

When I was a new faculty, it would have been really helpful if observation for my class was done by one of my peers first and then by the PL. It would have been helpful to get my peers' feedback first and then move on to the evaluative feedback.

The other comment that was common among the participants was that observing other classes helped them notice and realize the mistakes they were making in their own classroom management practices. For instance, Participant 2 said that she was not paying much attention to the engagement of the students while teaching but after her observer let her know about it, she was more mindful in checking on the students while teaching.

Four participants felt that peer observation was more effective than the observation done by the PLs (Programme Leaders) or the mentors. For instance, Participant 3 noted that it was a good opportunity to be an observer for a change instead of always being observed. In their words:

As a young faculty, we do not get the opportunity to observe the classes because we are usually observed. We don't get to discuss the observations later. When you are only being observed, you do not get to see the best practices which are possible when you get the opportunity to observe other classes.

This, however, was not just the view of the younger faculty who are usually observed but also of the senior faculty who usually go and observe other classes. Participant 4, who usually observes the classes for the purpose of evaluation, said that going for observation as a peer instead of going as a superior for the purpose of the evaluation was more effective, refreshing, and a completely different experience. In her words:

I have been doing classroom observation for a long time. Doing classroom observation as PL is really different. It is quite antagonistic. It is like you are watching and checking. So, I think this was really refreshing because you could just go into the class with no constraints. There weren't expectations of the list of things we have to tick off. This particular peer observation was not based on a

specific formula which can be quite restricting in some ways. It was a different experience.

Through the discussion, it was observed that it is not always helpful to have limitations or constraints on what has to be observed. When the observation is more organic in nature the process becomes more interesting for both the observer and the observed. According to the participants, it is more effective and efficient to go for observation with the intention to observe and learn rather than to give instructions. All the participants in the peer observation programme agreed that it was helpful and effective to observe other classes and bring in some of the best practices to their own classrooms.

However, it is important for the tutors to take the lessons learned and see how well it fits in their classrooms and their own personality. As noted by Donnelly (2007), the best practice for one teacher or class might not always work for others. With that said, the experience of observing another teacher in action and discussing their ideas about teaching was found to be a useful learning opportunity. A huge share of credit for the success of this particular peer observation programme goes to the participants for taking the time to sit together to discuss issues and identify the useful practices in the classes they observed.

Use of Feedback Received from Peer Observation

Feedback is important in any profession but more so for the teachers because it not only helps in learning from each other's teaching experiences but it also enhances the students' learning experience. Learning to receive and give feedback requires some practice to get used to the process. A few of the participants in the study said that at first it was difficult to receive and give feedback but with practice, it got easier. At RTC faculty do receive regular feedback from the students, the mentor or PL, and the management (if required), and all these feedbacks are quite evaluative. The aim of the peer observation was not to provide evaluative feedback but to provide feedback that is more collegial in nature. It was also noted from the discussion that frequent feedback during the semester was more helpful than being overloaded with feedback at the end of the semester all at once.

Timely and regular feedback can be helpful for the teachers to be better informed with regard to what strategies to adopt and adjustments to make in their teaching approach. For instance, Participant 2 said:

I learned that getting feedback is very important especially if it is frequent and is not kept for the end to be given all at once. It helps us know where we are lagging and helps us continuously work on improving. So, I feel like feedback should be more frequent.

Most of the participants agreed that the feedback they got from their peers was extremely helpful when one has learned to be open to receiving feedback. As Participant 6 said:

Before I took part in this peer observation, it was quite stressful for me knowing that someone would come and observe my classes. I have had the PLs and the

mentors come to observe my classes and that made me reluctant to participate in peer observation initially. However, the briefing before the observation where we were told that the purpose of the observation and the feedback is not for evaluation but to help us become better tutors made me feel comfortable to participate in this peer observation.

The orientation on receiving and giving feedback before the peer observations seems to have played a major role in helping the participants to be better equipped to give and receive feedback.

The issue with feedback is not usually the feedback itself but the way in which it is communicated. It is important to have a proper process and channel of communication in place. It was also noted that the participants appreciate when their peers give specific rather than vague feedback. Most tutors do seem to appreciate feedback that is well articulated and has clarity on what worked, what did not, and what actions might help in overcoming the challenges. One of the templates used during the observation is the interactive map which keeps note of the movement of the tutor in the classroom. Participants 2 and 5 said that receiving the feedback post-observation was very useful because the feedback given was specific and clear. As participant 3 said:

I got comfortable receiving the feedback after the post-observation, it was very useful and I felt like I was really learning because the feedback was not vague but was very specific. For example, being told that I moved around in the same direction about five times or that I was not paying attention to the backbenchers. This clarity in the feedback gave me the knowledge that I need to improve in that particular area and I have tried to adopt the best practices. So, from these specific types of feedback, I also learned how to plan my lesson, understand my strengths and weaknesses better, and be more aware of my classroom management practices. So, overall, it was a great experience.

All the participants agreed that they found it helpful to have that clarity of the process and the channel of communication in place. Though it is not comfortable for most to have an observer in their classes, if the process of giving feedback is done with clarity, there seems to be more open acceptance of feedback.

The templates used during the peer observations were useful in providing good guidelines for the observation. This made the observed feel that they have an equal role to play in the observation, unlike the observation that takes place as a surprise walk-in of the PLs or the mentors. Participant 3 mentioned that before an observer came and observed the class, being asked what one wants to be observed for and later discussing the feedback in the group made this particular peer observation more interesting and not as stressful. The tutors feel more comfortable receiving and keeping an open mind toward the feedback when there aren't too many surprise factors in the feedback. As noted by Participant 2:

The peer observation was especially very interesting because of the fact that I could ask about what I would like to be observed for and receive feedback on. I thought that was really helpful because I don't think that happens as often.

The same participant said, "Usually we just get the feedback and we don't get to decide on what area we are being observed for."

The other important factor noted by the participants for the feedback process to be effective was the transparency of the feedback. Participant 3 said:

When the Programme Leader or the mentors directly come to the class, we don't even know the format of observation but for the peer observation the format and the processes were all made clear to us before the observation which helps us have clarity on the purpose of the observation.

The same participant said that this clarity gave them an opportunity to improve on one particular area of their teaching at a time.

So, it was observed that the participants are more accepting of the feedback and open to learning or improving when there is more transparency and clarity in the process. All the participants agreed that it was easy for them to accept the feedback during the peer observations because they were prepared for the feedback with proper briefings beforehand. Participant 5, said that the feedback she received was constructive and did not feel judgemental at all. Participant 6 added, "This clarity of peer learning is helpful in adopting a lot of good practices and in working on our weaknesses."

The composition of the group was another factor that was mentioned as an important factor for feedback to be effective according to all the participants. Participants 1 and 4 mentioned that everyone in this particular group kept an open mind about giving and receiving feedback which made the process of peer observations fun and enjoyable. As a result, they felt comfortable sharing and receiving feedback knowing that they were not being judged.

Participant 4 said that 'composition is important', and that it's not just about forming a group for peer observation but also making sure that the peers are made aware of how and why to give and receive feedback. When the feedback is given in an honest and authentic manner with the intention to help the students learn better and for the tutor to be more effective, all the participants agreed that feedback plays a major role in one's professional development.

One practice in this peer observation programme that the participants enjoyed was the way the feedback was discussed in the group rather than talked about individually. Participant 5 said:

Usually the feedback is just between you and the observer and no one else is listening. It is not a discussion. So, I liked the idea of sitting and talking about the classes together as a team. This less secretive way of giving and receiving feedback helps us know that all of us have some areas we struggle with and it also helps us learn from each other.

This method of giving and receiving feedback was found to be more engaging and interesting. Participant 3 said that this way of giving and receiving feedback was not intimidating instead the environment was collegial and friendly and everyone was willing to learn even from the classroom observations they did not get to be a part of. Participant 1 said:

Listening to everyone's feedback was very insightful for me. As we were discussing the feedback for everyone, there were so many moments when I felt that this is the area that I should also look into and see how I am doing.

So, it is important to have an environment and space that is open and accepting of feedback and experiences shared. This peer observation group created a space where everyone was made to feel comfortable to share their experiences and provide constructive feedback where required. Participant 1 also added:

Even when we were being critical at certain points everyone seemed to understand that we are doing so to help each other to grow and to create better teaching and learning experiences. That made this experience very interesting for me and that is why I really enjoyed giving and receiving feedback.

The conclusion we can derive from this section is that feedback can play a major role in professional development and if done right, giving and receiving feedback need not be as daunting a task as it may seem to be. The reason many people seem to dread feedback could be because of the flaws in process of giving and receiving feedback. This paper doesn't suggest one right way to give or receive feedback but the participants in the peer observation said that they learned that receiving feedback is very important and interesting if it is frequent, honest, transparent, clear, and to the point.

Participants' Experience and Willingness to Take Part in Future Peer Observation

Participation in the peer observation programme is voluntary and so the paper has used the willingness of the participants from this particular peer observation to take part in future peer observations as one of the themes.

During the discussion, the participants were asked if they would be willing to take part in future peer observations. There was no participant who said that they don't want to participate in future peer observations. Participant 5 said, "I will definitely take part in it again. As a junior lecturer, I enjoyed coming here and talking to you all, and the environment you created was comfortable. We learned a lot as a team. I would love to share this practice with other members of the faculty and convince them. I am not stopping here."

Though the participants in this study seem enthusiastic and interested, in reality most faculty do not easily subscribe to the idea of peer observation because of some misconceptions. Participant 3 said that initially peer observation sounded quite stressful but gradually they started to enjoy the process as they understood the purpose of the peer observation. At least three participants initially thought that their colleagues coming to the classroom and observing them teach was similar to what the PLs were doing. However, by the second round of

observation, they realized that this was not a critical review but a constructive one, and they started to enjoy the peer observations. Participant 2 said, “By the end, it was quite useful and fun.”

However, not all the participants wanted to go through the whole process of peer observation all over again. Some of the participants said that their participation in future peer observations would be conditional. Participant 4 said, “I will definitely do it again but to be very honest I would look at the group composition. Just one or two people can change the dynamic in a group so quickly. I am conditional.”

Despite all the benefits of peer observation, one of the reasons why many faculty members do not seem to sign up for peer observation could be their busy schedule during the semester. Participant 1 said that initially, she was sceptical and not as excited to be a part of the peer observation programme because of the workload. Ultimately, she said she really enjoyed doing this and would take part again. She also added, “The dynamic of students is constantly changing which is why it’s important to have peers observe the class and give feedback.”

One common view that all the participants shared was the significance of observing different classes, witnessing different methods, learning the best practices, and reflecting on one’s own teaching strategies is huge. Irrespective of the participants’ experiences in teaching, everyone in the team seemed to agree that it is important to know what works or doesn’t work because every class is different. The participants were aware of the fact that what worked in the past may not always work in the present and that peer observation has the potential to provide some insights into that. That knowledge can take place when we get to sit on the other side of the table and observe or when we have a colleague observing and letting us know what is working or not working in our classrooms.

Personally, as one of the participants, I would highly recommend my fellow colleagues to take part at least in one round of peer observations and see for themselves if peer observation is actually helpful. Unlearning and relearning our beliefs and practices of teaching can help us become more efficient and effective teachers.

Discussion/Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that peer observation is a useful tool for teachers to use for their professional development. In the teaching profession, teachers need tools for self-awareness and self-evaluation. Peer observation can serve as one such tool.

When peer observation is implemented not as a tool for the evaluation or development of others on the basis of our assumptions, but instead as a reassessment of the assumptions on the basis of the observation, it has the potential to be very effective in the teaching practice. This research has attempted to draw together ideas on the development and practice of reflective peer observation based on the experiences of participants of a peer observation conducted at RTC, in order to measure the effectiveness of peer observation as an important tool for the professional development of the teachers. The participants in the peer observation were motivated to improve and better understand what types of strategies are meaningful and useful

for teaching in higher education. It was also noted through the experiences of the participants that peer observation works better when it's non-judgemental and non-evaluative. Peer observations seem particularly useful for self-assessment and for adapting better teaching strategies, and the ultimate beneficiaries of good teachers are students. Therefore, the motivation to adopt peer observation as a tool for professional development should be to help students learn better. However, if it is not done right, peer observation can easily lose its credibility among teachers.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the study suggests the following:

- i. When the focus of the peer observation is more on the collaborative dialogue among peers rather than just giving 'feedback', it is more effective and efficient than other forms of observation by the participants. Therefore, educational institutions can use peer observation as a basis for a dialogue.
- ii. The peer observation team composition matters, however, the teams may not always have the opportunity to form naturally; they may have to be created as needed for an exercise. In order to make the composition work, it is important that the participants in the peer observation know that the process of peer observation is for mutual growth and is supposed to be non-judgemental.
- iii. It is also important to consider the fact that peer observation may not necessarily be focused on just class observation because just observing a class or two might not always give the full picture of the classroom environment. In order to make this process of peer observation sustainable, more innovative strategies such as more ways of bringing together the tutors to have dialogues should be considered.
- iv. For new faculty, it would be a good practice to start with peer observation before being observed by a supervisor. The management could consider sending the supervisors to go for observation after the faculty has gone through one cycle of peer observation.
- v. Peer observation should be free from limitations or constraints on what has to be observed because there are other forms of observation in place that look into the aspect of evaluation. Since peer observation is voluntary, to attract more participants, it is important that the participants know that this form of observation is different from the others.
- vi. The feedback in the peer observation should be collegial in nature and not evaluative or judgemental. It was observed through the discussion that the frequency of feedback matters. The participants seemed to appreciate specific, clear, and regular feedback rather than vague feedback. The orientation on receiving and giving feedback before the peer observation played a major role in helping the participants to be better prepared to give and receive feedback.

Limitations

The findings of this study have to be considered with some limitations. The analysis of peer observation in the research is based on discussion and observation where the researcher herself was one of the participants. Therefore, the conclusions derived in the paper are subject to the biases of the researcher, and her own personal experiences as a teacher may have influenced the findings to some extent. The other major limitation of the paper is that the study is based on just one cycle of peer observation and the data used for the research is based on one focus group discussion. There are other concerns such as the effects of observation on the students and the classroom environment, unavoidable implicit judgments from the observer, and awkwardness faced by some observed. It is also important to note that observing individual lessons doesn't always give the best overall picture of the class.

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