



Peer Observation of Teaching: Can Peer Observation of Teaching Enhance Professional Development Practices within Higher Education?

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Acknowledgments: Dr. Sharon O'Brien, Clare Gormley, and Dr. Ryoko Sasamoto, and other peers who contributed to this paper through draft review and discussions

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A Literature Scoping Review

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this scoping review is to explore what the literature says about the use of peer observation in higher education. It examines the practice and process of peer observation as a professional development tool for academics¹ teaching in higher education; looking at whether it enhances and facilitates collegiate relationships and self-reflection, which in turn leads to enhanced teaching, learning, and assessment practices. This scoping review focuses on the use of peer observations, rather than peer evaluations, the distinction between these approaches hinges on the difference between the ethos of the process. Peer observation is voluntary, confidential, and bidirectional (i.e. situated peer observation) between the peer observers and observee. Hence the review is bounded by a definition of peer observation of teaching (POT) as a formative professional development tool reliant on the participants voluntarily engaging in the process with the explicit purpose of advancing their professional practice. Unlike peer evaluations and reviews where the feedback is used to evaluate practice, peer observation of teaching is a process that is most successful when pursued as part of a collaborative, voluntary professional development programme that encourages ongoing dialogue among teaching professionals.

The questions guiding this review were:

- How is POT used as a professional development tool for academics in higher education?
- Can POT encourage or nurture collegial relationships through dialogue and reflection on own practice? If so how can this be achieved effectively?

This paper adopts the following structure. Firstly, the methodology outlines the process and strategy in selection of papers for review. It presents the framework used in determining search parameters and concepts thus offering a rationale for the methodology adopted in this study.

Following this an introduction to how the literature frames POT as a tool to nurture collegial relationships and contribute to professional development is presented. This precedes a discussion of the main themes to emerge in this report which includes benefits or attributes of POT, and the role of leadership in effective approaches. This study commenced at the early stages of Covid19 and as such did not seek to explore specifically the role of POT in blended or hybrid teaching. However, as the paper was evolving the authors recognised the value of discussing this as a separate theme. The paper concludes by drawing together the main learnings to evolve from the scoping review.

¹ The term academics as used throughout these paper incudes all teachers in higher education.

2. Methodology

The review followed a scoping search (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) using relevant databases. This process was selected because it enables relatively swift coverage of a field, does not require quality assessment of each article selected and does not emphasise synthesis of results. Consequently, as Arksey and O'Malley (2005, p.23) observe 'scoping studies provide a narrative or descriptive account of available research', in this case of Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) as a professional development tool.

The PICO (Population or Problem - Intervention - Comparison - Outcome) model was used to frame the purpose of the literature scoping exercise. This approach is used by Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) research as a specialised framework to help formulate and facilitate literature searches (Schardt et al., 2007). Table 1 outlines the application of this model in the context of this scoping review.

Table 1: Framing Purpose of Literature Scoping Review

| | | |
|----------|--------------|---|
| P | Population | DCU School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies (SALIS) academics |
| I | Intervention | Peer observation |
| C | Comparison | Evidence in literature on peer observation |
| O | Outcome | Professional development of teachers to enhance teaching and learning |

The purpose of the scoping review, as defined using the PICO model (Table 1), was developed using a search template adapted from the University of Tasmania Library. This facilitated identification of the key concepts in the research. Once key concepts were agreed, free text terms were tested and used to help refine the terms used under each concept for the searches (Table 2). Each concept was searched separately, and then the three searches were joined to provide a comprehensive search of potentially suitable articles.

Table 2: Key Search Terms

| | Concept 1 | Concept 2 | Concept 3 |
|--|--|--|---|
| Key concepts | peer observation | professional development | higher education |
| Terms to use in your search (free text terms) | "peer observation" or "peer coaching" or "collegial support" | "professional development" or "teacher development" or | "higher education" or "college" or "university" or "post secondary" or "postsecondary" or "third level" |


| | | | |
|--|--|------------------------|--|
| | | “professional support” | |
|--|--|------------------------|--|

2.1 Study selection

The search terms covered ERIC and Education Research Complete databases. Eric is the world's largest education database, indexing over 650 journals as well as grey literature and Education Research Complete indexes abstracts from more than 1,500 journals, as well as full-text articles for more than 750 journals. Sixty-four potentially relevant results were identified through this search. Further analysis of titles and the abstracts of some possibly promising articles eliminated 45 articles. All three authors conducted this elimination process in order to enhance trustworthiness of selections, and throughout there was much discussion about paper relevance. These discussions allowed authors to have a shared understanding of what papers were relevant and why. Some papers were eliminated because of unnecessary duplication (reporting on the same cohort in ways that would not add to this review), or because the article focused heavily on localised practice that would limit its applicability more widely; and in other cases, it became clear that the keywords which resulted in the inclusion in the sample in the first place did not relate sufficiently to the purpose of the scoping review. Table 3, below, provides information on inclusion and exclusion criteria that allowed the review to narrow down to the most relevant studies. This process concluded in 16 papers being included as part of the final scoping review.

Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Timeframe | 2000-2020 | Prior to 2000 (pre-Bologna process and student-centered focus on teaching and learning) |
| Language | English | Non-English |
| Access | Full-text availability only | Only titles or abstracts available |
| Sample | Studies covering educators in higher education (full-time academics) | Studies covering all other types of peer review and evaluation. |
| Type of publication | Peer-reviewed, original research published in journals | Content that was not peer-reviewed, not in journals, not original |
| Focus of literature | Presenting findings that investigated aspects of peer observation as a tool in higher | Findings presented in terms of peer evaluation or review as part of a QA process. |



| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>education to enhance and facilitate collegiate relationships and self-reflection among full time teaching staff.</p> <p>Presenting findings that contribute to understanding of how peer observation can contribute to professional development.</p> | <p>Peer observation as a one way process where novices learn from experts.</p> |
|--|---|--|

The Appendix provides an annotated bibliography of the 16 selected publications that consist of the final sample.



3. The literature's framing of peer observation of teaching.

Bell (2005) offers a seminal definition of peer observation of teaching which continues to help frame the formative focus as a dialogical form of professional learning. In this respect, peer observation of teaching is defined as a collaborative partnership between two or more academics who observe each other's teaching, offer each other constructive feedback on their teaching and reflect on their teaching based on both what was observed and their colleague's feedback. This approach to peer observation encapsulates the collaborative nature of the process while also facilitating the professional development of teaching staff. Many of the papers recognise that teaching at university is often conducted behind closed doors and can as such be an isolating experience. Notably, almost 30-years ago Shulman (1993) suggested peer observations as a professional development tool to remedy this pedagogical solitude by making teaching visible and valuable.

The benefits of peer observation of teaching are highlighted in many research papers. These include the ease at which POT can be implemented, its scalability, and its multifaceted applicability. Moreover, peer observation can help to improve teachers' morale, staff congeniality, and reflective practice. Overall, the key and frequent message emanating from the literature is that it can be an excellent professional development tool. Yet the literature also highlights a dearth of theory being translated into practice within most higher education institutions, as few studies report how peer observation is embedded within teaching and learning strategies.

Although many examples of peer review initiatives are available in the research included in this review, there is evidence that they are difficult to sustain and develop. Many of the key themes emerging from this scoping exercise are reported in the next section. Models of best practice are highlighted together with suggestions by experts of how to sustain interest and momentum once the peer observation process has begun.

3.1 Major themes

Three major themes permeated the literature and case-studies selected for this review. Firstly, the benefits of Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) over and above those outlined above, were that participation in a POT programme improved teaching practice, enhanced commitment to teaching, built confidence among staff, increased awareness of students' needs in the classroom, and often led to the transformation of teachers' educational perspectives. These benefits emerge from studies on POT across different colleges and faculties (Bell & Thomson, 2018; Bell & Cooper, 2013; Ben-Peretz et al., 2018)

A second theme that emerged was that of leadership. The buy-in by college leaders was deemed very important for a sustained and successfully embedded programme. These leaders were heads of school or Deans of Teaching and Learning primarily. While it was accepted that the essence of the programmes should remain formative in nature, a connection to a formalised professional development programme was recommended. To bridge this nebulous distinction, between formative feedback and formalised professional

development of staff, is challenging: yet the benefits of a successfully implemented POT culture in a faculty or college have been shown to have enormous positive rewards (Bell and Cooper, 2013; Shortland, 2010; Windgrove et al., 2015). For example, the participants in Bell and Mladenovic's (2015, p.12) study highlighted the benefits that tutors gained from observing the pedagogical approaches taken by their peers as they 'presented discipline-specific content and engaged students in the learning process'. The development of deepened collegiality that emerged between participants was highlighted as an 'unexpected consequence' of the POT process in Shortland's (2010) research.

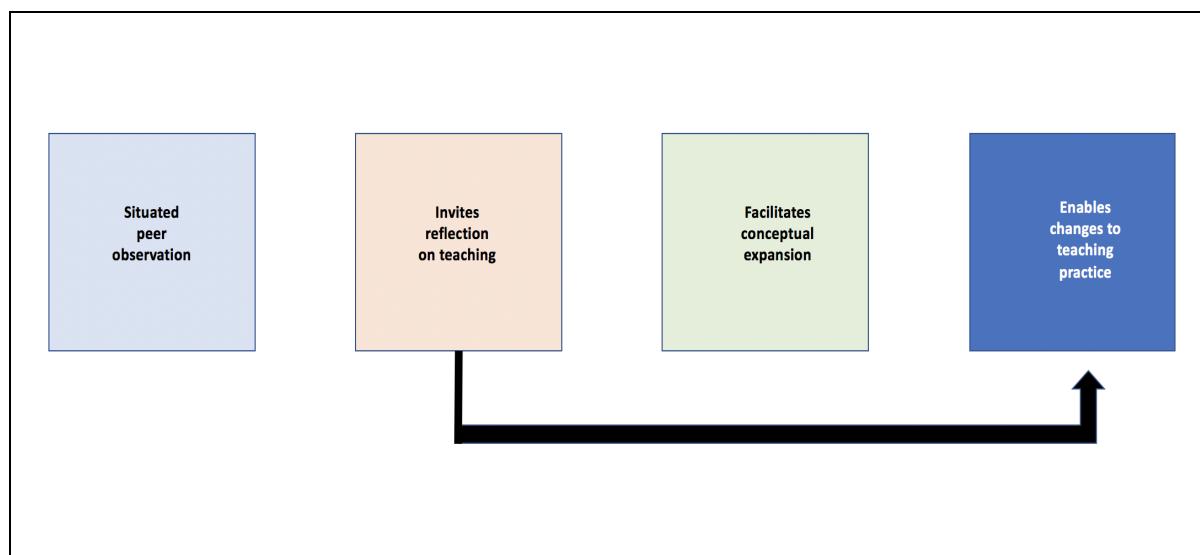
The final theme related to the feedback loop, its reciprocal nature, and how the pre- and post- observation sessions added to the feelings of collegiality and deepening interpersonal relationships within and/or between the participating schools. These relationships extended often beyond the peer observation sessions and the confines of the programme.

The attributes of peer observation of teaching as detailed by Bell and Mladenovic (2015) highlight how POT embodies many of the qualities which teaching practitioners value. This framework is illustrated in section 3.2.

3.2 Attributes of peer observation


Bell and Mladenovic (2015) present a valuable theoretical framework that encapsulates the essence of many models academics adopt when developing peer observation programmes. This framework illustrated in Figure 1 identifies three key pillars: situated learning, reflective practice, and conceptual expansion. Together these pillars can lead to transformational teaching practices among those participants.

Figure 1: Attributes of peer observation



Situated peer observation

Teachers in higher education are discipline experts in their chosen domain yet the ability to engage students in the process of understanding the nuances of the subject requires an ability to teach the material in a way that is appropriate to the context. First-year students will approach a subject differently from a postgraduate student despite the material being similar. The fact that POT generally takes place in the classroom, and more recently in



virtual classrooms, allows discipline experts to observe how their colleagues approach a topic, develop a rapport with their students and facilitate the critical evaluation of new ideas (Kirschner and Merriënboer, 2013). This shared experience develops the community of practice espoused by Lave and Wenger (1991) and the ideals of Dewey's experimental nature of education where teachers can try out new methods of teaching. In brief, the literature clearly demonstrates that POT, when adopted as a professional development tool, allows teachers the space to test new pedagogical methods and to share their own teaching experiences with colleagues.

Reflective practice


Bell and Mladenovic (2015) adopted the definition of reflective practices as defined by Boud et al., (1985, p.19): 'intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations'. The reflective element of the POT process is the strand that dominates the literature both as the catalyst for individual change and transformation and as a means of advancement in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Much of the published research on POT reviewed in this study involves the induction of novice tutors into the teaching profession through the mentorship and feedback of more established colleagues. This scoping exercise highlights the fact that POT has benefits beyond those of socialising novice learners into the teaching profession, that through a successfully implemented professional development programme, established teachers also gain from reflecting on their teaching and re-engaging with their craft. Hence, through discourse and reflection, the POT approach has the potential to support conceptual expansion and changes in teaching practice, or the reinforcement of existing pedagogical practices.

Conceptual expansion

In their article, which was based on the experiences of novice tutors, Bell and Mladenovic (2015) defined conceptual expansion in terms of moving tutors away from focusing on what they taught and towards what students learned, becoming more student centered in their approach. Other researchers have emphasised the benefits which accrue to the observer in the process of observing a peer (Hendry et al., 2013). Worth noting, even when conceptualisation of teaching is absent, changes to teaching practice are still achievable as a result of engaging in the observation sessions and reflections. Georgiou et al., (2018) noted that teachers in the STEM subjects highlighted the pedagogical benefits gained from involvement in a POT programme, the programme gave them a chance to 'try-out' new approaches and receive valuable feedback.

In summary, POT embodies much of the elements that research more generally highlights as key features of good educational practices. Situated learning empowers teachers to embrace new methods of teaching within a particular context and receive immediate feedback from a learned colleague. Both the preparation and the subsequent feedback serve to ignite reflection. Other unintended consequences have emerged such as greater interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning within a dynamic community of learners.

Despite the benefits detailed above and illustrated through Figure 1, the development of successful POT as an *embedded professional development* process is rare in HE institutions (Fletcher, 2018). In the absence of a meta-analysis of published work in the area, it is difficult to quantify the number of programmes that successfully embed themselves within



institutions, however, this was a common theme in all the case-studies reviewed for this scoping exercise. A prevailing theme in the literature is the difficulty HE institutions have in extending its remit beyond the initial stages of the process. The approach taken by the heads of faculty and college management teams appears to be a major determinant as to whether the process is embraced or not as an ongoing professional development process.

The following section expands on the theme of leadership by looking at how Deans of Teaching and Learning or people in equivalent roles can approach POT as a valuable professional development process.

3.3 Leadership

One of the limitations of this review is the lack of research on POT as professional development rather than as part of an accredited certificate in teaching and learning or as part of induction of new teaching staff into the teaching profession. The lack of focus on the former could be explained by the fact that experienced teachers allow their ideological philosophies about teaching and learning, often formed when the context in which they taught was very different from the current environment, inhibiting their continual professional learning. This position may stem from a belief that domain knowledge trumps pedagogical practice as the hallmark of a competent teacher. Although there is very little of this discussion in the literature, other explanations may stem from a historical skew towards discipline-specific research rather than research on teaching, as holding great currency within HE.


Coaching between expert teachers can break this cycle of pedagogical solitude (Schulman, 1993), mentioned earlier, and may explain why leadership and involvement by heads of faculty in any POT is important in creating and sustaining a successful programme. While no consensus exists on the extent to which heads of faculty are essential in a programme's success, Bell and Cooper (2013, p.60) posit that a successful programme of peer observation is dependent on educational leadership by the Head of School.

Research by Bell and Thomson (2018) highlighted the different approaches taken by four Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching at a research-intensive university in Australia, in encouraging POT among teaching staff. Three ways of supporting peer observation emerged from this study together with some of the reasons why leaders take the approaches they do.

The three approaches to supporting peer observation of teaching were:

- (i) Focus on the benefits of being observed
- (ii) Focus on collegiality and conversations between teaching staff
- (iii) Focus on the autonomy of choice for teaching staff.

This research revealed that personal experiences, especially positive experiences of observing others, encouraged leaders to support and promote POT themselves once they achieved leadership positions. In this study, the Associate Deans in each faculty facilitated the peer observation processes but did not observe sessions themselves. Disciplinary differences also played a part in the extent to which different faculties implemented POT. Institutional pressures and the emphasis often on domain research also played a part in explaining some Dean's resistance to leading teaching development activities. It was



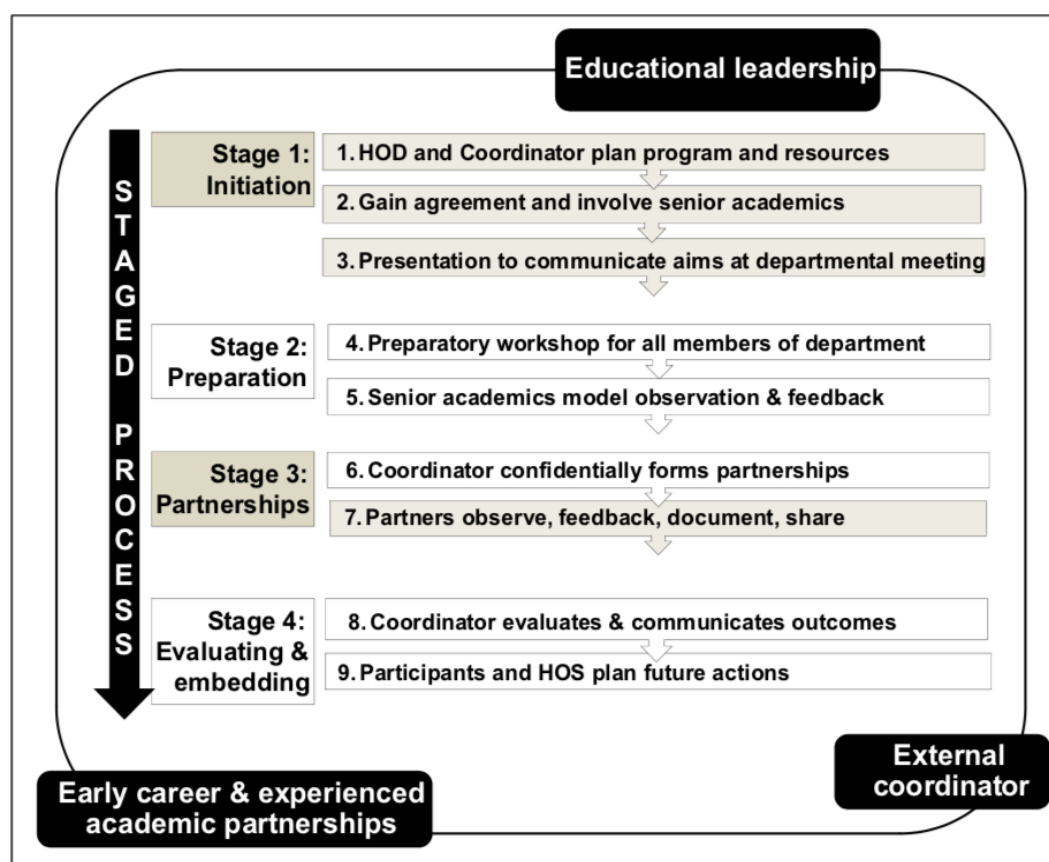
recognised by the researchers that despite individual Dean's enthusiasm to embrace POT, institutional culture needed to align in order for sustained change to evolve.

A similar study by Bell and Cooper (2013, p. 61-62) identified four critical elements that led to a successful POT programme:

- i. Educational leadership by the head of department throughout the process. See Figure 2 below.
- ii. A staged opt-in/opt-out process
- iii. Forming groups of early-career and experienced academic staff as equal partners
- iv. An external to faculty coordinator

When developing a programme of professional development that incorporates POT the research suggests that models which are formative in nature, with emphasis on collegiality, have proven more efficacious. Different departments within a university will have approaches to teaching and learning that differ to their own disciplines, therefore, features and models appropriate to one may not suit another. However, many of the templates provided in the research papers are adaptable and sufficiently versatile to be used in various contexts. For example, the model developed by Bell and Cooper (2013) shown in Figure 2 involved a department of engineering, but could be adapted across any university faculty.

Figure 2: Framework for peer observation of teaching



Source: Bell and Cooper, 2013, p.70

3.4. Blended teaching and POT

Although only two studies in this review referenced blended models of teaching, the pivot to online teaching could serve as a positive force in rolling out and sustaining POT as a professional development tool. Academics are under increased pressure to re-design modules for hybrid teaching, learning, and assessment environments. POT can offer an effective and efficient way for teachers in HE to learn from each other by observing online teaching practice and experiencing colleagues' virtual learning environments.

As courses in HE increasingly use technology to supplement their face-to-face class teaching, the recent pandemic has forced many colleges to transition to synchronised online teaching at least in the short-run. This poses the question as to how POT is impacted by this transition and whether or not the approach used in the face-to-face class can be replicated in an online space.

Nicolson and Harper (2014) were involved in a longitudinal study in which the first two phases were explored in detail in a blended environment. The impetus for the research was a sense by the staff developers in the language department, that teachers were 'displaying a more authoritarian, more guarded teaching persona and less creativity in their practice in these online classes than in their face-to-face teaching' (Nicolson and Harper, 2014, p. 251).

The underlying theoretical framework and ethos of the POT professional development model were employed, however, the research was conducted at the UK Open University where all classes are online. This research highlighted the benefits of POT within a single faculty initially, language teaching, and then in the second phase extended beyond language teaching to maths, computing, and technology teaching.


This study drew from the iterative action-research methodology where feedback from the first cycle informed change in the second iteration. For example, an interesting change was the move from teams of four to teams of eight when organising peer sessions. Feedback suggested that it was difficult to coordinate observations when teams of only four existed. The crucial point is that this example goes beyond mere peer observation to action through a second iteration of the process. In this respect, it helps to close the loop that some of the studies in the sample of literature either fail to do or simply do not report.

The following themes were identified following the first cycle of this project which was subsequently used to assess their impact in the second cycle when cross-disciplinary POT groups were initiated. Table 4 summarises the findings.

Table 4: Benefits of Peer Observation of Teaching

| Themes | Findings |
|--|---|
| Gains in self-confidence and self-belief | While initially, the technology was the main concern of teachers in the online environment, once the second phase commenced teachers recognised the fact that good teaching is not about being technologically savvy but that the content and their ability to try new things is what is important. |
| Gains in belonging | Teachers experienced a greater sense of belonging when the POT was confined to the one faculty. The community of practice was easier to sustain when all participants were language teachers. |
| Gains in reflection and widening perspectives | The findings here were interesting, particularly for the observer. Teachers reported increased awareness of the students and how teaching can impact student understanding. The online space highlighted the fact that the host online does not always know what the students are seeing in the shared screen window. |
| Gains in practice aspirations | All participants noted how the POT process made them question their teaching approach and provided them with new ideas and uses of the technology available. For example the ease of using breakout rooms and forum chats. |

The above study highlighted the dual benefits from being involved in a POT within one's own faculty and also the benefits which evolve from observing teachers from a different faculty. The question for developers of such processes is the level of choice they wish to provide.



The pivot to a blended model of teaching in HE could facilitate a more diverse POT approach within a university.

Peer observation of teaching has traditionally concentrated on the 'classroom delivery' of the traditional lecture in HE. The pivot to online teaching has highlighted the multiplicity of ways in which teachers communicate and interact with students in the learning environment. This suggests that the POT literature needs to be more inclusive of other teaching approaches in the future. Bennett and Barp (2008) highlight the fact that while the online teaching experience is very different from the face-to-face environment, POT can be a very successful professional development tool in the online space also, however, they do argue that the online POT process is more multifaceted than when applied in the classroom setting.

The evidence is that distinct strategies, processes, and models are probably needed to provide guidance for transferring peer observation online in order to help avoid the challenges and exploit the opportunities, inherent in the nature of 'online-ness' and in learning, teaching, and support processes online' (Bennett and Barp, 2008, p.564).

In a face-to-face context, the observation part of the process typically involves the observer 'sitting-through' a one-hour lecture. The online alternative requires a different blueprint as the online-ness impacts the nature of the process as preparatory work often involves reading students' posts, online forums, and watching synchronised or asynchronised classes. This research argues that POT online does present unique challenges and does not transfer seamlessly from the face-to-face model. In the online space, structured observation may be more difficult as often the time needed to source and absorb the material necessary to understand the essence of a class is more complicated and requires clear direction and guidance. The absence of natural time boundaries in the online space can create problems if not carefully negotiated. Therefore, this is an interesting area for further investigation in terms of both research and practice.



4. Conclusion

This scoping review explored the practice and process of POT as a professional development tool for academics who are teaching in higher education. This scoping review posed two questions namely

- How is POT used as a professional development tool for academics in higher education?
- Can POT encourage or nurture collegial relationships through dialogue and reflection on own practice? If so how can this be achieved effectively?

It identified the attributes of a successful and sustainable POT programme as one that concentrates on the professional development of teachers in a voluntary capacity where the driving force for involvement centered on teachers' desire to gain constructive feedback on their practice which would facilitate reflection and hopefully lead to enhancements in teaching, learning, and assessment. The duality of the process and the subsequent dialogue enhanced all participants and in many cases nurtured collegial relationships through this dialogue.

The involvement of management and good leadership skills was identified as vital if the process was to be sustainable and embedded into a department's/university's professional development identity. Equally important in terms of sustainability, was the development of a structured process with resources and external coordination support.

Two research pieces that dealt exclusively with POT in the online space highlighted the need to address the fact that the process of teaching online differs significantly from the face-to-face context and as such the preparation afforded to staff conducting POT online do need additional directions and guidance on what the observed teacher would like feedback on.

Notwithstanding the challenges associated with establishing and sustaining a POT process, particularly nuanced complications associated with the competency and time required for POT in hybrid or online spaces, the benefits of POT as an authentic and viable professional development tool render it worth the effort.

In summary, this scoping exercise illustrated that where the POT programme had been implemented in HE, the findings showed that participants benefited and valued the process. Participants reported that the process did nurture and encourage collegial relationships and enhanced their sense of belonging to a community of learners. The involvement of educational leaders, Deans of Teaching and Learning, heads of department or other academic leaders added gravitas to the process and led to greater success.

Although this study did not include student feedback in the original search parameters, the authors were advised that it would be remiss not to recognise the role of student input when developing a POT process. Two sources of student feedback that may be of value in this regard include the annual Irish Student Survey of Engagement (ISSE) and the recent Irish National Digital Experience (INDEX) Survey which reports findings on student needs regarding digital teaching and learning. Both of these documents offer an opportunity to ensure that teaching is informed and enhanced by the student voice, in a focused and targeted way.

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Appendix: Description of relevant studies

| # (n.16) | Title | Author | Annotated bibliography |
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| 1 | Supporting peer observation of teaching: Collegiality, conversations, and autonomy. | Bell, A & Thomson, K. | The research is conducted through the lens of university leaders supporting peer observation of teaching staff, and data explores the experiences of four deans in T&L at a University in Australia. While the emphasis is more on leadership than PD, the findings provide three approaches - benefit of observing; focus on collegiality and conversations; and a focus on autonomy of choice. |
| 2 | Peer observation of teaching in university departments: a framework for implementation | Bell, M & Cooper P | <p>This research, carried out in the engineering department of an Australian university, highlights four elements of successful peer observation of teaching programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • A staged, voluntary opt-in/opt-out process involving a hands-on preparatory workshop and trial observations • Partnering early career educationalists with more experienced academic staff • External to faculty coordination. <p>This paper highlighted the importance of feedback as a non-judgemental dialogue between 'critical friends'.</p> |

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| 3 | Learning by observing a peer's teaching situation | Hendry, G. D., Bell, A., & Thomson, K. (2014) | This article reports on a study of academics who observed their colleagues' teaching at a large research-intensive university in Australia. One of the findings relates to the learning value from observing colleagues, as opposed to feedback from a peer on one's own practice. |
| 4 | Peer review of teaching: What features matter? A case study within STEM faculties. | Georgiou, H., Sharma, M. & Ling, A. | This research looks at one institution's programme and its implementation, and participants' opinion. This paper is well written and an excellent model of the PRT presented. It highlights the benefits of having discipline-specific goals [stem observers and stem lecturers]. Excellent section on the themes -feedback, discipline, collegiality. |
| 5 | Coaching between experts - opportunities for teachers' professional development. | Ben-Peretz, M., Gottlieb, E. & Gideon, I. | In this paper, peer observation is described as coaching for PD of teachers. Following each observed class, the coach and coachee met to discuss observations. Classes were videotaped, and post-observation conversations were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The model of expert-expert coaching explored here is a model worth developing. Viewing teachers as experts in teaching, coaching between teachers could draw on this model, and promote professional in-service development. The value of joint reflection and mutual benefit for the coach and coachee provides interesting discussion. Worthy of inclusion. |

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| 6 | Situated learning, reflective practice and conceptual expansion: effective peer observation for tutor development. | Bell, A. & Mladenovic, R. | POT is defined as a collaborative partnership between two academics who observe each other's teaching, offer each other constructive feedback and reflect on their teaching based on what was observed and their colleagues' feedback. The process is unconnected to 'review' or performance management. Benefits listed as improved teaching, enhanced commitment, confidence, motivating, leading to the application of theory to practice, more awareness of students learning. possible negatives also listed: intrusive, the threat to academic freedom, not confidential, not accurate. benefits only individuals involved. |
| 7 | Teamwork in Establishing a Professional Learning Community in a New Icelandic School | Svanbjörnsdóttir, B; Macdonald, A; Frímannsson, G | While this article deviated somewhat from the essence of this scoping exercise, the fundamental tenets of the piece provide an insight into how a professional learning community (PLO) can develop in a school through teamwork and co-teaching. The action research project detailed in this article is well documented and provides insights into a longitudinal study. |

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| 8 | Feedback within peer observation: continuing professional development and unexpected consequences. | Shortland, Sue | This paper explores some weaknesses in Peer Observation as a method. To identify development needs involves evaluating the base from which they may be addressed. Checklists can constrain the observer into recording what the institution suggests is observed, rather than what would benefit the person being observed. It might be argued that checklists, therefore, 'pigeon-hole' both observation and, as a consequence, feedback. Instead, mutually understood and fit-for-purpose criteria for constructing feedback are essential if it is to be meaningful to the recipient. 10 peer observations are presented as a single case study. A distinctive aspect relates to the examination of a sustained peer observation relationship between two partners. |
| 9 | Distributing leadership for sustainable peer feedback on tertiary teaching. | Windgrove, D., Clarke, A. & Chester, A. | This article looks at how peer feedback on teaching was supported and designed in an Australian University. Peer partnership (PP) used voluntary and reciprocal peer observations to engage staff in collegial and reflective practice. The paper is about leadership and how a certain leadership module would allow peer-based professional development within a large University. While the research was on the leadership issue the essence dovetailed well with this research.....the change management lens which underpinned this research did not give sufficient details on the process of the peer observations however the feedback from the leaders in the various schools provided insight into the benefits of the process. |

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| 10 | Supporting Improved Practice for Special Education Teachers. | McLeskey, J. | This article identifies the various purposes of PD and concentrates on PD that is designed to provide teachers with 'new skills and strategies' that are used in classroom practices. It highlights the benefits of evidenced-based situational PD rather than the hitherto 'expect led ' professional development. Findings from the LR suggested that peer coaching resulted in significantly greater use by teachers of 'innovative practices' in the classroom. The emphasis is on PD as enhancing teaching practices in the classroom however in order for this to be successful the issue of teachers forming a professional learning community [plc] was essential |
| 11 | Ideas in Practice: Professional Development to Manage Atypical Learner Behaviors. | Colarossi, A. G.; Maltzman, Rachelle; Parisi, Hope; Rudisel, Christine M.; Weiss, Tara | This paper looks at action research using a group response can be more effective in dealing with classroom issues that traditional academic approaches. This was a multidisciplinary AR group where the objective was to reduce the stress of teachers and empower them to expand their repertoire of classroom management strategies. |

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| 12 | Peer coaching as an approach to faculty development. | McLeod, Peter J.; Steinert, Yvonne | This paper looks at a novel intervention in Australia in the dept. of health sciences which deviated from the teacher-expert model of faculty development programmes to one of peer observation partnerships. 42 lecturers joined the group, developed learning objectives for themselves and then invited a colleague in to act as observer for the 8-week intervention. The findings for those participants that completed the 8-week 'course' were good but the dropout rate was due to lack of oversight by the programme directors.....this paper is short on detail regarding the RQ posed here but does demonstrate the increased currency of POT in HE. |
| 13 | Peer Feedback: Who, What, When, How and Why? | Wilkins, Elizabeth A.; Eui-Kyung Shin | The emphasis in this article is on peer feedback rather than the peer observation itself, the content is pre-service teachers and the use of peer observation to enhance PD. A longitudinal study in the realm of AR allowed for the process to develop for each in-service teacher to be adapted as data was collected from earlier iterations. Nice peer review report provided. 3 step model [planning, observation, and data collection and feedback conference] presented. Themes emerged which provided insight as to how peer feedback affected pre teachers PD. Unintended benefits of observee identified. Used to enhance a 'critical friend 'group. |

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| 14 | Foundation observation of teaching project - A developmental model of peer observation of teaching. | Pattison, Andrew Timothy; Sherwood, Morgan; Lumsden, Colin James; Gale, Alison; Markides, Maria | This research deals with peer observation more in the developmental sphere than in the peer review model, this means that it does not fit too well with this scoping exercise. The processes followed and the models used however make the piece worth reading. Because doctors are continually teaching as part of their professional work, this paper, despite being a 'teacher' student' context, within the medical field this difference is blurred. A clear model of how the process worked and the timing of the process is clearly displayed. This was not a 'research' paper and hence was possible more user-friendly than some of the more theory-based papers. |
| 15 | Online Peer Observation: An Exploration of a Cross-Discipline Observation Project. | Nicolson, Margaret; Harper, Felicity | This paper explores the teaching practices of language teachers in phase one and a multidisciplinary study in phase two in an open university setting. This paper was a really interesting piece on the benefits of peer observation within a faculty and then the move away from the domain-specific [language teaching] to the observations of non-language teaching. This facilitated deeper reflection, an ability 'to move beyond reflection to abstraction and on to reframing and applying in their own context' (p..255). This approach of observing across disciplines also empowered teachers to question their beliefs of 'perceived best practices' and to confidently challenge prevailing views, recognising the importance of 'context' in making pedagogical choices. |

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| 16 | Peer observation-a case for doing it online | Bennett, Shirley; Barb, Donatella | <p>This paper reports on a case study following an online peer-review process. Many of the issues with face-to-face peer reviews also apply online however differences such as 'what is observable online, and the limited ability to get a sense of atmosphere and students' reactions is more difficult benefits were highlighted also.</p> <p>This paper reiterates the views of Gosling's Developmental model and Cosh's (1999) view that the focus in peer observation is on the development of the teacher's own development and not as a means of developing the teaching skills of one's peers. This point is important as a framework for developing the process of peer observation sessions as a professional development tool.</p> |
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