

How to do Peer Observation

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Introduction

The guidelines provided here are intended as exactly such, to help you get started with peer observation of teaching. They are not meant to be seen as a rigid prescription. The principles are more important than the guidelines. Indeed, we would actively encourage local adaptation and refinement to take account of individuals, their teaching environments and subject-specific teaching issues.

Principles of Peer Observation of Teaching

Tips for making peer observation of teaching work

- Be committed: As with all continuing professional development, you will get out of the process what you put in.
- It is important to subscribe to both the ethos and the practical issues of peer observation of teaching, such as ensuring you create the time and space necessary for it to be effective.
- Avoid judgemental approaches and negative comments; focus instead on finding ways to develop both your own and your colleague's teaching practice.
- It may prove useful to change your peer observation partnership each year. This will allow you to experience a range of different ideas and approaches over time.
- Agree your observation criteria, focus and framework in advance.
- Organise a pre-observation meeting so that you can brief each other before the observation.
- Set aside time for a post-observation de-brief meeting, where you can discuss the observation and participate in a joint reflective process.

Who should do peer observation of teaching?

The key to a successful observation pairing is normally mutual trust and respect. The choice of peers is significant.

- It is believed that the most honest and open exchange of ideas will take place when both participants are in much the same position.
- Experience shows that observation by a peer from the same school or department is often the most useful.
- Some alternatives are observation by a manager, mentor, colleague from another school or department with particular expertise in a given teaching method, or observation by an educational specialist, although these options are more appropriate when the focus is mainly on evaluation.

- For smaller schools or departments, observation by a peer from a different school or department but within a related subject may prove appropriate and useful.

How peer observation of teaching partners are selected

There is a variety of ways of selecting partnerships for peer observation of teaching. In some institutions, this may be decided for you. Where this is not the case, it is worth giving the following some thought and opting for the permutations that best suit you and your developmental goals. Possibilities include:

- free choice of reciprocal observation colleague(s) – this can involve a partnership or a triad of peers
- self-forming observation groups of five or six people who observe each other
- relationships around existing team-teaching arrangements
- allocated observation partnerships
- designated observers with whom others can sign up (this may or may not be a reciprocal arrangement)
- advisors from your staff development unit or external consultants
- buddy systems of one-way review from mentor.

The last three in the above list do not really qualify as peers, but can still be valuable sources of developmental feedback.

Experience shows that a partnership system in which colleagues take it in turns to observe and be observed tends to reinforce personal development more than a system which uses designated observers, as the latter may be perceived as judgemental.

What should be observed?

As far as possible, the full range of activities that constitute teaching for an individual should be observed. This might include:

- lectures
- small group sessions
- practical classes, such as laboratory and clinical sessions
- supervisions
- tutorials
- field trips
- meetings with tutor groups
- feedback on assessed work
- email or online discussions

- meetings with tutees or supervisees
- curriculum development
- materials design, especially reusable learning objects
- other teaching- and learning-related activities.

What to do and look for when observing a peer's teaching

This will depend on your agreed criteria and framework, and the data collection methods or technologies adopted. Possibilities include the following.

- **Directed** peer observation – good for those with less experience of observing teaching. You will need one or more of the following:
 - a checklist of pre-determined questions or global categories (for example, see www.nottingham.ac.uk/sedu/peerobs/checklist.php and <http://escalate.ac.uk/resources/peerobservation/04.html>)
 - your own institution's checklists or the checklists of other institutions such as the University of Birmingham, James Cook University in New South Wales and Lund University in Sweden (see www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/peer.htm, www.jcu.edu.au/office/tld/teachingsupport/web_peer.shtml and www.lu.se/o.o.i.s/450 respectively)
 - visual aids to help focus on a particular issue.
- **Open** approaches – good for those with more experience of peer observation of teaching. You can:
 - provide a chronological record of what happened during the session for discussion at the debrief meeting
 - use the ethnographic style of recording, where the observer notes down anything that strikes him or her for discussion with the observee at the debrief meeting (for example, 'I noticed that you did X, and that would never have occurred to me/where I would have done Y. Could you explain your rationale for doing X?') (see the Annex on p11 of this document for an example of a report based on this approach)
 - adopt measurement-based criteria, where you could choose to observe a particular area of performance, for example the ratio of teacher talking time to student talking time, interaction patterns or gender bias
 - use critical incident (see the downloadable document Critical Incident Analysis at www.prodait.org/approaches/cia/)
 - use stimulated recall, for example using a video of the teaching session, or referring back to your session plans (see also Claydon (2002)).

How often should peer observation take place?

This will depend on your own and your partner or group's individual preferences and needs. Experience suggests that a minimum target of one observed session a year for each member of staff is advisable. Your institution may well have minimum formal requirements that you will need to meet.

The peer observation process: key steps

Peer observation of teaching should be seen as a four-stage process, with time and space allowed to agree general **ground rules**, for an **initial briefing**, the **observation** itself and also a **debriefing** session. An optional but desirable fifth stage is **recording and reporting** the results.

Step 1: Set the ground rules

- Agree on what, and how much, will be observed.
- Discuss seating and participation arrangements.
- Agree on levels of confidentiality.
- Agree on feedback and debriefing procedures.
- Agree on what, and how much, will be observed.

General comments

Commonly, individuals select a session or event they feel comfortable and confident with, but you may get more benefit from observing or having observed a session that is new, difficult to teach, or potentially in need of change.

Experience suggests that observation of a lecture, seminar, class etc should typically last an hour, so a longer practical class or activity may need to be sampled. This will need to be discussed prior to the observation taking place.

Agree in general terms on the focus and criteria for observation, and the approach you will adopt (see also 'What to do and look for when observing a peer's teaching' on p. 3 above).

For the observation of other activities, such as feedback on assessed work, email supervisions or curriculum development, you will need to make similar decisions regarding the focus of the observation and the size of the sample to be observed.

Seating and participation arrangements

It is usually best for the observer and observee to be able to see each other clearly, and for the observer also to have a good view of the students being taught so as to be able to fully gauge their reactions to the teaching.

Establish whether or to what extent the observer will participate in the session, and how the observation will be explained to the students. Experience suggests that it is best practice and most effective to introduce the observer to those who are to be taught during the observed session and to explain that this individual is there to observe the teacher, not them.

Confidentiality

Most people prefer the details of peer observation of teaching to be confidential between the people involved, but some may want to keep a written record as part of a teaching portfolio or to use as evidence in a promotion case or for an appraisal discussion. If this is the case, both parties need to agree how the observation will be recorded to satisfy formal requirements. After debriefing, the written record should normally remain under the control of the observee.

Step 2: Initial briefing

The initial briefing provides an opportunity to:

- set the scene, allowing the observee to provide background information on the session or teaching and learning activity, how you've chosen to structure it and why, its learning objectives, plus the students, including their existing knowledge and skills, etc
- decide on practical issues, such as how the observer will record information and when you will meet for the debrief session (you may prefer to arrange the debriefing directly after the observation, or to build in time for reflection, before reconvening to discuss the experience), and how you will each provide feedback (see 'Feedback' on p6 of this document)
- make detailed decisions about the focus of the observation and the approach you will use.

Many people find it convenient to combine steps 1 and 2, at least for the first of a series of observations.

Step 3: Observation

What you will look for during the session will, to a certain extent, depend on your agreed observation criteria and framework. This is just one example of an observation schema:

- Planning prior to the session
- Introducing the session
- Delivering and developing the session
- Conclusions.

See Lublin (2002a) for ready-to-use formative observation schedules for a range of teaching activities.

Step 4: Debriefing

The following notes draw on Eastcott and Farmer (1992).

Detail will be easiest to recall if the debrief follows immediately from, or soon after, the session. It is often best to let the observed person have first comment on how they felt the session went, or to lead the entire session. It may then be appropriate to go through the observer's notes. The debrief approach needs to match the approach taken during the observation (this may be 'directed' or 'open'; see 'What to do and look for when observing a peer's

teaching' on p3 of this document.) The debrief may adopt some of the following elements, depending on the approach used.

Description

This approach suits the ethnological and stimulated recall approaches described above. It asks:

- What happened?
- Do you both agree on this?

In order to get the maximum developmental benefit from peer observation of teaching, it is important to spend time considering where your perceptions differ, and to discuss these fully.

Analysis

This approach suits critical incident analysis and stimulated recall approaches described above. It asks:

- Why do you think this happened?
- What was really going on?
- What sense can you make of the situation?
- What other options were available?
- What might have been the outcomes had you opted for these alternatives?

Again, your perceptions may diverge, and it is important to explore these differences.

Directed

This is a criterion-based approach. It asks:

- Which criteria were fulfilled?
- To what extent were they fulfilled?
- What might this mean or imply?

A good debriefing discussion should help both the observer and the observee reflect critically on their teaching and feed into their professional development. This process is facilitated by the effective giving and receiving of feedback.

Giving feedback

Effective giving and receiving of feedback is essential if you are going to get the most developmental value from the peer observation process.

- It is vital that the way you give feedback as an observer is focused on establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.
- If feedback is to have an impact, it needs to be effectively received. This does not come naturally to all of us. Typically our reaction is either to take everything on board unquestioningly, or to resent what can be seen as unwelcome criticism. Both these reactions from an observee

do little to encourage professional development or the growth of a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

When giving feedback, avoid:

- the assumption that what you would have done in the same situation is necessarily the ideal solution
- being overly negative (i.e. focusing on the problems and ignoring the positive points), or overly positive (this can lead you to gloss over areas or problems that could provide valuable developmental material)
- judgemental comments and generalisations (for example, 'You're overpowering', or 'That activity didn't work' or 'The students were permanently bored')
- giving too much feedback on the content of the session; aim instead to focus on teaching strategies.

Aim to:

- invite the observee to begin the discussion by giving their perceptions in order to help you to pitch your feedback appropriately
- begin in a way that builds your observees confidence in themselves and the process – tell them what you liked about the session you observed and why
- balance positive and negative feedback: too much of the former, and your observee can feel complacent, too much of the latter and he or she risks becoming discouraged and even despondent
- discuss the observation from a mutual problem-solving angle
- focus on teaching strategies rather than content
- be sensitive concerning what your observee was trying to achieve and their reasoning for behaving in a particular way
- focus on areas for change over which your observee has some control, and can therefore influence as this will avoid unnecessary frustration on their part
- remember that your comments should be about specific behaviour, rather than the general
- remember that giving feedback is not just a matter of what you say, but also how you say it, so be sensitive and respect your partner's point of view as much as your own.

Receiving feedback

As an observee when receiving feedback, try to:

- make clear before the observation what kind of feedback you are looking for
- be open to the feedback, and prepared to consider observations, even where these challenge your own views and perceptions

- view the feedback as an opportunity for professional dialogue with a colleague
- be aware of the impact of your own reactions and emotions and try to stay rational
- listen carefully and avoid immediately trying to rationalise, justify or defend your observed (re)actions and behaviour
- ask for clarification if you are unclear on something your observer has said; checking your understanding of your observer's message on a regular basis is an important part of receiving feedback
- thank your observer for his or her input.

See also the list of characteristics of reflective feedback given in McEnerney et al (1997).

Step 5: Recording and reporting

How your peer observation of teaching is to be recorded should be agreed before the observation takes place. This may be influenced by the particular requirements at your institution, but also depends very much on your own preferences.

- You may be required to submit a formal report to demonstrate that peer observation has taken place.
- You may wish to keep a private record for your own use, for example when preparing an application for a teaching award or promotion.

Formal reports

- Formal reports are normally prepared for submission to a nominated peer observation coordinator, who anonymises and collates returns from all his or her colleagues into a single document for checking and filing as part of the department's annual quality assurance and enhancement processes.
- The purpose of the collated document is to provide evidence that peer observation of teaching is taking place. It should not be used to assess the quality of teaching in the department, but to show that the department is supporting and encouraging reflective practice by ensuring that all teaching staff participate in the process.
- It is best practice for the observee to retain control of the content of the report sent to the coordinator by their having the final say on wording.
- It is also advisable to keep any documents such as checklists or forms used in the production of the report.
- The reports may include descriptions of innovative and excellent practice for dissemination across the department and beyond, with the permission of the observee.
- Preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of peer observation participants is essential, especially in the collated report that will become publicly available, otherwise the reporting process can quickly

become subverted and turn into a quality control and assurance mechanism, and many of the developmental benefits will be lost.

Private records

Completed checklists, notes, observer's notes, debriefing notes etc from peer observation sessions can all be included in your personal teaching record along with:

- course outlines
- lecture notes
- reading lists
- handouts
- overhead projector transparencies,
- slide presentations
- lists of learning outcomes
- essay and examination questions
- student module evaluations
- anything else connected with your teaching of a particular course or groups of students.

According to Lublin (2002b: 1), 'a teaching record is a comprehensive collection of documents and other artefacts [on one's teaching] that has been collected over the years'.

Records from peer observations are likely to be rich source of material for discussing and exemplifying the ways in which you work as a reflective practitioner. Awards and applications for promotion increasingly request such information. Such records are an essential part of any teaching portfolio, defined by Lublin (*ibid*: 1) as 'the focused distillation of the appropriate material in your teaching record for a specific purpose, like an application for promotion or a teaching excellence award.'

Although you may not be permitted to submit direct quotes or extracts from peer observation reports or records as part of, for example, an application for promotion (as this could encourage observing pairs to switch to a mutually complimentary evaluative mode, simply writing nice things about each other's teaching), you can normally cite examples of insights gained or changes you subsequently made to your teaching due to the reflective process.

Teaching portfolios

For more on teaching records, portfolios, reflective statements and articulation of a philosophy of teaching, it is recommended that you read Lublin (2002b). This contains detailed advice on what your teaching record might contain, including:

- quantitative, factual and descriptive material (for example, lists of subjects taught, booklists etc)

- qualitative evidence about your teaching (for example, student feedback results and your reflections on them, comments from peers concerning the adequacy and currency of a reading list)
- a record of your scholarly and developmental activities in university pedagogy (for example, workshops on teaching and learning you have attended, articles you have written about your own teaching).

By contracts, your portfolio might contain:

- your philosophy of teaching and learning
- innovations in teaching you have initiated
- what you have done in response to student feedback
- what self-development as a teacher you have engaged in.

Models of peer observation of teaching

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the UK has identified a range of developmental models of peer observation of teaching used in higher education. These, and further resources on peer observation of teaching can be found under 'Peer observation of teaching' in the resources section of the HEA website. Three examples are:

- Teaching Process Recall (Claydon, 2002) at www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=20
- Peer Pairing (Blackwell, 2002; Blackwell and MacLean, 1996) at www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=21
- Sharing Excellence (Slade, 2002) www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=22.

We also recommend Gosling (2002).

You can also visit the Higher Education Academy Education Subject Centre (ESCalate) at <http://escalate.ac.uk/>, which presents models involving external sampling and panels. This site also seeks to bring together and synthesise common guidance and advice for developmental purposes.

The annex to this document contains a sample peer observation report.

Annex: Example of an Observation Report

Rustic Studies: Peer observation of teaching report

Note that all names have been changed in this report for reasons of confidentiality.

In accordance with the guidelines on peer observation of teaching issued by the Academic Office and the observation schedule agreed with the Head of School, three peer observation sessions involving five members of staff took place in 2007/08 (one participant was both an observer and an observee).

Participants

The three teachers observed were:

- Caroline
- Brian
- Catherine.

The three observers were:

- Brian
- Sarah
- Tony.

Sessions observed

All three observation sessions were of lectures for full-time taught MA students:

- one second semester option module class (about 15 students)
- one second semester compulsory research methods class (about 50 students)
- one unspecified.

Observations

Two of the observation pairs chose to use an experimental ethnographic approach to the exercise (see Appendix) instead of the standard procedure and forms provided. In both cases, the follow-up discussions developed to include a number of aspects of successful teaching, together with practices that the participants wanted to reconsider and experiment with in future classes, or that were simply of interest. The main issues are listed below as numbered points below, with edited extracts from the reports to illustrate each overarching issue.¹

1. Different impressions of observer and teacher of how satisfactory the level of student participation had been (the observer was impressed, the teacher was not)

¹ These are quite lengthy, but are included in full to show how the nature of the post-observation dialogue can develop when based on observation notes instead of a pre-categorised form.

2. Strategy for acknowledging student contributions and giving feedback

It was noticeable that although the students contributed a lot to the class (in the first half, two students gave quite lengthy reports based on handouts they had prepared themselves, in the second half, much of the discussion took place in small groups), Caroline [the teacher] was always a leading participant. When the students were reporting, she gave constant 'back-channel' feedback, and also asked clarification questions. After the reports were finished, Caroline asked the class for other questions. In conversation, she explained that she asked questions out of genuine interest in the topic, and because some points were unclear to her.

Feedback, however, was a more self-conscious device employed to encourage the students with their interests. After the reports, Caroline felt that the other students had not contributed sufficiently, so invited questions from them. The students who gave the reports stayed in their own seats, and Caroline remained in the 'teacher's' chair. Caroline explained that she] did not invite the students to speak from the front of the class because she was aware that one of them at least was very shy, and felt that moving to the front of the class would be too stressful for her.

When the students were working in small groups, Caroline moved from one group to another and for most of the time was interacting with one or other of the groups. When she joined a group, she listened at first, gradually adding back-channel feedback and questions about the group's progress or clarification questions about their discussion. With some groups, she ended up taking part in the general conversation. Caroline explained that her policy when working with groups was to eavesdrop first, then join in the discussion.

3. Compromise over student groupings

Caroline explained that he would have preferred to have everyone at small, round tables, but that the layout of the room made this difficult. He chose four as the group size because this was the maximum size for interaction among students essentially sitting next to each other.

4. Clearing up student confusion

One of the things I found most interesting was that at the beginning of each stage in the class the students seemed unfocused, and at times they were clearly unsure of what was going on. For example, when each of the two student 'reporters' began her report, the other students seemed to have difficulty in understanding what was being said and seemed not to be concentrating. At the beginning of the small-group discussion, several students were unfamiliar with the term 'fallacy', which was crucial to the discussion, and some time was taken up by some students explaining the term to the others. What was noticeable, though, was that in a very short time indeed the students overcame

whatever problems they had and became absorbed in the activity and highly focused.

Caroline explained that she had not expected the students to have problems understanding the reports as they were based on work done earlier. In fact, she solved the problem by asking clarification questions. She commented that it took her a little time to realise that the students had not understood 'fallacy' – again this was a term that had been met earlier – but her monitoring of the groups indicated both that there was a problem but that the students were solving it themselves. My first instinct was that there might have been more explanation at the beginning of each section of the class, but I realised that the students had gained more by taking responsibility themselves for solving problems of clarification, and that they had become fully involved in the discussions very rapidly.

5. Dealing with students' unwillingness to contribute

A difficult part of the class came when the small-group discussions were finished and the teacher asked for more general discussion among the whole class. Students were unwilling to contribute and there was a lot of silence (even though the students had been talking quite happily and on-topic in their groups). Caroline eventually nominated individuals to respond to questions and gradually the discussion became more general, though tending to be dominated by the more talkative members of the class.

Caroline explained that she had intended the discussion to be general but that she nominated some students to avoid a situation where only one or two students talked. A turning point in the general discussion came when the teacher paraphrased one of Freud's points in an exaggerated form. This led to general laughter and more contributions from students, including students addressing each other rather than the teacher. Caroline explained that this is a strategy she often uses to break the ice – stating a proposition in an exaggerated form to elicit laughter and response.

6. Praising students

One further point I noticed was that when Caroline evaluated a student's contribution – the students' reports, or contributions to discussion – that evaluation was brief and minimal. Caroline explained that time constraints meant that little time could be spared for effusive evaluation. Although I was surprised at first that students were not being praised more, I realised that the minimal evaluation contributed to the sense of equality in the class. The students' reward for a helpful contribution was the interest of the whole group, not the teacher's endorsement. I felt this gave the students responsibility for the progress of the class.

7. Liaison between colleagues on class content

By consulting with the teacher of the immediately preceding class at the end of the previous week, Caroline had ascertained that that teacher would use questionnaire excerpts from previous MA dissertation projects (as examples of what [not] to do) in the session. Caroline was therefore able to use material from four of those same dissertations to initiate student discussion on the presentation of data. This became clear to the students during the initial activity, which was to match text extracts from these dissertations to the questionnaire excerpts they'd seen previously, and to comment on them. The activity was carried out in small groups of two to four students.

Student reactions were extremely positive: they clearly liked the fact that a) sessions were interconnected in this way and b) they had a fairly clear purpose for examining data.

This issue was raised during our subsequent discussion: both of us feel that the in-house MA course as a whole might be improved – at least in students' eyes – if members of staff were more aware of the content of their colleagues' classes, and therefore better able to relate their own teaching to other aspects of the programme.

8. Monitoring small-group work in large classes

During the activity, Caroline monitored a number of student groups, but this was obviously not easy, given the number of people involved and the physical layout of the lecture theatre. In one case that I observed, two relatively weak students (weak certainly in terms of their English language proficiency, and perhaps also academically) who were struggling, were regrouped with a stronger, more confident student. Caroline's choice of the stronger student appeared to be a good one, since his inclusion hastened the group's progress with the task, but without the new member monopolising discussion.

The small-group activity format, coupled with peripatetic monitoring, seemed to have value in that less confident students were able to ask the teacher questions that they might have been reluctant to ask before the whole class.

9. Time-management and covering planned content

Following the group task, Caroline then shifted to a 'teacher-fronted' mode. After initially asking for feedback from small groups, she quickly opted instead to provide her own explanation of specific points to the whole class, regarding:

- *presentation (clarity on page, keys to abbreviations, etc.),*
- *use of tables, diagrams, charts, appendices etc*
- *appropriacy of how data may be quantified (for example, the pointlessness of giving percentage figures where 100% = a total of five respondents).*

This change appeared to be motivated by Caroline's awareness that time was likely to run short, which was confirmed in later discussion.

10. Ending session and asking 'any queries?'-type questions

Caroline ended the session by asking for any questions. A final point raised during my discussion with Caroline was with regard to the role of this kind of teacher-fronted question – something that I tend, I think, to overuse in my own classes. We agreed that such an open invitation often results only in producing questions and comments from the most confident and able students, while those who may really need to ask questions (ie, the less confident and less able) tend to remain silent. We agreed to experiment with other means of eliciting student questions that might allow less confident participants to ask with less risk of losing face (for example, small groups produce questions, which are then asked by a group spokesperson).

The third observation pair used the standard forms provided. The observer's form included comments noting that good practice was the norm in all the categories given, and finished with the words 'All in all, an excellent example of good teaching practice'. No issues to be addressed were identified. The teacher's post-observation form showed appreciation of the observer's positive and complimentary comments and also suggested some minor changes that might be implemented next time, in particular, using a case study in which students take the lead and are encouraged to interact and participate more.

Observation process

When requesting reports from participants I also invited comments on the observation process itself, in particular on taking an ethnographic approach instead of the observation report form and checklist approach suggested by the School.

Comments from the first two reporting pairs were:

As always, I enjoyed watching another member of staff teaching, and learned a lot from the experience, particularly when she did something differently to what I expected. I did not want to use the forms connected with the observation process because they focused on evaluating a colleague as a teacher rather than on learning from the experience of observation. Making the ethnographic notes during the class was extremely valuable, especially noting what the students were doing at each point of the class. The discussion afterwards was also useful, though I do not think I fully understood the 'why' procedure, and I am not sure we got as deep as the philosophy of teaching. The most useful thing for me, though, was identifying what the teacher had done that contributed to the aspects of the class that impressed me.

I think it encourages a more collegial, less judgemental approach to the exercise and encourages both parties (observee and observer) to discuss their respective practices constructively, rather than focusing exclusively on the practice of the observed party.

The concluding comments written by the observers in examples 4 and 10 above support this claim:

I actually quite enjoyed the discussion we had, and found that my observer and I ended up comparing and discussing our approaches to aspects of teaching rather than me simply being on the receiving end of a report he had made on my class. I did not in any way feel judged during this process, and the issues that came up were those that genuinely concerned us rather than simply being those prescribed on the recommended forms. I would definitely prefer to continue to use this approach in future.

Summary

- Three observations involving five lecturers took place; two of these form the basis for this report.
- Good practice was identified in the way teachers interacted with students, organized and monitored group work and liaised with colleagues on course content.
- Areas identified for experimentation or possible improvement were to examine the effectiveness for the whole class of general 'any questions?'-type queries. and increased liaison over course content.
- The ethnographic and dialogue approach used by the reporting pairs was deemed successful in promoting a non-judgemental discussion of classroom practice from which both parties could learn.

Appendix to annex

Alternative (ethnographic) procedure for peer teaching observation, or 'Why, why, why?'

Observees: You know how young children go through a stage when they incessantly ask 'what?' and 'why?' about everything? Seeing your own teaching as if through the eyes of such a child can be very revealing. To do this, ask your observer to take ethnographic notes (or record the class) to act as a reminder of what happened.

Fairly soon after the class you should arrange to meet (within a day or two at most), so they can quiz you about what you did and why, but they should do this in a childlike, 'playing dumb' way. Your observer should note down your answers. He or she will then try to identify any teaching principles that seem to emerge from the data and present these to you to see whether you recognise them. If accurate, are they principles you are happy with? How might you modify them? How would the modified principles affect your teaching style? (Think about things you could have done differently in the observed class.) If you are happy with your principles, are you also happy that you are applying them consistently?

Observers: Take notes during your observation so that you have a reminder of what happened, or use an audio- or video tape. The purpose is simply to stimulate detailed recall of what happened, not to make judgements about the session.

Go through the notes or recording after the lesson together and ask your observee **why** at every possible point. In particular, try to identify the occasions when your observee made decisions during the lesson when something unplanned happened. Why did they decide on the particular course of action they took? What alternatives were there? Why did they not choose these at the time? If they had anticipated the event, would they have acted differently? Why?

During this recall and quiz session, take notes of your observee's responses.

You may find that if you go into sufficient detail you will begin to see clusters of responses that seem to relate to the same general area. For example, there may be three or four answers that explain actions on the grounds that they encourage or help the students to work out something for themselves. This cluster seems to point to a principle: that an inductive approach is desirable (why?). See whether you can begin to draw up a set of your observee's language teaching principles from your notes. Present them to your observee for comment and analysis.

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