

How does a group peer observation of teaching scheme lead to change in teaching practice? The experience of teaching fellows in a UK medical school

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Introduction

- Peer observation of teaching (POT) has been shown to lead to change in teaching practice (1, 2, 3).
- By undertaking reciprocal peer observation the opportunities for reflective practice, collaborative learning and teacher development are emphasised, rather than judgement of teaching performance based on external criteria (4).
- There has been little exploration of the specific aspects of peer observation which can lead to change in practice for a group of clinical educators.

Research Questions

- 1. What specific aspects of a group peer observation of teaching scheme lead to change in practice?
- 2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a group peer observation programme in this setting?

Method

Stage 1

Participants recruited Pairs randomly allocated

Stage 2

Reciprocal Peer Observation of Teaching

Stage 3

Focus group

Participants

- Eight (of a total of nine) teaching fellows, responsible for facilitating small group learning for medical students in their first 18 months of medical school, agreed to participate.
- Participants had been in post for several months to several years.
- Ethical approval for this study was obtained prior to recruitment.

Peer observation of teaching

- Pre observation meeting to identify the focus 1. for feedback.
- Teaching observation using standardised form.
- Post observation meeting to provide 3. feedback to the teacher and to allow for general discussion.

Qualitative data analysis

- Focus group was facilitated by a teaching and learning specialist.
- Focus group audio recorded and transcribed into MS word.
- Data was analysed using a basic thematic approach (5).

Results

Qualitative data analysis resulted in five key themes:

- A. Developing reflective practice
- B. Feedback
- C. Group cohesion
- D. Promoting a culture of change
- E. Organisation

A framework for establishing an effective group teaching observation scheme was developed.

• The inner rectangle represents themes related to teachers as individuals and the outer rectangle represents themes applicable to the group as a whole. Promoting a culture of change (D) contains individual and group themes.

C3 "I thought that was helpful, it was kind of supportive that we were all in the same boat."

useful."

E1/2 "Difficult to find a session

where you can do it and a suitable session as well so it's probably the biggest challenge."

> E4i "For us it was voluntary and people could agree to do it or not agree and it seemed quite important to me that we maintain that."

"It's a bit kind of 'I'll show you mine if...' (general laughter)... you know it's that kind of thing, isn't it."

A2 "The majority of that comes out of just watching someone else do it and thinking, 'oh that seems to work well, perhaps I'll try that with mine."

A1 "I found the benefit because I've been observed doing the session before and had feedback for it and tried to incorporate it and so I liked that aspect that it gave me another opportunity for someone to observe me."

E) Get organised

4. How the POT

programme

was organised

- 1. Time available for observations
- 2. Appropriateness of sessions for observation
- 3. Use of the teaching observation forms

A) Encourage reflective practice

- 1. Receiving feedback led to reflection and change in practice
- 2. Observing others led to reflection and change in practice
- 3. Self reflection about performance can be inaccurate
- 4. Individuals need to engage with the process

C) Develop group identity

- 1. Trust amongst group members
- 2. POT reduces the isolation of teaching alone
- 3. Everyone participates
- 4. Fear of disrupting group dynamics

B) Train and support participants in giving effective feedback

- 1. Giving feedback is a skill
- 2. Triangulation with other sources of feedback
- Feedback is important

B1i "You can say, 'yeh mate it was brilliant', but anyway I think picking specifics, I found that hard."

B3iii "We don't get a lot of feedback. I don't know whether I'm doing a good job or not."

C4 "I want to carry on working with

that person and err so you know

between everyone hugging each

other and saying you were great

and actually saying something

it's kind of - striking a balance

D1 "I think it needs to be an on going process, because there's always something that you can do better."

D2 "Going on the previous experience I was reassured by

> D3 "It's just like making a culture of this where you don't feel picked upon, but rather that it's constructive, it's to improve."

1. Change as an on going process that OK it won't be that bad." 2. Repeat experiences of POT increase engagement with and

4. Raising the profile of teaching

3. Promoting an atmosphere where change is acceptable

D) Promote a culture of change: Make it

acceptable to talk about teaching and change

confidence in process

5. Introducing new members to the POT scheme

D4 "Actually it's nice just to have a general discussion about something that's relevant to both of you that otherwise you might not."

References

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practice

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