Peer Observation and Review of Teaching (PORT) program: An initiative for continuing professional development

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Presented by: Hilary Lloyd (PhD; Grad Cert HE)

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Outline

– Introduction: Why do teaching staff engage in professional learning (development)?
– Overview of the Peer Observation and Review of Teaching (PORT) program
– About the PORT survey
– Peer review: my experience
– Peer review: participants’ experience
– Concluding remarks
Why do teaching staff engage in professional learning?

- Attendance?
- Overwhelm?
- Confidence?
- Student (dis)engagement?
What do our participants say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My objectives</th>
<th>How will I know I’ve achieved them</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To maximize student learning by incorporating different teaching methods into lectures e.g. discussion time, examples, flipped classroom, demonstrations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pacing - delivering content at a good speed</td>
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<td>- Holding student engagement from start to finish</td>
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<td>- Keep attendance rates</td>
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<td>- Checking with parallel lecturer</td>
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<td>- Seeing whether students ask questions &amp; if so, what they ask</td>
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<td>- Look around the theatre during the lecture</td>
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Feedback via lectures and/or Blackboard.

-4 week teaching style, body language, lecture, discussion questions in line (verbal/verbal).
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Variables associated with student achievement in higher education (Schneider & Preckel, 2017)

Systematic review involving 38 meta-analyses; 3,330 effect sizes; almost 2 million students

1. **Presentation/instructional practices** have medium to large (> .66) effect sizes
   Qualities of good presentations include
   - Clarity
   - Stimulation of interest
   - Enthusiasm

2. "**Assessment practices** are related to achievement about as strongly as presentation practices" (p. 31)

Overview of Peer Observation and Review of Teaching Program

- Workshop (Set aims/objectives)
- First review
- Follow-up meeting
- Second review
- Follow-up meeting
- Colloquium (End of semester/year)
- Peer observations x 2
Peer Observation and Review Program (PORT)

• Our program, PORT, combines aspects of both peer observation and peer review

• Provides the benefit of learning from others with engaging in reflective practice to enhance teaching practice

• The program aims to support academics to develop teaching practice for their face-to-face teaching situation

• To date, lecturing to large groups has been the focus. Teaching small groups and teaching practical skills in the laboratory are also included in the program.
Match with systematic review recommendations for faculty development programs (Steinert et al., 2006).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendations for programs</th>
<th>Peer observation and review of teaching program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make deliberate use of theory</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>Acknowledge the importance of context</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend over time to allow for cumulative learning, practice and growth</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulate reflection and learning among participants</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation is expected and required</td>
<td>✓</td>
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Presentation style and strategies/techniques faculty may observe

Presentation Style
Atmosphere, Connection, Enthusiasm, Pace, Format (e.g. story telling)

Strategies and Techniques
• Interactive quizzing e.g. think-pair-share
• Audience response systems
• Worksheets
• Demonstrations, videos/multimedia
Distinctive aspects of the program: is it effective?

1. Focus is on teaching strategies; overall presentation style and delivery is included in the feedback

2. Enables lecturer/tutor to get feedback on student engagement

3. The review process is one of mentoring and coaching i.e. non-judgmental. In the follow-up (review) meetings the conversation is structured yet informal (illustrate).

1. The requirement for participants to provide objectives provides a valuable measurable outcome

2. The survey was undertaken to answer whether:
   a) Our PORT program is effective
   b) Any positive effects are sustainable
About the survey and how it was developed

– On-line questionnaire consisted of 35 open and closed questions, with multiple response categories

– Questionnaire designed by PORT team and advisors to determine experience and effectiveness of the program and whether positive impacts were sustained

– Hosted by Survey Monkey

– Ethics approval was obtained from Human Research Ethics Committee (The University of Sydney)

– Participants were invited by email; two reminders were sent out prior to closure
Background of participants enrolled in the program 2014-2016 and who completed the survey (37% response rate)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate student (sessional/casual teacher)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Lecturer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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Results – Participants’ learning and motivation

Percentage Agreement

Peer observation

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Observing my colleague(s) teaching was useful for learning
After watching my colleagues teach I felt motivated to try something new
Being observed in my teaching and receiving feedback from my reviewer was useful for learning

Peer review

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
After receiving feedback from my reviewer I felt motivated to try at least one new strategy
Results – Participants’ change in practice

My trial of a new strategy in my teaching was successful

I am still using the new teaching strategies that I developed

I would recommend the Peer Observation and Review of Teaching program to other colleagues
Peer review: my experience

Objective of participant (Lecturer): to increase student engagement

Altered teaching practice:

✓ Use of student response system, used multiple times throughout the lecture
✓ Having students hand-write equations and formulae
✓ Integrated own research using the response system

Transformation: I was dazzled! Participant had created a class that was fun, engaging, informative and varied, and had the students' attention throughout :)

Peer review: my experience

Objective of participant (Lecturer): to gain confidence

Altered teaching practice:
✓ “Owned” the slides
✓ Simplified the lecture structure
✓ Interacted with students: welcomed students into class, engaged in conversation during the workbook exercise

Transformation: participant clearly "in command" of the class, presented with more confidence, created a class that was easy to follow, engaging (great slides; interesting material), informative and interactive.

The participant’s experience …
Peer review: participants’ experience

“To me the [PORT] experience has been very beneficial, though after 20 years of teaching ... I would’ve thought I had it all figured out. Having another pair of eyes in the back of the room observing students’ engagement, and many other important aspects ... has been very useful. I found the [first and second] review conversations very motivating as well.” (Associate Professor)
Peer review: participants’ experience

“... first experience (of lecturing) ... slightly overwhelmed... main goal - being confident... I was able to restructure and simplify the lectures... modifying the slides to allow delivery of the same material from my perspective. I could also specifically implement points of real interaction with the students. In the 2nd meeting, it was affirmed to me that the changes that I had made did make a difference in my delivery, with much more confidence ...Overall, the feedback from the students was good ... and gaining a round of applause in my final lecture!” (Lecturer)

“But I think the key was the chance to sit down informally and find common ground with a highly experienced lecturer and have excellent advice to overcome or deal with my concerns”
Concluding remarks

- The categories presentation and social interaction, which require face-to-face classroom teaching skills, are strongly associated with student achievement (Schneider and Preckel, 2017)

- The positive survey results and responses received from participants provide evidence for the effectiveness of our PORT program, at the point of delivery

- Our program in its current form does not address curriculum development or assessment; we recognise the crucial importance of both these areas for provision of excellent teaching and student learning outcome
References