

Sub theme:

Observation and feedback methods and techniques

Widening the scope of effective observation and feedback

by Psyche Kennett

Abstract

In 'Widening the scope of effective observation and feedback', Psyche Kennett explores observation and feedback from a number of points of view. She examines it as an individual developmental tool and describes the sandwich' feedback approach, exploring its benefits and highlighting the disadvantages of less constructive methods of feedback. She also looks at it as a tool to improve teacher education more generally.

She asks, 'Are there observable patterns of teaching and learning that can be used to improve teaching standards in schools and colleges and improve training courses and materials development?' This paper explores not just the different ways to observe but the different purposes for observing in the first place, including for needs analyses, research and monitoring and evaluation at cohort, programme or institutional level. She argues that it is important to categorise observation and feedback into qualitative and quantitative teaching skills, to find ways of 'quantifying' the qualitative, and ways of analysing the results. She demonstrates how to do this using interpersonal skills as one example and breaking this down into measurable components and the behaviours teachers should be striving for.

She argues that by giving teachers these detailed criteria we are giving them a structured set of options for their professional improvement. We are also ensuring that observers assess teachers in a transparent and evidence-based way. These criteria not only make qualitative judgements more objective; they create a means of quantifying the qualitative. She illustrates her paper with a concrete example of how this was done in a previous teacher education project.