Implementing peer observation of teaching: a formative staff development initiative.

Anne Weadick
A.W.

A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the degree of MSc in Leadership in Health Professions Education, Institute of Leadership, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

2013
Table of Contents
Abstract ......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ ii
Chapter 1 Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Project aim and objectives ............................................................................ 2
  1.3 Background to the change ............................................................................ 2
  1.4 Rationale for carrying out the change ........................................................... 3
  1.5 Summary ........................................................................................................ 5
Chapter 2 Literature Review ................................................................................ 6
  2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 6
  2.2 Search strategy .............................................................................................. 6
  2.3 Review themes .............................................................................................. 7
    2.3.1 The purpose of and models of peer observation of teaching and implications for higher education institutions ..................................................... 7
    2.3.2 Reported benefits of peer observation of teaching .................................. 10
    2.3.3 Possible difficulties associated with peer observation of teaching ....... 13
    2.3.4 Reflection and Peer Observation of Teaching ....................................... 15
    2.3.5 Implementation of Peer Observation of Teaching ................................ 15
  2.4 Implications for the change project ............................................................ 18
  2.5 Summary ...................................................................................................... 19
Chapter 3 Change Process ................................................................................. 21
  3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................. 21
  3.2 The change process and rationale for the selection of the chosen change model 21
  3.3 Change model .............................................................................................. 23
    3.3.1 Stage 1: Initiation. Preparing to lead the change ................................... 23
    3.3.2 Stage 2: Planning .................................................................................. 30
    3.3.3 Stage 3: Implementation ...................................................................... 37
    3.3.4 Stage 4: Mainstreaming ....................................................................... 40
  3.4 Strengths and limitations of the project ..................................................... 41
  3.5 Summary ...................................................................................................... 43
Chapter 4 Evaluation .......................................................................................... 44
  4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 44
List of Tables

Table 2-1 Models of Peer Observation of Teaching (Gosling, 2002) .........................9
Table 2-2: Martin & Double (1998) Personal and Professional Competencies arising from POT ..................................................................................................................10
Table 2-3: Commonalities identified in practice when implementing POT ..............17
Table 3-1: SWOT Analysis of Institution .........................................................................................17
Table 3-2: Personal Reflection ..............................................................................................................34
Table 3-3: Pilot study implementation plan ......................................................................................37
Table 3-4: POT process conducted in pilot study .............................................................................39
Table 3-5: Strengths and Limitations of Change Project ...............................................................42

List of Figures

Figure 3-1: HSE Change Model. Improving our Services, HSE, 2008 .........................23
Figure 3-2: Force field analysis .................................................................................................29
Figure 4-1: Jacobs Model of Evaluation (Jacobs, 2000) ......................................................47
Figure 4-2: Results of respondents willing to take part in POT ...........................................55
Figure 4-3: Respondents with previous experience of engaging in POT ......................56
Figure 4-4: Would you like to see POT introduced? .........................................................57
Figure 4-5: Who would you like to observe your teaching? ..............................................58
Figure 4-6: What kind of teaching should be observed? ......................................................58
Figure 4-7: Which aspects of teaching should be observed? ..............................................59
Figure 4-8: Should POT be used for formative or summative purposes? ..................60
Figure 4-9: The value of POT .................................................................................................60
Figure 5-1: Writer’s suggested process model for peer observation of teaching .....72
Abstract

For higher education institutions in Ireland, the call for improved efficiency and accountability to stakeholders in all areas of activity has never been more prominent than today. Reform initiatives are taking place across the sector and a key focus of this reformation is the quality assurance and quality enhancement of teaching activity, and the professional development of teaching staff. Peer observation of teaching is widely accepted as a mode of enhancing teaching practice and as a conduit for staff development. This change project centres on the implementation of a pilot of peer observation of teaching within a higher education institution and describes the process enacted when implementing the pilot project. Guided by the framework of the HSE Change Model the change process is described and its strengths and limitations acknowledged. The perceptions and experiences of participants in the pilot project are evaluated using the Jacobs Model of Evaluation. A survey of 66 teaching staff was conducted to elicit staff perceptions of peer observation of teaching. Staff volunteers participated in an education workshop and then undertook one peer observation, five acting as observers and 5 acting as observees. Their experiences were captured in focus groups interviews (n=7). The results indicate that staff would like to see peer observation of teaching introduced and that they value the formative, developmental model, as evidenced in the literature. Finally an informed basis for introducing a formative model of peer observation of teaching into the institution that consolidates the findings of this study is proposed.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people for their invaluable support and contribution to this project:

The teaching staff in RCSI for their interest and encouragement in this project, especially those who took part in the pilot study.

Professor Hannah McGee for her guidance and support in getting this project off the ground and in keeping it going.

Professor David Croke and Dr Richard Arnett who helped me out so many times during this journey.

Mr Liam Duffy and my classmates in my action learning set for their help and guidance in keeping this project on track.

Dr Martina Crehan and Ms Grainne McCabe, who were so kind in giving their time and expertise to this project.

A special thanks to Dr Pauline Joyce who kindly and patiently supported me throughout this entire project. Thanks also, to the staff in the Institute of Leadership for their support and for looking after me so well.

Dr Zena Moore my ‘study buddy’ from start to finish. As Zena so aptly put it, we were like ‘two peas in a pod’! Her support and friendship made this a very enjoyable experience.

Finally, a special thanks to my family. My Mum for her encouragement and child minding! My husband Alan for his support and encouragement over the last two years, and Jack and Roseanne for ‘letting Mammy do her homework’!
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This change project centres on the implementation of a pilot of peer observation of teaching (POT) within a higher education institution (HEI) and describes the process enacted when implementing the pilot project. Through a review of the literature the enablers and inhibitors to POT are identified. Guided by the framework of the HSE Change Model (HSE, 2008) the change process is described and its strengths and limitations acknowledged. Underpinned by the evidence in the literature the perceptions and experiences of participants in the pilot project are evaluated using the Jacobs Model of Evaluation (Jacobs, 2000). The various approaches to POT are explored and finally, an informed basis for introducing a formative model of POT into the institution is put forward.

This was a joint project that was carried out in conjunction with a work colleague and fellow student and on this MSc programme. Throughout the project the writer and colleague worked together in delivering all aspects of the change initiative. The change process that is described in subsequent chapters reflects the culmination of our joint efforts. However for ease of description and to present the process from my personal experience, I will use ‘I’ rather than ‘we’ when describing the implementation of the change initiative.
1.2 Project aim and objectives

The aim of this project was to implement peer observation of teaching (POT) on a pilot basis, as part of a formative staff development initiative, in a higher education setting.

The objectives were to:

- summarise the literature on peer observation of teaching pertaining to:
  - The methods of POT; The enablers and inhibitors of POT; The evidence base pertaining to POT within the higher education sector
- establish academic staff perceptions of POT by means of a survey
- provide a training programme for those participating in POT
- implement a pilot of POT
- evaluate the impact of the project through capturing the experience of both the observers and the observees
- make recommendations for practice

1.3 Background to the change

For HEIs in Ireland, the call for improved efficiency and accountability to stakeholders in all areas of activity has never been more prominent than today. Underpinned by the recognition of HEIs as economic drivers for increased competitiveness in growing knowledge-based economies (Henard, 2010), recent government and agency policy as detailed in the Hunt Report (2011) and HEA
Chapter 1 Introduction

Report (2013), exemplifies this call. In response, HEIs have had to rise to the challenge and look for innovative ways to deliver a reformed education experience to all stakeholders. A key area for development under this reformation is the requirement for HEIs to demonstrate commitment to quality assurance and quality enhancement in teaching activity and the professional development of academic staff (Hunt, 2011).

Currently there is no requirement for the professional training of third level academic teaching staff in Ireland (Donnelly, 2007), despite the acknowledgement of the importance to assure the quality of teaching practice (Henard, 2010; Hendry & Dean, 2002). Traditionally academics are recruited based on their discipline-specific expertise. Their teaching is often centred on content knowledge rather than on pedagogical knowledge (Henard, 2010; Martin & Double, 1998) and often their teaching practice is informed by their experience as students and interactions with colleagues (Martin & Double, 1998).

1.4 Rationale for carrying out the change

The institution in which this change is taking place is a third level institution which delivers research, academic and training programmes across the health professions. The institution is responding to these changes in the higher education landscape and has enacted a strategic approach in placing the quality of teaching and learning at the centre of its activity. As part of a suite of innovations, such as the establishment of a Health Professions Education Centre, the institution is set to
introduce a process of POT for the first time. POT is often part of a strategic approach by HEIs to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Hendry & Oliver, 2012) and is gaining increased recognition in the higher education sector, not just as a mode of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning activity, but also as a conduit for the personal and professional development of academics (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005).

Biggs and Tang (2007) suggest the purpose of peer observation of teaching is “…to provide formative feedback for continuing professional development of individual teachers. A teacher invites a colleague, a critical friend, to observe his/her teaching and/or teaching materials to provide feedback for reflection and improvement” p.269.

Whilst it is acknowledged widely that a focus on quality prevails amongst staff and throughout all academic programmes in the institution, it must be accepted also that individual quality initiatives are not sufficient for embedding an institution-wide approach to quality assurance of teaching (Henard, 2010). In this regard, POT is considered central in reinforcing the culture of quality teaching in the institution and facilitating staff development in pedagogical skills and on that basis the proposed change initiative was selected. Through the implementation of a pilot of POT, the staff perceptions and experiences will provide valuable insight into the enablers and inhibitors of POT and the process of POT favoured by staff, thus providing guidance to management and enabling an informed decision on the nature of POT for this institution.
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.5 Summary

Reform initiatives are taking place across the higher education sector in Ireland. A key focus of this reformation is the quality assurance and quality enhancement of teaching activity and the professional development of teaching staff. POT is widely accepted as a mode of enhancing teaching practice and as a conduit for staff development. The institution has enacted a strategic approach in placing the quality of teaching and learning at the centre of its activity. Although it is widely acknowledged that a focus on quality prevails throughout the institution, the implementation of a POT process is considered central to reinforcing a culture of quality and facilitating the professional development of staff. Through the implementation of a pilot of POT, the experiences of participants will inform the introduction of a POT process in this institution.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this project is to implement a pilot of peer observation of teaching (POT) as part of a formative staff development initiative, in a higher education institution (HEI). As this is the first time that POT will be implemented in the institution, it is important to establish the evidence base for POT within HEIs, the methods of POT and identify the enablers and inhibitors for introducing POT. This chapter explores the literature on peer observation of teaching and identifies five key themes emerging from the evidence gathered. The five themes are discussed and implications for this project arising from the literature are addressed.

2.2 Search strategy

The implementation of POT within the institution could potentially have a significant impact on those who will engage in the process. The model and process of POT that is introduced will be informed by the literature and the evidence of best practice in other institutions. Because of this, it was decided to seek the expertise of an assistant librarian in conducting the literature review to ensure that the literature review was comprehensive and to reduce the risk of omitting seminal papers on the subject. Initial searches were carried out on PubMed and CINAHL Plus with Full Text with the support
of the assistant librarian and further searches were carried out independently on Web of Knowledge, ERIC, Emerald and Google Scholar.

2.3 Review themes

The literature reviewed on POT was very consistent in its analysis, discussion and recommendations for implementation of POT. The writer identified five broad categories in the literature relating to POT. They are:

I. POT in relation to its purpose, models and general overview
II. POT and participants’ experiences, perceptions and opinions
III. POT in relation to quality, enhancement and development
IV. POT in relation to reflection
V. POT and its implementation in higher education institutions

From these categories five central themes came to the fore which are explored in more detail below.

2.3.1 The purpose of and models of peer observation of teaching and implications for higher education institutions

Agreeing on and communicating the purpose of POT for an institution is the cornerstone of its implementation in a Higher Education Institution (Martin & Double, 1998). Largely speaking the literature suggests that POT can be used for two purposes, either summative or formative. Summative is concerned with making a judgement about a persons’ teaching and is often
management-led and linked to decisions related to promotion, tenure or accountability (Blackmore, 2005; Gosling, 2002). On the other hand, POT used for formative purposes aims to promote personal development, generate discussion and enhancement around teaching and learning, and forge collegial relationships amongst academics (Gosling, 2002; Lublin, 2002).

Agreeing the purpose of POT will inform the model that is used. Therefore it is suggested that HEIs must be clear about the purpose of POT for their institution and must decide on and communicate this at the outset (Martin & Double, 1998). In a paper by Gosling (2002) three models of POT where identified which are referred to widely in the literature. These are the Evaluation, Developmental and Peer Review models and are summarised in Table 2-1.

There is an increasing focus on accountability for HEIs in terms of the quality assurance of teaching and learning in programmes offered (Blackmore, 2005; ENQA, 2009; Henard, 2010; Hunt, 2011). To comply with external demands from stakeholders, HEIs may see the evaluation model as a suitable format to meet these demands. However, numerous studies warn of the risks involved in using POT as a compliance mechanism, suggesting that it can lead to mistrust amongst staff, disengagement from the process and become a ‘tick box’ exercise where enhancement or development of teaching and learning is limited (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Boocock, 2012; Iqbal, 2013; Shortland, 2004).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Evaluation Model</th>
<th>Development Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who does it &amp; to whom?</td>
<td>Senior staff observe other staff</td>
<td>Educational developers observe practitioners; or expert teachers observe others in department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teachers observe each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Identify under-performance, confirm probation, appraisal, promotion, quality assurance, assessment</td>
<td>Demonstrate competency/improve teaching competencies; assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>engagement in discussion about teaching; self and mutual reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Report/judgement</td>
<td>report/action plan; pass/fail PGCert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis, discussion, wider experience of teaching methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of evidence</td>
<td>authority</td>
<td>expert diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peer shared perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of observer to observed</td>
<td>power</td>
<td>expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>equality/mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>Between manager, observer and staff observed</td>
<td>Between observer and the observed, examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Between observer and the observed - shared within learning set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Selected staff</td>
<td>Selected/sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>Pass/fail, score, quality assessment, worthy/unworthy</td>
<td>How to improve; pass/fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-judgemental, constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is observed?</td>
<td>Teaching performance</td>
<td>Teaching performance, class, learning materials,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching performance, class, learning materials,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who benefits?</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>The observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual between peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions for success</td>
<td>Embedded management processes</td>
<td>Effective central unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching is valued, discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks</td>
<td>Alienation, lack of co-operation, opposition</td>
<td>No shared ownership, lack of impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complacency, conservatism, unfocused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast, the peer review model, sometimes called the collaborative model, described by Gosling (2002), receives wide support in the literature (A. Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Blackmore, 2005; Washer, 2006). This model fits closely with the use of POT for formative purposes (McMahon, Barret, & O’Neill, 2007). It is widely regarded as a support mechanism for the quality enhancement and development of teaching and learning practice.

2.3.2 Reported benefits of peer observation of teaching

The literature consistently reports the benefits of POT and, if an HEI is to introduce POT, its staff must understand what the potential benefits might be. Martin and Double suggest a number of personal and professional competencies which can be developed through engagement in POT. Many of these competencies outlined in Table 2-2 are borne out in the reviewed literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential personal and professional competencies as an outcome of engaging in POT</th>
<th>A growing ability to plan/learning activities which cater for the needs of an increasingly diverse student body within the requirements of a particular discipline provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A developing confidence to effectively employ a range of teaching strategies appropriate to the learning needs of this broad group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An ability to deliver teaching programmes which are at a level of challenge and pace appropriate to individual students, have regard to their developing understanding, and result in student work of high quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An increasing capacity to enhance the learning of students and effectively exploit the resources of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A growing awareness of the importance of personal reflection and peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A greater ability to collaborate actively in shared approach to curriculum delivery and renewal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Colleagues observing each other can be a very powerful learning experience, though this is based on the assumption that peers learn from each other (Hendry & Oliver, 2012). In a study by Bell and Mladenovic (2008), participants considered the observing process as being more beneficial than the actual feedback from peers. Evidence suggests that it is not just those who are observed and receive feedback, but also those who observe, that gain from the experience and develop or change their teaching practice as an outcome of it (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Donnelly, 2007; Gosling, 2009; Hendry & Oliver, 2012). Increased confidence in teaching which in turn, facilitated an openness to try new teaching strategies was also reported in studies by Bell and Cooper (2013), Donnelly (2007) and Hendry and Oliver (2012).

Forging a collaborative collegial culture also is regarded as a key benefit or POT. Those who participate in POT are provided with opportunities to discuss their teaching practice with their peers, share ideas and experiences, explore different methods and approaches to teaching and provide support to each other (M. Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Byrne, Brown, & Challen, 2010; Gosling, 2002; Shortland, 2004). This concept is explored further by Bell and Cooper (2013) in which participants in their study generally agreed that the POT programme had helped to develop a sense of collegiality amongst peers. Similarly, in a recent study by Carroll and O’Loughlin (2013), participants reported that POT encouraged academic engagement. However, it is suggested also that collegiality carries risks in that it can lead to conformity,
removing some of the uniqueness in the varying teaching styles amongst academics. In the study by Bell and Cooper (2013) this was found not to be the case, rather participants reported increased confidence in their teaching and a value in their own individual style, and as a result they felt comfortable giving feedback to peers.

There is also evidence to suggest that the dissemination of good teaching practice is facilitated through POT (Gosling, 2002; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). From a quality enhancement perspective this is an important component for HEIs, as it makes sense to capture and utilise the experience of their teaching staff and facilitate opportunities for staff to benefit from each other.

Another benefit highlighted in the literature is the emergence of staff development initiatives through feedback by participants on areas of practice requiring development (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). This is facilitated by centralising anonymous feedback from participants on recommendations for improvement or development. Through such a system common themes can be identified, and where appropriate, staff development opportunities can be offered generally, or be tailored for discipline-specific purposes (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). Such a system also can help to align often scarce resources with the development needs of the faculty.
2.3.3 Possible difficulties associated with peer observation of teaching

Whilst the benefits of POT are very convincing, HEIs also need to be aware of
the difficulties associated with the introduction of POT as highlighted in the
literature. If these potential difficulties are not acknowledged and paid due
attention at the outset, the introduction of POT into the institution may have
adverse effects (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Shortland, 2004).

Perhaps one of the most widely reported concerns from academics engaging
in POT is the issue of ownership and confidentiality (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013;
Traditionally academics are used to their teaching being more or less a private
arrangement between them and their students (Iqbal, 2013). Having a
colleague present in the lecture theatre and making observations regarding
their teaching can in some cases make the lecturer feel very vulnerable,
anxious or stressed. Who will see the information? What will the information
be used for? Who owns the information? These are some of the questions
arising in the literature (Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond,
2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Shortland, 2004; Washer, 2006). Many studies
recommend that the information gathered during the process should remain
the property of the observee and should not be used by managers for
evaluative purposes of the participants teaching (Shortland, 2004). The extent
to which confidentiality is an issue will depend upon the format of POT that is
introduced, though it may become less so when the collaborative model is used (Iqbal, 2013; Shortland, 2004).

Closely linked with the issue of confidentiality is the matter of trust and credibility. For the process to be meaningful, Shortland (2004) suggests that the relationship between the observer and observee must be one of mutual respect. POT is largely carried out by peers, often from the same discipline but with little training on educational pedagogy. Therefore, though observers may be content experts, their observations and feedback on a peer’s teaching may not be highly regarded by their peer if the elements of trust and credibility are absent (Blackmore, 2005; Shortland, 2004). Bell and Cooper (2013) comment on the observer being a critical friend where feedback is given ‘as dialogue and not judgement’ (p.62), thus removing the notion of the observer as an expert.

Academic autonomy is highly valued amongst academics (Bryman, 2007; Gosling, 2009). Some criticism of POT is that it can undermine academic autonomy (Iqbal, 2013; Kell & Annetts, 2009), while others have commented on how academics may find POT intrusive and a challenge to their academic freedom (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). Although the study by Bell and Cooper (2013) found that the collegial culture that emerged through engagement in POT did not lead to conformity, the criticism is still evident in the literature. Concerns remain amongst academics regarding the emergence of a ‘one size
fits all’ approach or an ‘institutional approach’ to teaching practice (Blackmore, 2005; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005).

2.3.4 Reflection and Peer Observation of Teaching

Reflection and developing reflective practice skills is reported as being central to meaningful engagement with POT (M. Bell, 2001; Cosh, 1998; Hendry & Dean, 2002; Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005). As described by Peel (2005) it is reflection “over time and through numerous situated contexts” (p.496) that changes teaching practice, challenges assumptions and helps to develop life-long learning skills.

Reflection facilitates the realisation of new levels of self-awareness, the opportunity to develop classroom practice and deeper understanding of pedagogical philosophies (Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005). Other writers comment on how reflective practice sustains life-long learning and how POT is a channel for engaging in reflective practice (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). The study by Sullivan et al (2012) also found that POT promoted reflection, providing participants with the opportunity think critically about their teaching practice.

2.3.5 Implementation of Peer Observation of Teaching

Many examples of the implementation of a POT programme in HEIs are presented in the literature. A recent study by Bell and Cooper (2013)
Chapter 2 Literature Review

recommends a framework for implementing POT. This largely successful study outlines four critical components which need to be in place for POT to be successful. An earlier study by Hammersley-Flectcher and Orsmond (2004) describes a similar process and again identifies key considerations for implementing POT. Bell and Mladenovic (2008) describe the model of POT implemented as a tutor development program and make suggestions for expanding and enhancing the process. There are commonalities across these studies which advocate similar practice when implementing POT for the first time and they are outlined in Table 2-3.
Table 2-3: Commonalities identified in practice when implementing POT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonalities identified in practice when implementing peer observation of teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The nature of the POT process has significance when POT is being introduced for the first time. The collaborative or peer-review model of POT is widely favoured in the literature (A. Bell &amp; Mladenovic, 2008; M. Bell &amp; Cooper, 2013; Hammersley-Fletcher &amp; Orsmond, 2004; Hendry &amp; Oliver, 2012). Participants in their studies reported positive experiences when a formative, developmental approach was taken. In contrast Shortland (2004) suggests that a POT process that is management-led and primarily serves to meet the requirements of external quality agencies will have less traction with academic staff and may falter once the urgency for its initial purpose has passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The participants in most studies engaged in POT on a voluntary basis initially. This appears to be an important aspect in moving from the private classroom experience between teacher and student, to a more open experience between peers (A. Bell &amp; Mladenovic, 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher &amp; Orsmond, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidentiality in the process is also considered important in terms of engaging staff in POT. Most studies reported that the ownership or the documentation remained with the participant who was observed (M. Bell &amp; Cooper, 2013). However, in some instances, developmental needs arising from the process were captured in a confidential manner (Hammersley-Fletcher &amp; Orsmond, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In some studies, POT was a reciprocal process, where the pairs had opportunity to observe each other (Hammersley-Fletcher &amp; Orsmond, 2004; Hendry &amp; Oliver, 2012). This is linked to the reported benefits of acting as an observer as well as receiving feedback on teaching (M. Bell &amp; Cooper, 2013; Donnelly, 2007; Gosling, 2009; Hendry &amp; Oliver, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In the framework put forward by Bell and Cooper (2013), a facilitator or coordinator was seen as important in terms of providing unbiased support to participants engaging in the process. In the study by Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004), the coordinators role was to provide support and also to confidentially collate feedback and identify development needs of staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Implications for the change project

One of the key implications for implementing the pilot project will be the nature of the POT process selected. The institution needs to be clear from the outset what it will be used for, in order to get buy-in from staff. In the pilot project POT was introduced using the collaborative model. The benefits of POT are widely reported and staff will have to understand the relevant advantages of engaging in the process. This is linked to the ‘what’s in it for me’ element of introducing change, and will require continuous communication with stakeholders to encourage participants to engage in the process.

Anxiety and stress experienced by some participants in POT studies is also an issue requiring consideration. There will be a need for sensitivity towards staff to assure them of the formative and confidential nature of the process (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Martin & Double, 1998).

The complexity of implementing POT has to be acknowledged by management in the institution. This is about creating a supportive environment where staff will feel safe engaging in POT (A. Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Shortland, 2004). Management will have to give their support to the process and recognise the value of POT over competing demands on staffs’ time (Henard, 2010). In the long-term, the institution will need to give
consideration to providing a coordinator/facilitator for the process and be willing to invest in training and staff development needs arising from process.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has explored the literature in relation to POT and is so doing identified five central themes which were discussed in detail. What is evident from the literature is the congruence in the analysis, discussion and recommendations for introducing a process of POT within HEIs. A formative approach to POT was consistently recommended and favoured by participants in other studies. Numerous benefits for engaging in POT for both participants and the institution were highlighted. However, there are a number of risks associated with engaging in POT, which should be taken into consideration. Reflection is considered central to a meaningful POT process, facilitating the deeper understanding of pedagogical issues. Several writers put forward a framework for implementation of POT. In general the literature suggests a framework that is formative in nature, a reciprocal process, voluntary in the initial stages, in which ownership of the documentation remains with participants and a facilitator or coordinator is in place to support the process.

Creating a supportive environment for engaging in a POT process is central to getting buy-in from academics. Management must acknowledge the complexity of implementing POT and recognise its value over competing
demands on staff. However, given the consistency in the literature, if the identified enablers and inhibitors for POT inform the basis for a POT process, management can be confident that they are implementing a process that is in line with best practice as evidenced in the literature.
Chapter 3 Change Process

3 Chapter 3 Change Process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the management of the change process for the implementation of a pilot project in peer observation of teaching. The HSE change model was chosen as a framework to guide the process and a detailed description of its application under each of the four stages is described. A synopsis of the strengths and limitations of the change project and a summary of the key aspects encountered during the process are presented.

3.2 The change process and rationale for the selection of the chosen change model

Implementing change can be a very complex process, requiring simultaneous consideration of multiple factors (Shanley, 2007). There are many different approaches to the management of change which can be categorised into a hard systems model or a soft systems model of change (Senior, 2002). The hard systems model works best when there are clear and measurable goals to be achieved, in situations where change is a means to solving a problem. The soft systems approach is underpinned by organisational development assumptions concerning the significance of three factors: people in organisations; organisations as systems; and organisations as learning organisations. Change can be further categorised by the frequency of occurrence, by whether it is planned or emergent and the extent of the change itself (Senior, 2002). This concept is explored further in a paper by
Chapter 3 Change Process

Todnem (2005) which concludes that the pace of change across all sectors is increasing, requiring a skilled managed approach to change for it to be successful. However Todnem (2005)p.370 suggests that despite this the management of change tends to remain largely “reactive, discontinuous and ad hoc”.

Young (2009) explores the common themes arising in the change literature classifying them under nine headings, from which commonalities in the process of change emerge. Young’s meta model of change provides further guidance to practitioners of change, reinforcing the concept of the necessity for the management of change, regardless of motivating factors for change. ‘Leading change’ is identified as one of the nine themes in which the work by Kotter (2007) and Fernandez and Rainey (2006) are commonly cited. Kotter (2007) puts forward a model for managing change, referred to as Kotter’s eight steps, which aligns with the soft systems approach to change. The model guides practitioners through critical steps for successful implementation of change. Change models provide a useful framework for introducing change which, when used effectively, can lead to the achievement of the final desired state of change (Shanley, 2007).

Based on similar principles to Kotter’s eight steps, the HSE change model guides practitioners through the complex process of change management, whilst at its core maintaining focus on the aspects of change underpinned in the soft systems approach (HSE, 2008). However, unlike Kotter’s model which is linear in nature, the HSE model is a cyclical process which allows for the complexity of change, suggesting that change does not take place in a linear manner. Rather, it is a set of
multiple-interacting factors, which are often in a dynamic state, requiring re-visiting and consideration throughout the change process. I believe this dynamic state is inherent in the HSE Change Model (2008) and selected the model on that basis.

3.3 Change model

3.3.1 Stage 1: Initiation. Preparing to lead the change

Understanding the context in which the proposed change is taking place is fundamental to its implementation. The initiation stage of the HSE model captures the context in which the change project is being implemented.

3.3.1.1 Context and driving forces for implementing the change

Driven largely by political and economic forces, HEIs in Ireland are moving into a new era in terms of how they interact with each other, in satisfying the
Chapter 3 Change Process

expectations of stakeholders and managing the increased demands for quality and accountability in all aspects of their activities (Hunt, 2011). The higher education landscape in Ireland is changing and is poised for further changes as detailed in the Hunt Report (2011) and the recent HEA report to government in response to the Hunt Report (HEA, 2013). It was within this environment that this change was implemented.

Like other HEIs, quality and accountability is high on the agenda for this institution and certain criteria in relation to the quality assurance and quality enhancement of teaching and learning activities must be met as part of the ongoing QA/QI agenda. It is imperative for the institution to demonstrate commitment to, and the application of, quality assurance and quality enhancement initiatives in its teaching activities (QQI, 2013). This is relatively urgent as the institution is now three years on from a previous quality review where staff development in teaching and learning was a recommendation of the review panel. The subsequent quality review is due in the next six months where the recommendations from the previous review will again come under consideration.

POT is accepted widely as a process in which institutions can not just meet these demands but also achieve quality enhancement benefits for staff and students (Henard, 2010). However, on a cautionary note, we are reminded in the literature that POT used solely for the purpose of satisfying external demands for quality and accountability is unlikely to yeild lasting benefits for the institution and its teaching staff (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Iqbal, 2013; Shortland, 2004).
Much like other organisations, HEIs exist in the world of competition. They have to remain alert to their environment and focused on the aspects of their activities that will gain them and sustain them in achieving competitive advantage (Porter, 2008). In the recent strategic review of the institution, ‘Excellence in Education’ is identified as a key objective in the strategic plan. Given the benefits of POT discussed in Chapter 2, it is expected that the introduction of POT into the institution will go towards the realisation of this objective.

As evident in the strategic plan, the focus on quality of teaching and learning is being brought more to the centre of activity in the institution. This is further displayed by the establishment of a Health Professions Education Centre, and the appointment of staff to support this. These developments suggest that the Institution is ready for this change and is supportive of its introduction. In addition, direct support and sponsorship for this change initiative was sought and received from a member of senior management in the institution. This again was further evidence of the readiness of the institution to implement the change.

The institution has a track record of innovation and has led the way in many areas of activity amongst its competitors. For example, it was the first institution in Ireland to introduce a Graduate Entry Programme into Medicine and recently it successfully tendered for the development of the first Institute of Pharmacy in Ireland. This culture of innovation is an important factor and displays the readiness of staff to accept the tasks that they are frequently charged with and successfully implement change across the institution (Young, 2009).
3.3.1.2 Environment Analysis

3.3.1.2.1 SWOT Analysis

However, although the Institution appeared to be ready for this change, having conducted a SWOT analysis the potential weaknesses and threats associated with the planned change were highlighted (Table 3-1). In particular, real consideration was given to reassuring staff of the formative nature of this process and to providing assurance of the confidentiality of their engagement in POT. Another factor that required monitoring was the support from management within the institution. Engagement in POT requires participants giving up time in other areas, such as research, if they are to engage in a worthwhile way in the process. If managers do not facilitate and support this, then the project is likely to become a ‘tick box’ exercise with no real personal learning or self-development emerging from it.

3.3.1.2.2 Stakeholder analysis

Understanding how change can impact on an organisation and its people can assist leaders to better manage the complex process of change. A central component of the HSE change model is its attention to the stakeholders impacted by the change. Stakeholder analysis facilitates identification of all those who will be affected by the change and in so doing also highlights areas where resistance to change might occur (Bryson, 2004). Resistance can occur for many reasons including sense of loss, fear, uncertainty, change fatigue (Shanley, 2007). Leading change requires
acknowledgement of, and inclusion of strategies for management of, potential resistance to the change (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Rantz, 2002).

Table 3-1: SWOT Analysis of Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Engaged academic staff</td>
<td>- Limited history of training and development in teaching and learning pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Culture of innovation in the institution</td>
<td>- Time constraints for staff – will have to find time to carry this out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Readiness within institution for introduction of POT</td>
<td>- Traditionally the institution is more focused on research output and POT will impact on staff time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Development of teaching practice required under QA/QI regulations</td>
<td>- Loss of academic autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Core component of new strategic plan</td>
<td>- Concerns over confidentiality and trust in the POT process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Establishment of new Centre for Teaching and Learning and appointment of staff to support it.</td>
<td>- Potential for POT to be used against staff if used to evaluate staff performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Establishment of Personal Development Planning (PDP) system</td>
<td>- Staff won’t buy-in to it for the above and other reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunities for academic promotion</td>
<td>- Needs the support of management, particularly in recognising its value over conflicting demands such as research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunity to identify and share ‘best practice’ in teaching and learning</td>
<td>- Establishment of committee on POT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point a stakeholder analysis was conducted and plotted on a power/interest matrix (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2006). This was found to be a useful process as it ensured that all stakeholders were identified and the level of engagement required was understood.
Teaching staff were identified as a key stakeholder as it is their teaching practice that is the focus of the change project, their power and interest was considered high. It was important to communicate and engage closely with this group, ensuring that their input into the process is captured. Management representatives from across the institution were also identified in this category; their support and approval for this change is paramount to its implementation, without it staff will not be encouraged to engage in the pilot study. Other stakeholders identified are students, Human Resources, staff from the education unit who will provide training in POT and staff in the Quality Enhancement Office who will assist in implementing the survey and collecting the data.

Some way into the project another stakeholder group was identified. This is a committee that was established during this project to look at a policy for introducing POT into the institution. This committee worked in parallel to the pilot study. The flexibility within the HSE model allowed for me to go back and identify this stakeholder group, even though the change project was well underway when the committee was formed. This committee was categorised as having high interest and high power as the work of the committee could affect the outcome of the change project.
3.3.1.3  Force field analysis

Through the force field analysis exercise a visual image of the driving and restraining forces for the change emerge. This quickly helped to identify restraining forces that needed to be reduced or eliminated where possible and driving forces that can be leveraged in favour of the change. Following the model guidelines I listed what I had identified as the main drivers for change and the main restraining forces for change (Senior, 2002). Each of these forces were then assigned a weight from 1 to 5, 1 being the force is considered weak and 5 being the force is considered strong. I allocated a weight of 5 to the legislation and institutional review, as they both created a sense of urgency for driving the change. I assigned a weight of 4 to trust and confidentiality in the process and the nature of POT to be introduced. Though I identified them as strong restraining forces, I believed that the sense of urgency associated with the legislation and impending institutional
review were stronger forces. The remaining forces were assigned lower weights between 2 and 3. The model suggests that if the driving forces outweigh the restraining forces then you should proceed with the change, however you must attend to the restraining forces to take measures to reduce or eliminate them where possible.

At the end of this part of the initiation process I decided to proceed with the change and in so doing paid particular attention to maintaining communication with key stakeholders to ensure that their input, opinion, and support for the process was sustained throughout the project. This was also important from the point of view of reducing the risk of resistance to the change as the extent of participation in the change process has a positive relationship to overcoming the resistance to change (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

3.3.2 Stage 2: Planning

The planning stage involves a three-step approach centred on building commitment for the change, determining the detail of the change and developing the implementation plan. Although the model suggests a set of steps to be taken separately in planning the change, the reality in this change project was that the three elements were occurring simultaneously. However, to provide clarity and structure around the process of planning the change, I will describe the events under the separate headings. At the outset of the project a Gantt chart was
drafted. However during the course of the project it was modified when necessary, and the final Gantt Chart is available as appendix 1.

3.3.2.1 **Planning: Building Commitment**

When implementing any change it is important to identify those who are most likely to support or go along with the proposed changes, to get buy-in from the beginning (Senior, 2002). Forming a powerful guiding coalition is considered vital for success in organisational change. The coalition needs to be high-powered in terms of ‘titles, information and expertise, reputations and relationships’ (Kotter, 2007)p. 4. This starts with building and communicating a shared vision of the change and of what the change will mean to the organisation (Kotter, 2001). The staff would have to understand and align to the vision for the change project to be successful (Gill, 2002). It was during this stage that I fine-tuned the plan for the change in terms of what the changed involved, who would be involved and what the outcome of the change would be. Fernandez and Rainey (2006) highlight the importance of creating a sense of ownership, disseminating significant information and facilitating feedback amongst stakeholders.

Having identified the key stakeholders, I began the process of engagement with them. As outlined in the initiation stage, I had secured the support of a key member of senior management. I felt this person was critical to the successful implementation of the change and consulted with them on an on-going basis on the progress of the change project.
At an education research meeting, I took the opportunity to present my change project to the members. This was a useful platform for sounding out the project proposal and refining some of the objectives. It was from feedback at this meeting that the participants for the study were expanded to include a group that I had previously not considered but who would be suitable to partake in the pilot study.

Securing the support from other senior members of staff was also considered very important. In many instances the senior members of staff were the managers of the staff who would be invited to take part in the pilot study. I had to ensure that they understood the basis for the change, what it involved and how I perceived it would affect them and their staff. It also gave them the opportunity to contribute to the format of the pilot study and to make recommendations for its implementation. Creating a sense of ownership and consultation with stakeholders during a change process is recommended by many in the literature (Kotter, 2007), particularly in relation to reducing resistance and gaining support for the change. I found this to be true and was buoyed by the overwhelming support and valuable contributions that I received. One senior member of staff said that it was like “pushing an open door”. These meetings also had an additional benefit in that the managers then gave time during their staff meetings to discuss the change project and encourage staff to participate if they wished to do so.

Another senior member of staff invited me to speak about the change project at a committee meeting of the key stakeholders whom I hoped would participate in the project. Gaining access to this group in this forum had the double effect of
endorsing the project and provided a unique opportunity to communicate the planned change and vision with my target audience.

During this phase of the project an issue arose that caused some concern to me initially, which was subsequently resolved quite easily. This issue is described in a personal reflection in Table 3-2.
During this phase of the project, a committee was established to scope out the potential for implementing POT across the institution. This was of initial concern to me as I feared that it would send a confused message to staff in the institution. I had spent considerable time engaging with the academic staff, communicating the vision for the change and getting their support for it. Now, a second group was consulting with staff on POT and potentially communicating a different vision. For this project, it raised questions as to which vision staff would align with? Which message would they listen to? Or would they be so confused that they disengaged from the process? (Kotter, 2001).

At this point in the project I was concerned that I would not maintain the support and buy-in from staff that I felt had been secured. However, I knew that I had to address this concern in order to move forward with the project. I decided that it was important to meet with the committee Chair to discuss my concerns and seek clarification on our dual projects. It turned out to be the best move as our meeting had the effect of dissolving my concerns and facilitated a collaborative approach to fulfilling both our project requirements. I was invited to be ‘in attendance’ at the committee meetings. I contributed regularly to the meetings and it was agreed that the findings of the change project would be considered in the final report of the committee. This reinforced the importance of communication and to keep communication going throughout the change process.

When implementing change we are often faced with such issues or challenges. From this experience I learned that it is important to deal with issues as they arise and not just ignore or avoid them. At some point down the line you are going to have to address it and at that stage it may be too late.

Table 3-2: Personal Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During this phase of the project, a committee was established to scope out the potential for implementing POT across the institution. This was of initial concern to me as I feared that it would send a confused message to staff in the institution. I had spent considerable time engaging with the academic staff, communicating the vision for the change and getting their support for it. Now, a second group was consulting with staff on POT and potentially communicating a different vision. For this project, it raised questions as to which vision staff would align with? Which message would they listen to? Or would they be so confused that they disengaged from the process? (Kotter, 2001).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point in the project I was concerned that I would not maintain the support and buy-in from staff that I felt had been secured. However, I knew that I had to address this concern in order to move forward with the project. I decided that it was important to meet with the committee Chair to discuss my concerns and seek clarification on our dual projects. It turned out to be the best move as our meeting had the effect of dissolving my concerns and facilitated a collaborative approach to fulfilling both our project requirements. I was invited to be ‘in attendance’ at the committee meetings. I contributed regularly to the meetings and it was agreed that the findings of the change project would be considered in the final report of the committee. This reinforced the importance of communication and to keep communication going throughout the change process.

When implementing change we are often faced with such issues or challenges. From this experience I learned that it is important to deal with issues as they arise and not just ignore or avoid them. At some point down the line you are going to have to address it and at that stage it may be too late.
At each opportunity during the stakeholder consultation process the benefits and risks associated with POT, as evidenced in the literature, where outlined and discussed. Given the potential risks of implementing POT in the institution, I emphasised continuously the purpose of the pilot study and the formative and confidential nature of the POT process itself. As is commonly recognised in managing change, failure to provide clarity on the change and the expected outcome, can adversely affect the process of change. As reminded by Bryman (2007) we may be managers of meaning, but we are not controllers of meaning and therefore we must make sure that the purpose and the intent of the change is not only communicated to, but also understood, by stakeholders.

3.3.2.2 Determining the detail of the change

Feedback from my meetings with key stakeholders provided further evidence for the rationale for implementing POT on a pilot basis, from which recommendations could be made for an institution-wide implementation of POT.

As mentioned earlier, it was feedback from stakeholders that determined the selection of participants for the pilot study. Discussion with a member of the education team clarified how to implement the pilot study in terms of training for participants and the observation process itself. The member of senior management, who has significant experience in research, made valuable recommendations for conducting the focus groups.
Establishing the current perspectives of staff regarding POT was central to the study. It was planned to do this by administering a short online survey to selected participants via Survey Monkey (appendix 2). Given the potential risks associated with the proposed change, it was important to give assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of survey results. To this end, I engaged with a member of staff from the Quality Enhancement Office. Advice was given on administering the survey and the Quality Enhancement Office agreed to administer it and collate the results and provide the survey results in an anonymised report.

Of critical importance to the change project was securing ethical approval for the pilot study. This forced me to make sure that the details for the pilot study were clear, relevant, sponsored by the institution and safe-guarded the interests of participants. An application was made to the Research Ethics Committee at the institution and approval for the pilot study was granted (appendix 3). Receiving ethics approval was further endorsement of the robustness of the proposed change initiative.

3.3.2.3 Developing the implementation plan

Timing is of critical importance when implementing change. Having created a vision, developed a sense of awareness and created a guiding coalition, it was important to leverage the interest and support of stakeholders and implement the change in this new state of awareness and enthusiasm for POT in the institution.
(Kotter, 2001). At this point I set the time-frame for the implementation of the pilot study. The implementation plan is outlined in Table 3-3.

**Table 3-3: Pilot study implementation plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Develop list of participants for pilot study. Final list verified by managers and cross referenced with teaching schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Administer survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Close survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Invite volunteers to participate in pilot study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March – April</td>
<td>Provide training on POT to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>POT process is carried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Conduct focus groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants of the study had been identified as all the staff who taught on the undergraduate programmes in the foundation, first and second years of study at a single campus. A member of staff from the education unit with expertise in POT was approached and agreed to provide an education workshop for the volunteers for the pilot study, the details of which were agreed at a planning meeting.

**3.3.3 Stage 3: Implementation**

It would be fair to say that the implementation of the pilot study was extremely straight-forward. Although some resistance was anticipated, I did not encounter any during the pilot project. When leading change, approaches for dealing with potential resistance to change including education and communication, participation and involvement, and facilitation and support are suggested by Kotter and Schlesinger (2008). I believe that the reason I did not experience any resistance
Chapter 3 Change Process

was that the effort invested in preparation, communication and consultation during the planning and initiation stages, had successfully laid the foundations for the POT pilot process. The vision that had been created and communicated was one that the participants understood and were supportive of.

In early March the survey on staff perceptions on POT went live. Through the Quality Enhancement Office participants (n=66) were sent a personalised email inviting them to complete the survey. On day three, a second invitation was sent to those who had not completed the survey. The survey was closed on day five, having reached a 71% response rate. The Quality Enhancement Office then issued an anonymised report of the survey data. The results of the survey are discussed in Chapter 4.

Once the survey was closed I emailed all participants inviting volunteers for the pilot study. I was looking for 6 volunteers but I received expressions of interest from 19 members of staff. All 19 volunteers were invited to partake in the study. However, it was necessary that all volunteers would attend the education workshop and, of the 19, 11 were available.

The two-hour education workshop was held at the end of March with the 11 volunteers. The workshop comprised of presentations on POT, giving and receiving feedback and information on the observation tool. Questions and discussion were facilitated throughout the session. The literature on POT highlights a number of potential risks associated with the process. Issues such as participants feeling
vulnerable or anxious have been reported, the need for trust and mutual respect between partners is considered crucial and the confidentiality of the process must be guaranteed (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Blackmore, 2005). Because of the potential risks I wanted to make sure that all participants were comfortable with the process and that they were in agreement with how the pilot study would be conducted.

Therefore it was agreed at the workshop that I would randomly assign partners for the POT process, one to be observed and one to act as observer. One participant was to act as a reserve. Participants were then required to carry out the observation during a three-week period, following which they were invited to give their feedback at a focus group. Two separate focus groups were conducted, one for those who acted as observers and one for those who were observed. The feedback from the focus groups is discussed in Chapter 4. The POT process followed during the pilot study is outlined in Table 3-4

### Table 3-4: POT process conducted in pilot study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of POT</th>
<th>Collaborative (peer-review) model used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure of observation process</strong></td>
<td>Pre-observation meeting to agree goals and focus of observation; logistical arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation – feedback tool used to guide the observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-observation meeting – give feedback and provide opportunity for reflection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4 Stage 4: Mainstreaming

Embedding change in an organisation and making it “the way we do our business” (HSE, 2008) p. 61 is the ultimate goal when leading change. The overwhelming support from staff and the positive findings of the pilot study (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4) suggest that the academic staff and the institution itself are poised to embrace the introduction of a POT process. However, given the timeframe for this project in relation to completion of the MSc programme, the point at which POT is fully embedded in the institution was not reached. Rather, several initiatives are currently in progress which I believe will ensure that POT will be introduced into the institution in the 2013-2014 academic year. These initiatives are outlined under the following bullet points:

- The findings of the pilot study have been fed back to the POT steering group. Their report with recommendations for introducing POT into the institution will acknowledge the output from this change project.
- I will provide a summary report to senior management which details the process and the outcome of the pilot study and will also include recommendations for implementation of POT.
- The quantitative results from the staff survey have been circulated to all participants. I consider this to be an important step as it highlights to staff the overall interest and support for the introduction of POT into the institution. It also provides evidence of the POT format, i.e. for formative purposes, that staff would like to see introduced.
• At the invitation of senior management, this change project on POT was presented to an audience of teaching staff at an annual education forum during the summer. It provided the opportunity to disseminate the results of the pilot study to a wider group. It served also to demonstrate the rigorous planning and inclusive approach taken in this change project, which will hopefully reinforce staff commitment to the change.

• I believe that POT is very much to the fore of the agenda for enhancing the teaching practice within the institution. At a board meeting of the governing authority of the institution, details of the study were outlined. This further demonstrates the readiness and commitment of the institution for the implementation of POT.

3.4 Strengths and limitations of the project

The main strengths and limitations that I identified during this process are outlined in Table 3-5.
### Table 3-5: Strengths and Limitations of Change Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Limitations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The pilot study has heightened the sense of awareness amongst staff of POT and in so doing increased the readiness and capacity within the institution for introducing the change</td>
<td>• This is a change project that is part fulfilment of an MSc. Because of this, there was a limited timeframe for implementation. As a result, not all staff in the institution were invited to partake in the pilot study as it would not have been possible to complete the project within the set time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The survey of staff perceptions conducted as part of this project provides evidence for introducing POT</td>
<td>• The change has not had time to embed within the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The inclusive approach taken during the change project has reduced the risk of resistance to the change</td>
<td>• There is the potential for bias in the evaluation of the pilot study as all participants were volunteers. This may indicate that they already had an interest in this area. These early adapters will be useful for leveraging the change. However, it does not account for those who were not involved in the pilot study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The experiences of participants in the pilot study reflect the themes highlighted in the literature. This suggests that the pilot study explored and addressed the key areas associated with implementing POT.</td>
<td>• It is still unclear as to how the outcome of the pilot study will be incorporated into the final recommendations for the implementation of POT into the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There now is evidence of staff participating in POT which can be leveraged for its implementation across the institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Summary

This change initiative, though challenging at times, was implemented successfully. Using the HSE model was critical for guiding the process and helped to structure my approach to the change initiative. The core focus of the HSE model is its attention to stakeholders in the initiation and planning stages, and ensuring that stakeholder engagement was established and maintained throughout the pilot project. This was also important from the perspective of reducing the risk of resistance to the initiative. The inclusive approach taken had the effect of creating a sense of ownership in the project and therefore no resistance was experienced. Embedding peer observation of teaching in the institution is the final stage in the process. Although the project has not quite reached that point because of the timeframe, there are several initiatives currently in progress which I believe will ensure that POT will be introduced into the institution in the next academic year.
Chapter 4 Evaluation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the evaluation plan for an education initiative regarding the implementation of a pilot of peer observation of teaching in a higher education institution. It provides a brief overview of the purpose and theoretical background of evaluation. The Jacobs Model of Evaluation (Jacobs, 2000) is selected as the means of evaluating this change project and an account of its application is described. It describes the key methods of evaluation for this project, which include a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques in the form a survey and focus groups. The evaluation findings are reported and analysed and a discussion of the findings is presented.

Project Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this project was to implement peer observation of teaching (POT) on a pilot basis, as part of a formative staff development initiative, in a higher education setting.

The objectives were to:

- summarise the literature on peer observation of teaching pertaining to:
  - The methods of POT; The enablers and inhibitors of POT; The evidence base pertaining to POT within the higher education sector
- establish academic staff perceptions of POT
• provide a training programme for those participating in POT
• implement a pilot of POT
• evaluate the impact of the project through capturing the experience of both the observers and the observees
• make recommendations for practice

4.2 Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation is often concerned with effectiveness, improvement and decision-making (Frye & Hemmer, 2012; Joyce, 2010). Others describe evaluation as being concerned with making a judgement on the value of a program (Cook, 2010). It is increasingly being used as a method of accountability, making a value judgement and meeting the needs of multiple stakeholders (McNamara, Joyce, & O’Hara, 2010).

Evaluation is grounded in three theoretical camps, reductionist theory, system theory and complexity theory (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). Each of these theories lend themselves to particular evaluation models or approaches. Numerous evaluation models, such as Kirkpatrick’s Model of Evaluation, the CIPP Model and the Jacobs Model, have emerged from these theoretical backgrounds and can assist evaluators in evaluating programmes from various perspectives (Frye & Hemmer, 2012).

However, what is coming to the fore from the literature is the importance of the context in which a program operates and the complexity and inter-relationships between program components (Frye & Hemmer, 2012; McNamara et al., 2010).
The literature recommends that whatever model evaluators choose the context should be incorporated into the evaluation process.

4.3 Jacobs Model of Evaluation

The Jacobs Model (Figure 4-1) is a ten-stage evaluation process designed to accommodate the evaluation of innovative practices, which typically operate in challenging environments often with multiple stakeholder interests to serve (Jacobs, 2000). The model allows for checking and revision at several stages of the process, being cognisant of the complex dynamic environment, often fraught with ‘uncertainty and ambiguity’ (Frye & Hemmer, 2012)p.291 in which programs exist.

4.3.1 Rationale for selecting the Jacobs Model

The context for this innovation and the interests and requirements of stakeholders are key deciding factors in choosing the Jacobs model to evaluate the change project. The need for illumination of the initiative and its outcomes is an important feature in the implementation of POT in the institution. I believe that serving the interests of stakeholders is of particular relevance to this change project. Stages one through to three and stage ten of the model will have a particular bearing on this aspect of the project. The aspects of the innovation to be evaluated, sources of information, the criteria for evaluation, the collection methods and the data gathered (stages four to eight) are key components of the initiative which will influence stakeholder perceptions and adoption of POT.
Figure 4-1: Jacobs Model of Evaluation (Jacobs, 2000)
4.4 Evaluation of change project

4.4.1 Stage 1: Locate the innovation within the context and policy framework of its operation.

The context in which this change was piloted is described extensively in Chapter 3. In summary, this change initiative took place in a Health Professions higher education institution against the background of the emergence of a new landscape for the higher education sector. Shaped by legislative requirements and government policy (HEA, 2013; Hunt, 2011), this emerging landscape is calling for improved efficiencies, increased collaboration and increased accountability in all activities delivered in the higher education sector. The demonstration of quality assurance in relation to teaching and learning is central in this emerging landscape.

In the institution, excellence in teaching and learning is one of the core objectives of its recently launched strategic plan. Currently there is no formal process of POT within the institution. It is anticipated that this pilot project, its findings and its recommendations, will pave the way for the introduction of POT in the institution, whilst going some way towards satisfying the demands of stakeholders.

4.4.2 Stage 2: Determine the goals of the evaluation

The goals of this evaluation were to:

- Provide a summary of the existing evidence base pertaining to POT
- Develop a greater awareness of academic staff perceptions of POT
Chapter 4 Evaluation

- Provide a training programme for those participating in POT
- Develop an understanding of the impact of POT in terms of the observer and the observee
- Provide guidance for management regarding the implementation of POT across the institution.

4.4.3 Stage 3: Identify principal stakeholders from all constituencies.

A stakeholder analysis was carried out as part of the change process and is outlined in Chapter 3.

4.4.4 Stages 4, 5 & 6: Identify the aspects of the innovation to be evaluated; determine the criteria for evaluating aspects of the innovation; decide on the best sources of information.

Stages 4, 5 and 6 are linked in keeping with the cycle of collaboration inherent in this model and the fact that there should be movement back and forth between these stages. The aspects of the project to be evaluated should broadly be considered in terms of the innovation itself and the institutional context (Jacobs, 2000).

The aspects of the innovation which were evaluated concerned the implementation of the pilot of POT which involved:
Chapter 4 Evaluation

- A detailed literature review to explore the various aspects of POT and the implications for the introduction of POT. The existing literature informed the POT process that was piloted.

- Delivery of a training programme for participants of the pilot project.

- Conducting a pilot of POT.

In the institutional context, it was important to gain a greater understanding of how staff in the institution perceived POT, as this had implications for how POT would be introduced into the institution. In addition, it was important to capture the experiences of staff who participated in the pilot as their positive experiences could be leveraged in favour of introducing POT. Also, any issues that arose in the pilot could be addressed prior to rolling out POT in the institution.

Jacobs (2000) stresses the importance of including as many stakeholders as possible as sources of information. To this end I consulted with a wide range of stakeholders as identified in stage 3. The role of the evaluator is also highlighted as a principal source of information and recommendations are made for the maintenance of personal records. Throughout this project I kept a notebook and a record of each meeting or event was captured. In addition I have kept a reflective diary and this was also a useful source of information for my own personal understanding of the complexities of the change process and its evaluation.
4.4.5 **Stage 7: Decide on evaluation methods to be used**

Stage 7 activates the second cycle of continuous movement between stages, in this instance, stages 6, 7 & 8 (Figure 4-1). Also, at stage seven it is advised to revisit stage 2, ‘to reflect on the formative, summative and illuminative goals of the evaluation’ (Jacobs, 2000)p.270. The evaluation was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire of open and closed questions (appendix 2) was used to gather staff perceptions of POT, and two focus groups (appendix 4) were conducted to capture participants’ experiences of engaging in POT.

4.4.6 **Stage 8: Collect data from sources**

Jacobs (2000) emphasises the importance of taking measures to ensure that the instruments used for the collection of data are reliable and valid. To ensure congruence between the goals of the evaluation and the methods used to collect the data, several layers of scrutiny were applied to the staff survey tool and the focus group questions. This involved receiving approval from the Research Ethics Committee, seeking input from the Quality Enhancement Office, the review of documentation by the HR Department and by a member of senior management, thus ensuring face and content validity.

4.4.6.1 **Objective: To summarise the literature on peer observation of teaching**

A comprehensive review to the literature on peer observation of teaching was conducted and is presented in Chapter 2. The key themes that emerged from the literature informed the change process, the implementation of the pilot of peer
observation of teaching and the recommendations for practice. Therefore the objective of summarising the literature on peer observation of teaching was achieved.

4.4.6.2 Objective: To establish staff perceptions of POT

Based on key themes arising from the literature review, a survey instrument was designed to elicit staff perceptions of POT. The survey was administered by the Quality Enhancement Office via Survey Monkey. In early March participants were invited to complete the online survey. On day three, a second invitation was sent to those who had not completed the survey. The survey was closed on day five, with 47/66 responding, achieving a 71% response rate. The outcome of this objective is discussed under heading 4.5.1.

4.4.6.3 Objective: To provide a training programme for those participating in POT

In early April, a two-hour education workshop on POT was delivered to volunteers for the pilot project. The workshop explored aspects of POT and the process followed for this pilot, including information on the selected observation tool and guidance on giving and receiving feedback (appendix 5). Therefore the objective of providing a training programme for those participating in the POT pilot process was achieved.
4.4.6.4 **Objective: To implement a pilot of POT**

In the following three weeks, ten participants (five observers and five observees) carried out the POT process. Informed by the existing literature, the POT process that was followed was the peer review model (Table 2-1 Models of Peer Observation of Teaching (Gosling, 2002)) and involved:

- A pre-observation meeting
- The observation. *(using a structured feedback tool; appendix 5)*
- Post-observation meeting

The objective of implementing a pilot of POT was therefore achieved.

**Objective: To evaluate the impact of the project through capturing the experiences of both the observers and observees.**

At the end of April, following the POT sessions, participants were invited to take part in a focus group where they answered questions regarding their experiences of the POT process (appendix 4). Two focus groups were conducted, one for observers and one for observees. Both focus groups were recorded with signed consent from participants. The results of this objective are discussed under heading 4.5.2.
4.4.7  **Stage 9: Analyse and interpret findings & Stage 10: Disseminate the evaluation findings**

The type of analysis carried out was guided by the methods of evaluation outlined at stage 7. In this project the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. The qualitative data from the two focus groups was analysed using thematic analysis.

4.4.7.1  **Objective: To make recommendations for practice.**

At this stage it is important to disseminate the findings to as many stakeholders as is feasible in a timely manner in order to sustain the interest and momentum generated during the change project. The change project and evaluations of the pilot of POT were presented to staff at an International Education Forum in the institution, where recommendations for the introduction of POT and a model of POT were outlined.

The quantitative survey results were also made available to the peer observation steering committee, and were used to inform their report on introducing POT. In addition, a summary report of the change project, the outcome and recommendations for implementation of POT, will be sent to senior management within the institution. The results of the pilot project will also be made available to an external quality assurance agency during the upcoming institutional review later in the year.
Given the extensive dissemination of the evaluation findings and accompanying recommendations for the implementation of POT in the institution, the objective of making recommendations for practice was achieved.

4.5 Evaluation results and discussion of findings

4.5.1 Survey to elicit staff perceptions of Peer Observation of Teaching

Teaching staff in foundation year, junior cycle and year 1 on three the undergraduate programmes on a single campus were selected as the sample for the survey of staff perceptions of POT. The instrument (appendix 2) was based on themes identified in the literature review. The online survey was administered to 66 participants, of which 47 responded achieving a 71% response rate.

![Would you be prepared to take part in POT?](image)

Figure 4-2: Results of respondents willing to take part in POT

Figure 4-2 shows results for those responding ‘yes’ to the question.
Figure 4-3: Respondents with previous experience of engaging in POT

Figure 4-3 shows results for those responding ‘yes’ to the question. When the data is cross-referenced with the free text comments it suggests that this experience was either gained at another institution or in an informal manner where lecturers sit in on each others’ lectures.
Figure 4-4: Would you like to see POT introduced?

For respondents who made no response the free text comments suggested that they would have liked a neutral response option. The main concerns raised in the free text comments were with regards to the following points:

- the nature of POT to be introduced i.e. whether it is for formative or summative purposes;
- whether or not training would be provided;
- that the process should be voluntary.
Chapter 4 Evaluation

**Figure 4-5:** Who would you like to observe your teaching?

**Figure 4-6:** What kind of teaching should be observed?
Figure 4-7: Which aspects of teaching should be observed?
Figure 4-8: Should POT be used for formative or summative purposes?

Figure 4-9: The value of POT
4.5.1.1 Discussion of findings from staff survey

The results of the survey of staff perceptions of POT indicate that staff are largely positive towards POT and would like to see it introduced (83%). Reflecting the literature, staff value the formative approach to POT and see it as being useful for developmental purposes (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Donnelly, 2007; Gosling, 2009; Hendry & Oliver, 2012). With regards to who is considered a peer, staff favoured a colleague from within their department, someone from outside the organisation or someone from another department within the institution. However, they were less in favour of having their line manager or head of department as a peer observer. A high percentage of participants felt that POT would encourage open discussion on teaching and learning. This reflects the evidence in the literature that POT helps to build collegiality and provides opportunity for discussion of teaching and learning practice (M. Bell & Cooper, 2013; Carroll & O’Loughlin, 2013). Importantly too, 74% of staff believed that it would enhance the quality of their teaching.

The findings of the survey largely reflect the themes identified in the literature review, suggesting that there is congruence between staff perceptions in the institution and those involved in other studies. Evaluation is often concerned with decision-making. The institution now has a clearer understanding of staff perceptions of POT and the format of POT that they favour. Now the institution is better placed to make a more informed decision regarding the introduction of a POT process. This confirms that the objective of establishing staff perceptions of POT was achieved.
4.5.2 Analysis of focus groups to capture the experiences of the participants

At the end of the POT process volunteers were invited to participate in a focus group, one with observers and one with observees. In late April, four volunteers participated in a focus group for observers and three volunteers participated in a focus group for observees. Volunteers were provided with the participant information sheet and each gave signed consent. A number of weeks later, two volunteers who were observees, but who were unable to attend the focus group, met with me for an informal discussion about their experiences as observees in the POT process. I used the same questions as in the focus groups to guide our discussion and made a written account of their experiences. The focus groups were recorded and the data was analysed using simple thematic analysis.

4.5.2.1 Emerging themes from focus groups

Upon analysis of the data I identified three emerging themes: The nature of POT; the benefits of engaging in POT; supporting the POT process.

4.5.2.1.1 The nature of POT

Participants reported it as being a positive experience and were positive towards POT being introduced into the institution.

“It’s a good thing to determine the quality of teaching; I think it’s reasonable..., it’s reasonable for any organisation to see how their staff are doing” P7 (observee)
Chapter 4 Evaluation

The formative, developmental approach to POT was favoured by staff. Some participants felt that if it was used for summative or evaluative purposes, it will be difficult to get buy-in from staff.

“I would be reluctant to be involved in something where you think it might be a stick, it should be a growing, learning” P3 (observer)

“People will have problems (with POT) if they feel they are going to be assessed” P8 (observee)

Participants felt that the purpose of the process should be stated by the institution from the outset and that it should be clear to staff what it would be used for.

“Buy-in would be the big one (challenge) I would say, I think they (the institution) would have to be very clear on what it’s being used for…” P1 (observer)

However, even though participants favoured the formative approach they felt that it was important to record that you had taken part it. Participation in the process could then be captured when applying for promotion or completing the professional development planning process (PDP). However, they felt that personal development requirements arising for the POT process should remain confidential.

“I think it should be formative, but to support buy-in it needs to be recognised as well, so for example, on promotional forms you have evidence that you have been involved in POT and have developed your lectures as a result…but the development (training) might be personal” P4 (observer)
4.5.2.1.2 Benefits of engaging in the POT process

The participants agreed that they had enjoyed the experience.

“It was a great experience for both of us” P1 (observer)

“Should be regarded as a positive thing...there is a bit of joy in interaction” P7 (observee)

The participants felt that both the observee and the observer learned from the process. All observers agreed that there was learning involved for them. They also reported that they picked up some useful tips and approaches to teaching from the observations.

“I went in and observed the lecture, I enjoyed it, I learned something from it too...I was thinking, oh yes, I would like to try that” P1 (observer)

“It was a great opportunity to see a different style of lecture...seeing how you could apply that to your own teaching, like the technique and the approach if it is working well” P3 (observer)

Some suggested that it would build collegiality in terms of discussing and sharing teaching practice as the POT process would provide a platform for engaging in dialogue around pedagogy.

“It would lead to conversations around teaching” P8 (observee)

“We had a broad ranging conversation which I thought was a good thing...talk about big picture stuff...it was a constructive conversation between two professionals” P7 (observee)

Some participants felt that it provided the opportunity to identify areas that require staff development supports and that staff development programmes could then be
tailored to meet the needs of staff in the institution. Though participants believed that the observation process and the outcomes should remain confidential to the persons involved, they thought that areas that were consistently identified for development might be captured through focus groups, for example.

You would need to keep a register, an anonymous register, so maybe after 6 months a theme starts to appear for the workshops (training)...get it focused on our own needs” P4(observer)

4.5.2.1.3 Supporting the POT process

All participants agreed that training to support the POT process was needed, particularly in relation to giving and receiving feedback. Interestingly, none of the participants had received training in giving and receiving feedback even though they do it regularly with students. Some reported being anxious or worried about upsetting the observee when giving feedback.

“I was a bit nervous,...so I tried to make sure that, well you know the way it's hard if there were any negative feedback, but eh, it's not meant to be negative, it's meant to be constructive, but you still don’t know...” P1 (observer)

Some participants felt that switching roles would make the process more comfortable.

“...but I think that it would be great if you could partner with some person and we could switch role, coz when you are observing someone else, you kind of feel bad, but if you know that you are going to be going through that exact phase, then you relax a little...” P1 (observer)
Participants also suggested that training and support in areas of practice that are identified as requiring development as an outcome of the POT process, is also needed.

“There needs to be some training and support provided for the areas that you identify” P5 (observee)

It was also recognised that there are existing opportunities within the institution which could be utilised to complement the process. For example, recipients of teaching awards could be exemplars for others.

“The staff who get the president’s award, might be willing, not to get feedback, but to have people observe their teaching” P3 (observer)

The education workshop delivered to all participants was found to be of benefit especially with regards to giving feedback, and they suggested that it helped them to structure the process.

“I thought the workshop we had beforehand gave us some tips which were very, very, useful... I found it was very useful to get the tip, don’t go straight to the negative...” P3 (observer)

It was generally felt that the observation tool was useful, particularly as a starting point.

“I found it very useful as a platform for developing ideas...it was useful to help you even start a conversation. It captured it nicely about what you were trying to achieve and see” P4 (observer)
However, some said that they favoured a more unstructured approach to the process.

“...more of a process (POT) that evolves over time...start off unstructured then build on it” P9 (observee)

There was mixed opinion on who participants thought of as a peer. Some felt that it should be someone who is at the same academic level, for example, a lecturer observes a lecturer, as this would also eliminate the issue for a power imbalance.

“I think there is a lot to be said for senior lecturers being assessed by senior lecturers... there’s no power thing there...you’re all assessed by your equal” P6 (observee)

“There may be a problem if there is a strong hierarchical standing” P8 (observee)

For some participants the difference in seniority was not an issue. However, most participants agreed that you needed to be comfortable with the person observing, suggesting that the relationship between observer and observee must be one of mutual respect.

“The person I was observing was very much more senior to me...but the interactions we had were very good...”P2 (observer)

“I got on very well with the other person and I think that was good” P3 (observer)

The experience of participants captured in the focus groups was found to be a very positive one overall. What was very clear was that they valued a formative, developmental approach to POT over a summative one, but suggested that
participation in the POT process could be recorded for promotional purposes. They felt that training in the POT process was important, particularly around feedback as feedback is central to the process. Interestingly none of the participants had received training in feedback or in reflection, both of which feature strongly in the literature. The experiences captured in the focus groups largely reflect the themes identified in the literature review. This suggests that the institution can be confident that if they take these experiences on board when designing the POT process for implementation, that they are implementing a POT process that is valued by staff and meets with best practice identified in literature. Given this outcome, the objective of evaluating the impact of the project through capturing experiences of observers and observees was achieved.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the evaluation of the change project using the Jacobs Model of evaluation. The objectives set out at the beginning of this process have been achieved and are described under the application of the ten stages of this evaluation model. Through the survey I have captured staff perceptions on POT. By providing training in POT through the education workshop I could implement the pilot of POT with volunteers, from whom I was then able to capture their experiences of the POT process in focus groups.

Evaluation is often concerned with effectiveness, improvement and decision-making (Frye & Hemmer, 2012; Joyce, 2010). The robustness of the evaluation, the
findings of the survey and of the focus groups can now be taken into consideration by management when making the decision on the POT process to be introduced in the institution.
5 Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter consolidates the evidence for introducing a process of peer observation of teaching (POT) in the institution. Implications of the pilot project for management are presented. Recommendations for future improvements in terms of a process model of POT that meets the needs of the institution are suggested. Finally, some personal learning and reflection on the process of implementing the project are shared.

5.2 Implications of the change for management

This change initiative was an important testing ground in preparation for the institution-wide introduction of POT. Due to the influencing factors as outlined in the previous chapters, management had heightened the focus on enhancing the quality of teaching and the professional development of staff in the institution. They had identified POT as a method of embedding an institution-wide approach to the quality enhancement of teaching, and recognised its value in facilitating the professional development of staff in pedagogical skills.

The approach taken throughout this project was an inclusive one. Key stakeholders, including the participants themselves, management representatives, senior staff members and other interested groups were consulted with regularly and had an opportunity to provide input into the process, thus reducing the risk of resistance and creating a sense of ownership. The congruence of the evidence
gathered in the literature review, the staff survey and the experiences of participants in the POT pilot, now provides management with a comprehensive evidence-base for making an informed decision on introducing a POT process that reflects what is valued by staff in the institution.

There is now evidence of staff participating in POT and management are now in a position to leverage the positive experiences of staff in the pilot project for its implementation across the institution. In addition the pilot project has heightened the sense of awareness amongst staff with regards to POT and in so doing has increased the readiness and capacity within the institution for introducing the change.

However, POT is a complex process that will require support at management level. Its value must be recognised over other competing demands on staff time, and time to engage in POT in a meaningful way must be facilitated. Training on POT in terms of the process itself, giving and receiving feedback and staff development opportunities to complement the process, will have to be established. If these elements are not forthcoming there is a risk that the process will become a ‘tick box’ exercise and may fail to become embedded as an institution-wide approach to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Further strengths and limitations for this pilot project are highlighted in Table 3-5.
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.3 Recommendations for future improvements

The evidence gathered in this project is consistent in its recommendations for introducing a POT process that is formative in nature rather than evaluative. Based on the experiences of participants in this study and the experiences of participants in other studies as evidenced in the literature, I have proposed a process model of POT that consolidates the findings of this change initiative.

Figure 5-1: Writer’s suggested process model for peer observation of teaching
This model (Figure 5-1) is informed by the recommendations for implementation as outlined in Table 2-3: Commonalities identified in practice when implementing POT. It recommends a POT process that is reciprocal in nature, whereby participants switch roles. This reinforces that both the observer and the observee can benefit from engaging in POT. Opportunity for reflection is central to the process and, having engaged in the observation, consideration is given to reviewing teaching practice as an outcome of the process. The model also suggests that it is a continuous process.

For POT to become embedded in the institution there are several key factors that need to be in place, as indicated in the outer circle. The formative/collaborative model of POT is recommended as this was favoured by participants in the pilot study. Meaningful processes require a supportive environment where staff feel safe participating in POT. Some training or education around POT needs to be put in place and complemented with staff development opportunities to support staff in enhancing their teaching practice. Finally, I believe that it will be important to have a facilitator or coordinator to manage the process and to provide unbiased support to participants. The facilitator/coordinator role could also be used to confidentially capture feedback and to identify development needs of staff.

5.4 Reflection and learning from carrying out the change initiative

A key learning for me during this change initiative was the importance of engagement and communication with stakeholders. As described in the personal
reflection in chapter 3 (Table 3-2), communication was central to resolving some of 
my concerns regarding the pilot study as they arose. I also believe that the inclusive 
approach taken throughout the project, ensured the support and buy-in from staff. 
This was particularly important as I am in an administrative role and yet the 
academic staff in the institution gladly gave their support to this pilot project.

Structuring the change process and the evaluation process around a framework was 
useful for ensuring that consideration was given to the various aspects of change 
and evaluation. This was particularly so for the HSE Change Model (HSE, 2008). 
However, the Jacobs Model of evaluation proved challenging at times and as I 
applied the evaluation process to the model, I found it did not necessarily meet my 
needs. I had chosen the model because of its focus on serving the needs and 
interests of stakeholders and illuminating the outcomes. Obviously, a key 
stakeholder in the project is the participants themselves. However, I had not 
identified communicating the results of the evaluation to participants as a goal of 
the evaluation process. So essentially, even though the participants were central in 
my mind and I had chosen the model on that basis, it was not actually an objective 
of the evaluation, leaving a gap between the two. From this experience, it has 
reinforced the importance of clearly identifying your objectives at the outset, which 
in itself is a valuable learning experience.
5.5 Conclusion

The aim and objectives of this pilot project on POT were successfully achieved. From the evidence gathered in the literature review, the survey of staff perceptions of POT and participants’ experiences recorded in the focus groups, there now exists valuable insight into the enablers and inhibitors of POT and the process of POT that is most favoured by staff. For management, this will provide a solid basis for informing the process of POT that is introduced as an institution-wide approach to the quality enhancement of teaching and the facilitation of staff development in pedagogical skills. The process model of POT that is put forward encompasses the key findings in this evidence-base and is centred on a process of POT that is formative in nature, as this is what is most valued by participants. In addition there is now evidence of staff engaging in POT and their positive experiences can be leveraged in favour of implementing POT.
6 References


References


References


Appendix 1: Gantt Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Activity</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finalise change plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with key stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature searching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Survey &amp; analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observation of teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups &amp; analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write up &amp; submit &amp; feedback to stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Appendix 2: Staff Perceptions of POT Survey Instrument

Peer Observation of Teaching Survey

Dear colleague,

We are carrying out a survey on staff perceptions of the potential use of Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) at RCSI. Below is a link to a short survey that should only take about 5 minutes to complete. We are interested in your perceptions of the potential for participating in POT and this information will help us learn more about the different staff perceptions across RCSI, from this we hope to make recommendations for POT at RCSI.

Peer observation of teaching is “A collaborative and reciprocal process whereby one peer observes another’s teaching (actual or virtual) and provides supportive and constructive feedback” (Lublin 2002:5).

Your contribution will remain anonymous and you will not be identified in any way in subsequent research reports.

Thank you,
Appendix 2: Staff Perceptions of POT Survey Instrument

1. Would you be prepared to take part in POT?
   - As a reviewer       Yes/No
   - As a reviewee       Yes/No
   - As both a reviewer and a reviewee Yes/No

2. Have you participated in POT?
   - As a reviewer       Yes/No
   - As a reviewee       Yes/No
   - As both a reviewer and a reviewee Yes/No

3. Have you received training in POT?
   - As a reviewer       Yes/No
   - As a reviewee       Yes/No
   - As both a reviewer and a reviewee Yes/No

4. Would you like to see POT introduced into RCSI? Yes/No

5. Who would you like to peer observe your teaching?
   - A colleague from within your department Yes/No
   - A colleague from outside your department Yes/No
   - Your line manager       Yes/No
   - Your head of department  Yes/No
   - Someone from outside RCSI Yes/No
   - Other (please state)
6. What kind of teaching and learning interactions should be observed?
   - Lab sessions        Yes/No
   - Classroom lectures   Yes/No
   - Online sessions (e.g. Camtasia) Yes/No
   - Workshop            Yes/No
   - Seminar             Yes/No
   - Tutorial            Yes/No
   - Other (please specify):

7. Which aspects of the teaching/learning process should a peer review questionnaire address? Please detail in the box below
   - Presentation of material Yes/No
   - Content of the material Yes/No
   - Communication skills   Yes/No
   - Presentation style     Yes/No
   - Engagement with students Yes/No
   - Focus on learning outcomes Yes/No
   - Dealing with students questions Yes/No

8. How often should a lecturer’s teaching performance and materials be assessed through POT?
   - Once a semester       Yes/No
   - Once each academic year Yes/No
   - Other (please state)
Appendix 2: Staff Perceptions of POT Survey Instrument

9. What should POT be used for?
   - Summative (linked to promotion/progression)  Yes/No
   - Formative (not linked to promotion/progression)  Yes/No

10. Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the statements below:
    - POT will enhance my practice  Agree/Disagree
    - POT will enhance the quality of my teaching  Agree/Disagree
    - POT encourages open discussion of teaching and learning issues within schools  Agree/Disagree

11. Is there anything else you feel you would like to add, regarding POT?

   

Thank you for your help
Appendix 3: Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter

11th February, 2013

Ethics Reference No: REC793
Project Title: Peer Observation of Teaching - A Pilot Study
Researchers Name: 
Other Individuals Involved: 

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your Research Ethics Committee (REC) application. We are pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted by the committee for this study.

This letter provides approval for data collection for the time requested in your application and for an additional 6 months. This is to allow for any unexpected delays in proceeding with data collection. Therefore, this research ethics approval will expire on 11th December 2013.

Where data collection is necessary beyond this point, approval for an extension must be sought from the Research Ethics Committee.

This ethical approval is given on the understanding that:
• All personnel listed in the approved application have read, understand and are thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the study.
• Any significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported immediately to the REC, and an ethical amendment submitted where appropriate.
• Please submit a final report to the REC upon completion of your project.

We wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

PP Dr. Niamh Clarke (Convenor)
Dr David Smith (Acting Chair)
Appendix 4: Focus Group Interview Schedule

Focus Group Interview Schedule

- Can you talk about your experiences of peer observation of teaching
- Can you discuss the potential of implementing peer observation of teaching
- Can you discuss the challenges of implementing peer observation of teaching
- Can you talk about your experiences around the format of the peer observation
- Can you discuss giving and receiving feedback
## Appendix 5: Observation Tool

### TEACHING OBSERVATION and Self Assessment FORM*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor’s Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LECTURE

**Situation (e.g., noon conference):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization and Clarity</th>
<th>Very Descriptive</th>
<th>Not at all Descriptive</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. States purpose of the lecture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Specifies instructional objectives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Presents material in an organized manner (that is easy to outline)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Makes clear transitions between different parts of the lecture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provides occasional summaries of major points</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Uses examples and illustrations to explain complex concepts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Explains technical terminology, where appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Uses alternative explanations when necessary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Suggests ways to apply content</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Clearly indicates what the important points and main ideas are</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Relates new ideas to familiar ones, where appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does not digress from main topic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Uses strategies to provide closure (e.g., summarizes main points)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Very Descriptive</th>
<th>Not at all Descriptive</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Establishes rapport with audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Asks questions to involve students, where appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Allows enough time for students to think and respond</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Repeats student questions/answers for entire audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Observation Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responds to audience questions/comments respectfully and appropriately</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Notes and responds to signs of puzzlement, boredom, curiosity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Delivery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Varies speed and tone of voice</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Avoids use of speech fillers (“okay”, hmnn, etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Speaks at an appropriate volume</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Speaks neither too fast nor too slow</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Slows word flow when ideas are complex or difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Words are well enunciated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Varies the pace of the lecture to keep students alert</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Voice conveys enthusiasm, sincerity, emphasis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Maintains eye contact with audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Uses hands and arms appropriately</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Moves purposefully</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Appears natural – neither too stiff or too casual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Audiovisuals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uses microphone effectively</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Uses pointer effectively</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate audiovisuals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Use of audiovisuals is coordinated with and enhances content being presented</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Uses audiovisual aids which are easily seen or heard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Operates audiovisual equipment effectively</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>When using audiovisuals, provides sufficient light for note taking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments**

*With kind permission of the Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education, University of Iowa.*