Observational feedback literacy: designing post observation feedback for learning

Marion Heron, Helen Donaghue & Kieran Balloo

Published online: 31 Mar 2023.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 3328

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Citing articles: 4 View citing articles ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

        OPEN ACCESS   Check for updates

Observational feedback literacy: designing post observation feedback for learning

Marion Heron [a], Helen Donaghue [b*] and Kieran Balloo [c]

aSurrey Institute of Education, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK; bLearning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) Centre, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh; cUniSQ College, University of Southern Queensland, Springfield, Australia

ABSTRACT

The aim of teaching observations and post observation feedback in higher education is to support teachers to reflect on and improve their teaching. Yet, our understanding of tutors' (observers') and teachers' (observees') capacities for capitalising on these feedback opportunities is limited and there is little empirically derived advice for either the observer or the observee on the post observation feedback processes. We argue for the need to conceptualise and operationalise observational feedback literacy as a particular type of feedback literacy which is played out in both the design of the post observation feedback session, and in the moment-by-moment feedback talk. Drawing on the concept of student and teacher feedback literacies, this paper offers a framework of observational feedback literacy which identifies how observers and observees act in feedback literate ways. The framework foregrounds observer feedback literacy and recognises the importance of providing opportunities for observees to enact feedback.

Introduction

In this paper we problematise our current understandings of post observation feedback and present the case for applying the concept of feedback literacies to interrogate post observation feedback practices. Post observation feedback refers to the discussion between observer and observee following a teaching observation. Although observation of teaching has become central to higher education practice, in particular in peer observation programmes (Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker 2006; Heron and Head 2019; Yiend, Weller, and Kinchin 2014) and teacher education programmes such as the PGCert (Compton 2019), guidance on how to give feedback (observer), or how to maximise the feedback opportunities (observee) is virtually non-existent. Similarly, post observation feedback research and practices rarely explore how and why teachers act upon

---

the feedback, limiting our understanding of the impact of post observation feedback. In contrast, the burgeoning higher education feedback literacy scholarship advocates for a focus on student uptake of feedback and presents frameworks and empirically-driven practices as ways of achieving this. We argue that it is now time for post observation feedback research and practice to follow this lead and turn its attention to optimising opportunities for feedback uptake.

If the quality of feedback is judged on students' ability to enact it (Pitt and Quinlan 2022), then the same should be true of post observation feedback. However, tracking feedback uptake in the context of teaching is challenging and difficult to identify or measure. Zeng's (2020) systematic review of peer review in teaching focused on the extent to which teachers improved their teaching skills following feedback, but the accounts were based on teachers' self-reports rather than empirical evidence. To help resolve this 'black box', we view and critique post observation feedback through the lens of feedback literacies and point to guidance on practices which will maximise the impact of feedback opportunities. In this paper we first present the scholarship on post observation feedback, predominantly from the field of applied linguistics where researchers agree that the feedback stage is crucial in supporting reflection on practice. Next, we introduce the concept of feedback literacies, namely student and teacher feedback literacies. We then suggest how post observation feedback can be viewed through the lens of feedback literacies and present an observational feedback literacy framework with a focus on observer and observee literacy. We conclude by operationalising the observational feedback literacy framework with illustrative examples of activities and training.

The conceptual framework

In higher education, formal teaching observations are often carried out by academic developers who have an expertise in teaching and who observe newer academics enrolled in teacher education programmes such as a PGCert. In the context of peer observations, it has been argued that observation can aid reflection, debate and dissemination of best practice (Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond 2005), promote teacher learning and development (O'Leary 2016), and ultimately improve teaching and learning (A. Bell and Mladenovic 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond 2005; Shortland 2010). However, despite the centrality of observation to current HE policy and practice (O'Leary and Savage 2020) little attention is paid to the feedback stage, and in particular feedback talk, in both the general HE and academic development literature. To help fill this gap in understanding, we first turn to the field of applied linguistics. Through analysing feedback discourse, researchers in linguistics show how talk affords observees the multiple beneficial opportunities extolled in the HE literature and offer empirically based advice on how to encourage these benefits. For example, linguistic researchers show how feedback talk can enable the construction and negotiation of the professional identities needed to exercise agency, growth and development (Clarke 2009; Donaghue 2018, 2020; Riordan and Farr 2015; Urzúa and Vásquez 2008), how feedback talk can change teacher behaviour and resist powerful hegemonies (Copland and Donaghue 2021), can co-construct teaching knowledge (Engin 2013), and how valuable language resources such as questions can scaffold learning (Engin 2013).

Applied linguistics research also extends the HE literature discussion of feedback difficulties and offers empirically based guidance on how to manage these difficulties. For example, one common feedback difficulty cited in the HE literature is the consideration of politeness and face (i.e. an individual's claimed self-image being interpreted negatively by others). Esterhazy et al.'s (2021) review of peer observation literature highlights the fact that relational factors can influence willingness to provide honest and constructive feedback. Iqbal (2014) and De Lange and Wittek (2018) found that observers in their studies avoided critique and constructive feedback, fearing the risk of damaging collegiality by making their colleagues feel threatened or defensive. Instead, observers opted to provide positive feedback and focus on the mechanics of teaching rather than more complex or problematic aspects. This decision compromised the goal of fostering professional growth in teaching, leading De Lange and Wittek to recommend explicitly shifting from polite to exploratory talk. Applied linguistics studies show how to do this through analysis of common potentially face-threatening moves such as giving and receiving criticism, defending decisions and actions, and disagreeing. Discourse analysis shows how participants can understand and overcome the sensitive issue of face threat (Copland 2011; Donaghue 2022; Vásquez 2004), and related issues of identity (Donaghue 2020) and power (Copland 2008). For example, these studies highlight the importance of facework, e.g. using strategies such as preambles, hesitation, laughter and modifiers to soften potentially face threatening moves while being careful not to mitigate an important message to the extent that it is obscured (Copland 2008; Copland and Donaghue 2021; Donaghue 2022). Studies also caution against power moves adopted by observers who initiate topics, control the floor and take longer turns (Copland 2008; Hyland and Lo 2006; Vásquez 2004) leaving the observed teacher with little space to talk.

However, despite the consensus on the importance of feedback for future improvements in learning and performance (Henderson et al. 2019), an understanding of how observers and observees can maximise the feedback opportunities, and how observees enact the feedback, is lacking (Copland and Donaghue 2021). Copland and Donaghue (2021) recommend that both participants, observer and observee, need to be made aware of the nature and purpose of feedback, including making explicit the 'rules of the game' and preferred behaviours during different generic sections of feedback. They add to a growing call for observers to have training in conducting and managing feedback (Baecher and Beaumont 2017; Farr 2011; Iqbal, 2014; Vásquez and Reppen 2007) including raising observer awareness of the distribution (i.e. who talks most) and type (monologic or dialogic) of their feedback talk. However, most importantly from the perspective of this paper, they recommend that researchers and practitioners turn their attention to how feedback is followed up and incorporated into practice.

Our stance is that by integrating scholarship on applied linguistics with frameworks for teacher and student feedback literacies, we can conceptualise and operationalise observational feedback literacy. This can lead to a better understanding of post observation feedback, which ensures that feedback practices support and encourage observees to act upon the feedback. Carless and Boud (2018) conceptualised student feedback literacy as students' capacities for making sense of feedback information for uptake and improvement. Feedback literacy is an important set of capacities to develop. Firstly, students with more developed feedback literacy are likely to understand the benefit of using feedback to improve their learning and performance (Carless and Boud 2018). Secondly,

being able to make and refine evaluative judgements means that students can understand the quality of their own and others' work (Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020; Tai et al. 2018). Thirdly, working with emotions productively means that students can manage the potentially negative affective reactions to receiving critical feedback, and are also able to seek out further feedback in ways that portray sensitivity towards the feedback giver (Carless and Boud 2018; Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2020). Finally, understanding how to use feedback information to take action is a key self-regulatory capacity (Carless and Boud 2018).

While the concept of student feedback literacy importantly highlights what the learner does in feedback processes, the more recent notion of teacher feedback literacy moves the teacher's role away from feedback provider to designer of learning environments that support students to develop feedback literacy (Carless and Boud 2018; Carless and Winstone 2023; Pitt and Winstone 2023). Carless and Winstone (2023) define teacher feedback literacy as 'the knowledge, expertise and dispositions to design feedback processes in ways which enable student uptake of feedback and seed the development of student feedback literacy' (153). Boud and Dawson (2023) developed an empirically-based framework of teacher feedback literacy comprising 19 categories of competencies operating at three levels. At the highest level are macro competencies for building feedback practices into the environment of the overall programme. At the meso level are competencies related to designing module/unit/course feedback practices. Finally, micro competencies concern the approaches that are used to respond to individual student needs and assignments. In this paper, we are concerned with the meso and micro levels as we feel they more accurately reflect the post observation feedback context in terms of the design of the feedback session and the feedback conversation.

Positioning feedback processes as being about the co-construction of knowledge and sensemaking between students and teachers aligns with a social constructivist perspective (Carless 2020; Carless and Winstone 2023; Price, Handley, and Millar 2011). Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa (2023) noted that this perspective situates teacher feedback literacy as 'an inherently social practice' (3). A sociocultural lens posits that feedback is primarily relational and shaped by social encounters (Esterhazy 2018), and feedback literacy practices are said to be performed by teachers jointly with others through dialogue (Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa 2023). By casting teacher feedback literacy as a performance, it is argued that rather than referring to teachers as feedback literate, 'it is more correct to say that teachers "act in feedback literate ways"' (Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa 2023, 11).

A recent study by Heron et al. (2023) has established the value of a linguistic perspective on classroom feedback talk and this has resulted in an empirically validated feedback talk framework. The framework not only provides guidance to teachers and students on what feedback looks like in classroom discourse but highlights the merging of feedback and teaching. The current paper takes the view that observers and observees can develop their capacities for feedback literacy in the post observation feedback context. Given that the aim of teaching observations is for the observee to reflect and improve their teaching (Atkinson and Bolt 2010), it is important that they are able and willing to enact the feedback. The feedback literacy literature discussed in this section highlights the utility of a feedback literacies lens to re-imagine post observation feedback. An observational feedback literacy framework can identify how observers and observees perform feedback literacy (Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa 2023) at meso and micro levels (Boud and

Dawson 2023). It is anticipated that this application can stimulate a more systematic and rigorous exploration of how observers and observees co-create opportunities for learning and can maximise the effectiveness of teaching observations in higher education.

Observational feedback literacy: a framework

Features of observational feedback literacy

In this section, we present our framework for observational feedback literacy. In designing the framework, we drew on the literature above, operationalising observational feedback literacy and demonstrating how observers and observees might perform feedback literacy (Esterhazy 2018) in context. In the framework, we employ the notions of how observers and observees 'act in feedback literate ways' (Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa 2023, 11), since we believe observational feedback literacy is something we perform and is contingent on the sociocultural context. Post observation feedback is unique from the student-teacher feedback contexts generally associated with feedback literacy, as it is highly context-dependent. Spoken post observation feedback in particular is complex, high stakes and involves relational aspects of feedback literacy. To reflect these features, our framework is dialogic, highlighting the interplay of both observer and observee feedback literacy at the meso level of structure and the micro level as evidenced in the feedback talk.

Table 1 presents a framework of observational feedback literacy based on joint responsibility-sharing (Nash and Winstone 2017). For us, a significant aspect of performing feedback literacy as an observer is providing opportunities for the observee to enact

Table 1. Observational feedback literacy.

Level	Observers perform feedback literacy by:	Observees perform feedback literacy by:
Meso (Structure and planning) As evidenced in the organisation and structure of the feedback session, and the feedback talk.	• setting up post observation sessions in a timely way • structuring and outlining the post observation feedback session clearly • making expectations and purpose of post observation feedback session explicit • providing clear signposting to paperwork / forms	• making expectations of post observation feedback session explicit • seeking to understand the purpose and structure of the post observation feedback session • completing all forms including self-evaluation • attending post observation feedback session • preparing questions for post observation feedback session
Micro (Feedback talk) As evidenced in the feedback talk	• asking questions • encouraging and praising • encouraging the observee to ask questions • giving observee opportunities to clarify / ask questions • making suggestions and giving advice • encouraging reflection and self-evaluation • suggesting goals and action plan	• asking questions • seeking clarification • using opportunities to elaborate/explain/justify • responding to questions in a self-evaluative way • identifying goals and action plan • reflecting and evaluates

the feedback, as well as engage in the feedback conversation. Equally, an observee can perform feedback literacy by taking up these opportunities and recognising when they arise. The literature presented above has highlighted how issues of power dynamics, politeness and face threat are common to both peer review contexts (Esterhazy et al. 2021) and assessed observation by an education expert (Copland and Donaghue 2021). One central underpinning of the framework is the focus on transparency and the need to be explicit about the rules of the game (Copland, 2008). The framework therefore identifies observational feedback literacy for a range of observation purposes.

An illustrative case example of the observational feedback literacy framework in practice

To illustrate the framework in practice, we provide case examples below. These are drawn from some preliminary data from a wider project exploring post observation feedback practices in a PG Diploma in Teaching and Learning in HE, carried out at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project received ethical approval from the research site institution. In this project, 16 lecturers (within a cohort of 41 course participants) enrolled on the PG Diploma volunteered to be part of the study. The lecturers all had fewer than three years HE teaching experience and were undertaking the diploma as a probationary requirement. The lecturers worked in a range of disciplines and departments across the University, with each of the three colleges (Business, Technology and Engineering; Social Sciences and Arts; Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences) being represented. On the first two 30-credit modules (on a 4×30-credit PG diploma), course participants did an assessed observation followed by a feedback meeting. For this study, the 16 volunteers agreed to have their second post observation feedback meeting (i.e. the observation in the second module) recorded through Zoom. One of four course tutors did the 1:1 observation and feedback meeting and although the tutors used the same feedback form for written feedback, there was no prescribed format for the meeting itself. Around eight weeks after the observations, the teachers were interviewed about their experiences of teaching and their reflections on the observation cycle, including the post observation feedback session and its role in developing their teaching. In this paper, the illustrative examples are taken from one of the feedback sessions which demonstrated clear links between the ideas generated in feedback conferences and teachers' interview descriptions of how their teaching had changed and developed as a result of the observation and feedback process, as well as topics articulated in response to other questions. We argue that these links provide some evidence that observees both understood the feedback and had started to enact it. Thus, they were performing certain features of observational feedback literacy that we will now elucidate.

Meso level: structure and planning

The meso level is concerned with structuring the feedback processes in a way which optimises observees' opportunities to understand and enact the feedback. In a post observation feedback context the observer needs to ensure the feedback processes are clear, the aims and expectations of the feedback session are explicit, and that the feedback session is clearly structured (Engin 2013). In dialogic feedback (Yang and Carless 2013) the observee also has responsibilities to articulate their own expectations of the

post observation feedback and be cognizant of relevant processes and procedures, such as paperwork and observation forms. Completing a self-evaluation, for example, prior to the post observation feedback can both structure the session through the feedback form itself (Engin 2015) and allow the observee to reflect on and be prepared for the post observation feedback.

In the illustrative example below, the selected post observation feedback session followed a clearly defined structure. Table 2 presents this structure and mirrors to some extent the generic phases of a feedback session identified by Copland and Donaghue (2021). Recognising the overlap between meso and micro levels of feedback literacy, we also include feedback talk which signposts and achieves the different phases, ultimately working towards making the structure explicit. A clear structure can help orient both observer and observee, help them to recognise and understand expectations

Table 2. Structure of a post observation feedback session.

Phase	Purpose	Example phrases
Introduction phase	Opening	Observer: *So tell me a little bit about your session and how it went and what you were thinking about it afterwards?*
Questioning phase	Invitation to reflect in detail	Observer: *And you do start asking questions at the beginning, you know, and there are questions sort of built into the slides. I noticed there were some questions on sort of – I think it was slide 6 or something like that – where there were like two or three questions listed and you were obviously trying to throw that out to the group to get their feedback and one or two of them did respond to you. Were you expecting them to respond? Did you plan it as a rhetorical question or did you actually want to assess them at that point?*
Justification and explanation phase	Observee reflection	Observee: *So I was hoping for responses. So most of the time I did get responses. I guess sometimes I was a bit surprised that I didn't get a response and sometimes I was surprised the other way that I got a response to a question that I thought was more challenging.*
Observer feedback phase	Positive reinforcement	Observer: *But I mean the plan was really good, you know, you thought about your different types of learners and how you were going to accommodate those and I think you've thought about how they're going to access the materials, which is really nice.*
Suggestion phase	Suggestions and advice	Observer: *So on one of the pieces of data that you included, you had a list of names and I was wondering whether or not you could have thought about which names you included and whether or not you could have had a wider range of ethnic diversity in there, because they were all really sort of white names to a large extent.*
Summary phase	Summary of positive points and recommendations	Observer: *So yeah, I mean I thought you had some really nice resources that supported your teaching really well. I think you're really clear in the way that you explain things. I think you've got your learning outcomes, you know, you've got that straight in your head what you're trying to assess and what's less important maybe for the assessment or that might be worth just clarifying that slightly in your planning. I do think some sort of additional assessment throughout your lecture, even if it's just as simple as a kahoot pol.l*
Observee phase	Invitation for comments	Observer: *I don't know if you've got any other questions or comments or things that you want to ask me?*
Administrative phase	Procedures and next steps	Observer: *All right, well I'll upload your feedback to blackboard. Would you like me to email it to you as well?*

at the different stages, and understand the purposes of the feedback session (Carless and Boud 2018).

A significant feature of observational feedback literacy is the use of and reference to relevant artefacts such as forms and other paperwork. These can guide both observer and observee through the feedback processes and the feedback session. For example, the observation form allows the observee a space to request feedback on specific areas, encouraging reflection and giving responsibility / agency to the observee for their own feedback. The observer uses this as a way in to discuss an action point:

> *Observer: I was really interested in your request for feedback on inclusivity. Do you want to tell me a little bit more about what you were thinking with that?*
>
> *Observee: I think it's useful to get someone else's perspective because I think it's difficult to know whether you are covering the needs of everyone, I think, because I think you try and do it sort of inherently trying to set things up so that you are inclusive of the needs of everyone. But you know, it's hard to know whether you are actually meeting the needs of everyone I think.*

Furthermore, in the illustrative example, the observee had completed a reflection form prior to the feedback session. The observer incorporates this reflection point and encourages the observee to reflect further:

> *So one of the things I was sort of wanting to ask you about is that in your focus sheet you talked a bit about saying that you kind of lectured for more than you normally would and I just wondered, was there a reason for that? Did you choose to do that deliberately or was that just the way it worked out? What was your thinking behind doing that?*

The reflection form supports the development of feedback literacy in a number of ways: it helps the observee to prepare for the feedback session, it clarifies expectations and aims of the feedback session, and provides a catalyst for the feedback dialogue.

In the example below, the observee appreciated the purpose of the post observation feedback and commented on this towards the end of the session:

> *It's been really useful getting an outsider's perspective because often I'm observed by people who are from a [own discipline] background, so it's useful getting the perspective of someone who teaches a different subject because it's helpful to get ideas from an outside perspective. You've come up with some things that I might not think about as much myself.*

At the meso level, an observer can perform feedback literacy by setting up structures, procedures, and opportunities to enact feedback, such as a follow-up observation, as well as encouraging observees to articulate expectations, values and purposes of post observation feedback. Feedback literacy is supported by appropriate artefacts which can serve a vital function in guiding and making processes explicit. As mentioned above, there is overlap between meso and micro levels of feedback literacies and meso-level feedback competencies (Boud and Dawson 2023) underpin effective feedback talk at the micro level.

Micro level: feedback talk

Observational feedback literacy at the micro level is evidenced and performed in the feedback talk which aims to provide support, sensitivity and encourage partnership (Carless and Winstone 2023). We suggest this rests on the moment-by-moment dialogic

interaction of the post observation feedback session itself and through the feedback talk. We argue that whilst the meso level is incumbent to a large extent on the observer, the feedback talk is co-constructed. Observers need to ask questions, provide praise and encouragement, scaffold developing understanding of teaching and provide opportunities for observees to ask questions. Equally, observees perform feedback literacy by asking questions, seeking clarification, evaluating teaching and managing affect by focusing on both strong points as well as points for development. The relational aspect of feedback literacy is paramount in the feedback talk and is developed through a supportive atmosphere.

In the illustrative example, the observer encourages and praises, e.g. *I thought you had some really nice resources that supported your teaching really well. I think you're really clear in the way that you explain things.* The observer mitigates suggestions to help the observee see any changes as manageable. This can help in developing a supportive relationship:

> It's not a major change in the sense that it wouldn't take a lot of work to do it, but I think it would be a significant change in possibly your mindset but also in demonstrating to the learners that you're open to these kind of changes that are happening in the world and you're aware of them.

The observer asks a number of questions to encourage the observee to discuss the feedback and reflect on their teaching. For example, *Did you feel you achieved that? I don't know if you agree with that?* The observer checks understanding and involves the observee in the discussion by asking for a response. This exchange highlights the importance of both parties holding similar views on the standards of, in this case, teaching.

Observees perform feedback literacy when they seek clarification and ask questions to maximise opportunities for learning from the feedback. This also supports the notion of shared responsibility. In the illustrative example, the observee raised concerns over the challenge level of questions:

> So I was hoping for responses. So most of the time I did get responses. I guess sometimes I was a bit surprised that I didn't get a response and sometimes I was surprised the other way that I got a response to a question that I thought was more challenging. So yeah, I found that interesting that maybe sometimes the easier questions they may be just, I don't know if it's maybe they are a bit too easy in the sense that people don't want to respond to them because they're not challenging enough? I don't know. Or they may think it's harder than it actually is, I don't know.

Observees also perform feedback literacy when they elaborate, explain or justify their practice. In the example, the observer questions the observee about the assessment of learning outcomes.

> Observer: I think the task – my understanding, and tell me if I'm wrong, but my understanding was the assessment task judged the final learning outcome rather than the other two. Would you say that's fair or not?

> Observee: There was a little bit – so it was more based on the final learning outcome but there was in the exercises themselves, essentially they got the code for doing each of the examples I went through with the class.

In sum, micro-level observational feedback literacy is evidenced in the feedback talk which is complex, challenging and contingent on the moment-by-moment interaction,

and yet it is where the learning and development of teaching understanding happens. Awareness of the nuances of feedback talk as well as being able to use feedback talk as demonstrated in the examples above is essential for observational feedback literacy.

Observational feedback literacy is contextual and co-constructed through the processes, procedures and discourse of post observation feedback. Although we recognise that feedback is performed in situ, is a situated practice (Esterhazy, de Lange, and Damşa 2023; Gravett 2022), and is contingent on the moment-by-moment interactions, the features we highlight in our framework reflect how observer and observee can perform observational feedback literacy in practice. Observational feedback literacy enables observers and observees to interrogate practices and consider ways of improving the post observation feedback to maximise the potential for observee feedback take up.

In the light of the identification of observational feedback literacy above, and given the paucity of guidance on post observation feedback for both observer and observee, we present a number of recommendations for practice below.

Applications of the observational feedback literacy framework: Recommendations for practice

- **Induction sessions**. Formal training which includes clear guidelines for both observer and observee (Esterhazy et al. 2021) are pivotal to fulfilling the features in the meso level. At the induction sessions, expectations, roles, structure and outcomes can be explicitly articulated and an agreed set of expectations can be drawn up.
- **Follow-up observations and / or follow up meetings**. These aim to encourage dialogic interaction across lessons. Here observees could demonstrate, either through further observed lessons or through a lesson plan, how they have incorporated feedback into their practice.
- **Use of clear and guided artefacts**. Observers and observees can use a number of documents to guide the observation and the feedback session. For example, observees can be required to complete a self-evaluation form before the feedback session. The feedback form can not only prompt reflection (e.g. a critical incident), but the questions can also structure the feedback session and implicitly set up expectations.
- **Focus on feedback talk**. The quality of feedback talk has been highlighted in the literature as an issue in observations (Iqbal 2014) and Esterhazy et al. (2021, 262) argue that: 'The empirical questions of how participants, through interaction, co-construct meanings related to teaching, engage with each other's views, and develop a shared understanding are therefore relevant to address in future research'. We suggest that observers can be encouraged to use an evidence-based reflection approach (Walsh and Mann 2015) to improve practice. For example, observers can audio-record and reflect on their practice and examine features of talk, such as their own questioning techniques, the structure of the feedback session, and how they give opportunities for observees to ask questions.
- **A dialogic approach**. Questions are fundamental to promoting dialogic interaction and avoiding passive recipience of feedback. Through questioning, the observer can probe and encourage active participation, and the observee can check understanding and seek clarification.

- **Feedback structure**. A feedback structure (e.g. Table 2) can be introduced to both observers and observees. The structure can act more as a heuristic and guide rather than a straitjacket. Observers and observees can be asked to reflect on the utility of a feedback structure and agree on their own structure for the post observation feedback session. The key outcome is that both observer and observee share the same schema for the post observation feedback session.

Conclusion

We believe that going forwards the literature and practice of post observation feedback can benefit from further and more explicit links with teacher and student feedback research and literature in general. More synergy between these areas would result in interdisciplinary work building on advances in understanding, knowledge and practices in both areas.

A number of areas for further research arise from our observations and arguments. Firstly, longitudinal studies exploring uptake of feedback through a series of observations in the same observer–observee partnership would also further refine our understanding of observational feedback literacy and how observers and observees perform feedback literacy. This could be through a action plans agreed in feedback sessions with follow up observations. Teachers could also be encouraged to notice their uptake of feedback through reflections on a series of lessons following feedback.

Secondly, we recognise that much of the post observation feedback work is performed in the feedback talk. Whilst there is a rich body of literature on post observation feedback talk in the field of applied linguistics and second language teacher education, there is little exploration and investigation of post observation feedback talk in a disciplinary higher education context. Given the central role teaching observations play in quality assurance and teacher education (e.g. PGCert), theoretical knowledge and practice would benefit from further research in this area, in particular, research which uses discourse analysis to examine authentic feedback interaction.

A further area for exploration would be disciplinary feedback practices. As mentioned above, observers in HE are often academic developers with an expertise in teaching. As a result, observers will observe across a range of disciplines. Feedback practices are known to be disciplinary-specific (Carless and Winstone 2023; Quinlan and Pitt 2021; Winstone, Balloo, and Carless 2022) and therefore observers will need to 'manage disciplinary factors in feedback processes' (Carless and Winstone 2023, 156). Further understandings of how the disciplinary norms and practices impact on how to enact post observation feedback literacy will be of benefit in providing guidance to observers and observees.

Disclosure statement

Funding

ORCID

Marion Heron http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6129-1265
Helen Donaghue http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7227-7864
Kieran Balloo http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1745-4653

References

Atkinson, D.J., and S. Bolt. 2010. Using teaching observations to reflect upon and improve teaching practice in higher education. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 10, no. 3: 1–19. https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/josotl/article/view/1798.

Baecher, L., and J. Beaumont. 2017. Supervisor reflection for teacher education: Video-based inquiry as model. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL* 6, no. 2: 65–83.

Bell, A., and R. Mladenovic. 2008. The benefits of peer observation of teaching for tutor development. *Higher Education* 55, no. 6: 735–752. doi:10.1007/s10734-007-9093-1.

Boud, D., and P. Dawson. 2023. What feedback literate teachers do: An empirically-derived competency framework. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 48, no. 2: 158–171. doi:10.1080/02602938.2021.1910928.

Carless, D. 2020. Longitudinal perspectives on students' experiences of feedback: A need for teacher–student partnerships. *Higher Education Research & Development* 39, no. 3: 425–438. doi:10.1080/07294360.2019.1684455.

Carless, D., and D. Boud. 2018. The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8: 1315–1325. doi:10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354.

Carless, D., and N. Winstone. 2023. Teacher feedback literacy and its interplay with student feedback literacy. *Teaching in Higher Education* 28, no. 1: 150–163.

Clarke, M. 2009. The ethico-politics of teacher identity. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41, no. 2: 185–200. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00420.x.

Compton, M. 2019. Purpose, process and perception: Rethinking PGCert HE teaching observations. *Educational Developments* 20, no. 3: 18–22. https://www.seda.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Ed-Devs-20.3-Web.pdf.

Copland, F. 2008. Deconstructing the discourse: Understanding the feedback event. In *Professional encounters in TESOL: Communicating in professions and organizations*, eds. Sue Garton and Keith Richards, 5–23. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. doi:10.1057/9780230594173_1.

Copland, F. 2011. Negotiating face in feedback conferences: A linguistic ethnographic analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, no. 15: 3832–3843. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2011.09.014.

Copland, F., and H. Donaghue. 2021. *Analysing discourses in teacher observation feedback conferences. Routledge studies in applied linguistics*. New York: Routledge.

de Lange, T., and L. Wittek. 2018. Creating shared spaces: developing teaching through peer supervision groups. *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 25, no. 4: 324–339. doi:10.1080/10749039.2018.1544645.

Donaghue, H. 2018. Relational work and identity negotiation in critical post observation teacher feedback. *Journal of Pragmatics* 135: 101–116. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2018.08.002.

Donaghue, H. 2020. Teachers and supervisors negotiating identities of experience and power in feedback talk. *The Modern Language Journal* 104, no. 2: 401–417. doi:10.1111/modl.12633.

Donaghue, H. 2022. Teachers and supervisors negotiating face during critical account requests in post observation feedback. *Journal of Politeness Research* 18, no. 1: 37–62. doi:10.1515/pr-2018-0028.

Engin, M. 2013. Questioning to scaffold: An exploration of questions in pre-service teacher training feedback sessions. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 36, no. 1: 39–54. doi:10.1080/02619768.2012.678485.

Engin, M. 2015. Written artefacts in post-conference feedback sessions: The running commentary as a support for teacher learning. *Journal of Education for Teaching* 41, no. 3: 254–266. doi:10.1080/02607476.2015.1041289.

Esterhazy, R. 2018. What matters for productive feedback? Disciplinary practices and their relational dynamics. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8: 1302–1314. doi:10.1080/02602938.2018.1463353.

Esterhazy, R., T. de Lange, S. Bastiansen, and A.L. Wittek. 2021. Moving beyond peer review of teaching: A conceptual framework for collegial faculty development. *Review of Educational Research* 91, no. 2: 237–271. doi:10.3102/0034654321990721.

Esterhazy, R., T. de Lange, and C. Damşa. 2023. Performing teacher feedback literacy in peer mentoring meetings. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 48, no. 2: 227–240. doi:10.1080/02602938.2021.1980768.

Farr, F. 2011. *The discourse of teaching practice feedback: A corpus-based investigation of spoken and written modes*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge.

Gravett, K. 2022. Feedback literacies as sociomaterial practice. *Critical Studies in Education* 63, no. 2: 261–274. doi:10.1080/17508487.2020.1747099.

Hammersley-Fletcher, L., and P. Orsmond. 2005. Reflecting on reflective practices within peer observation. *Studies in Higher Education* 30, no. 2: 213–224. doi:10.1080/03075070500043358.

Hatzipanagos, S., and S. Lygo-Baker. 2006. Teaching observations: A meeting of minds? *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 17, no. 2: 97–105. https://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE52.pdf.

Henderson, M., R. Ajjawi, D. Boud, and E. Molloy 2019. *The impact of feedback in higher education: Improving assessment outcomes for learners*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-25112-3.

Heron, M., and R. Head. 2019. Discourses of peer observation in higher education: Event or system? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 56, no. 4: 458–469. doi:10.1080/14703297.2018.1531776.

Heron, M., E. Medland, N.E. Winstone, and E. Pitt. 2023. Developing the relational in teacher feedback literacy: Exploring feedback talk. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 48, no. 2: 172–185. doi:10.1080/02602938.2021.1932735.

Hyland, F., and M.M. Lo. 2006. Examining Interaction in the Teaching Practicum: Issues of Language, Power and Control. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 14, no. 2: 163–186. doi:10.1080/13611260500493535.

Iqbal, I. 2014. Don't tell it Like it is: Preserving collegiality in the summative peer review of teaching. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44, no. 1: 108–124. doi:10.47678/cjhe.v44i1.183625.

Molloy, E., D. Boud, and M. Henderson. 2020. Developing a learning-centred framework for feedback literacy. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 45, no. 4: 527–540. doi:10.1080/02602938.2019.1667955.

Nash, R.A., and N.E. Winstone. 2017. Responsibility-sharing in the giving and receiving of assessment feedback. *Frontiers in Psychology* 8, no. 1519: 1–9. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01519.

O'Leary, M. 2016. Introduction: Reclaiming lesson observation as a tool for teacher learning. In *Reclaiming lesson observation: Supporting excellence in teacher learning*, ed. Matt O'Leary, 1st ed., 1–9. London: Routledge.

O'Leary, M., and S. Savage. 2020. Breathing new life into the observation of teaching and learning in higher education: Moving from the performative to the informative. *Professional Development in Education* 46, no. 1: 145–159. doi:10.1080/19415257.2019.1633386.

Pitt, E., and K.M. Quinlan. 2022. *Impacts of higher education assessment and feedback policy and practice on students: A review of the literature 2016-2021*. Advance HE.

Pitt, E., and N. Winstone. 2023. Enabling and valuing feedback literacies. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 48, no. 2: 149–157. doi:10.1080/02602938.2022.2107168.

Price, M., K. Handley, and J. Millar. 2011. Feedback: Focusing attention on engagement. *Studies in Higher Education* 36, no. 8: 879–896. doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.483513.

Quinlan, K.M., and E. Pitt. 2021. Towards signature assessment and feedback practices: A taxonomy of discipline-specific elements of assessment for learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 28, no. 2: 191–207. doi:10.1080/0969594X.2021.1930447.

Riordan, E., and F. Farr. 2015. Identity construction through narratives: An analysis of student teacher discourse. In *Advances and current trends in language teacher identity research*,

edited by Yin Ling Cheung, Selim Ben Said, and Kwanghyun Park, 1st ed., 161–174. Abingdon: Routledge.

Shortland, S. 2010. Feedback within peer observation: continuing professional development and unexpected consequences. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 47, no. 3: 295–304. doi:10.1080/14703297.2010.498181.

Tai, J., R. Ajjawi, D. Boud, P. Dawson, and E. Panadero. 2018. Developing evaluative judgement: enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work. *Higher Education* 76, no. 3: 467–481. doi:10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3.

Urzúa, A., and C. Vásquez. 2008. Reflection and professional identity in teachers' future-oriented discourse. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, no. 7: 1935–1946. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.04.008.

Vásquez, C. 2004. "Very carefully managed": Advice and suggestions in post-observation meetings. *Linguistics and Education* 15, no. 1–2: 33–58. doi:10.1016/j.linged.2004.10.004.

Vásquez, C., and R. Reppen. 2007. Transforming practice: Changing patterns of participation in post-observation meetings. *Language Awareness* 16, no. 3: 153–172. doi:10.2167/la454.0.

Walsh, S., and S. Mann. 2015. Doing reflective practice: A data-led way forward:. *ELT Journal* 69, no. 4: 351–362. doi:10.1093/elt/ccv018.

Winstone, N.E., K. Balloo, and D. Carless. 2022. Discipline-specific feedback literacies: A framework for curriculum design. *Higher Education* 83, no. 1: 57–77. doi:10.1007/s10734-020-00632-0.

Yang, M., and D. Carless. 2013. The Feedback Triangle and the Enhancement of Dialogic Feedback Processes. *Teaching in Higher Education* 18, no. 3: 285–297. doi:10.1080/13562517.2012.719154.

Yiend, J., S. Weller, and I. Kinchin. 2014. Peer observation of teaching: The interaction between peer review and developmental models of practice. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 38, no. 4: 465–484. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2012.726967.

Zeng, L.M. 2020. Peer review of teaching in higher education: A systematic review of its impact on the professional development of university teachers from the teaching expertise perspective. *Educational Research Review* 31: 100333–16. doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100333.