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Re-thinking post-observation feedback in the EFL teaching practicum: a case study of a professional development programme

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Abstract

Post-observation feedback plays an important role in the professional development of student teachers enrolled in intensive initial EFL teacher education courses. However, many supervisors are not sufficiently experienced or trained in giving such feedback and tend to rely on default approaches to delivering post-observation feedback. In this thesis, I critically question the simplistic binary that is set up in the literature between directive and constructive approaches to feedback through the promotion of a shift from a directive or transmission approach towards a non-directive or exploratory approach in teacher education. I argue that supervisors require a range of approaches which they can draw on thoughtfully and with sound reasoning when scaffolding student teachers' learning through post-observation feedback.

Designed as a practitioner research project within the sociocultural context of language teacher education, this study aimed to investigate what approaches to post-observation feedback supervisors working within the field of initial EFL teacher education would use if they had more options than just a default mode of supervision.

Supervisors were presented with a range of options available to them when delivering post-observation feedback through a professional development intervention. The professional development needs of supervisors which had been identified in previous research and literature were used to develop a professional development intervention framework. The framework encompassed the '*what*' (or content of) and the '*how*' (or the form of) post-observation feedback. It was framed by sociocultural theory and the content and approach to delivery were based on four guiding principles: collaboration, engagement, a balance between theory and practical content, and promotion of reflective practice. The professional development intervention was implemented and ran over a period of 10 months.

The professional development intervention proved to be a successful model for the development of some aspects of supervisors' practice. Findings show that through this professional development intervention, supervisors were aware of the options available to them which enabled them to move away from default approaches in order to construct post-observation feedback discussions in more informed and nuanced ways that supported student teacher learning.

Keywords: *professional development of language teacher educators; intensive initial EFL teacher supervision; EFL teaching practicum; post-observation feedback event; practitioner research; case study; sociocultural theory; zone of proximal development; supervision as a practice; knowledge for supervision; approach to feedback; talk; reflection; structure of feedback*