6 Peer observation in Oman: How it is carried out and teachers' attitudes towards it

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims

The aim of this study is to uncover teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding peer observation, the process whereby one teacher observes another with a view to enhancing the professional development of one or both. I also wish to investigate teachers' experiences of conducting peer observations and their views as to how they would like to carry them out in future.

1.2 Background and rationale

In the last ten years, great attention has been paid to teacher development in Oman, with increasing awareness within the Ministry of Education that pre-service programmes are insufficient in themselves. One innovation aimed to support in-service development is peer observation. Personally, I started observing peers six years ago when I moved to a big school where there were eight English language teachers. I used to observe and be observed by other teachers about once a month. Some teachers were not very happy about this arrangement, although for me it was a positive experience to see how others taught and handled their classes. In some cases, when teachers did not have good relationships, peer observation was an uncomfortable process. Others did not like to be observed because they were not used to it or because they were afraid they were not going to do well, which meant they could lose face in front of their colleague.

When I came to the UK I discovered that peer observation is actually used in higher education, which surprised me. So I thought if it is part of higher education, then it must be very beneficial. That is why I decided to conduct this research. I wanted to learn what teachers in Oman (not just in my old school) thought of peer observation and how they carry it out.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Purposes and benefits

Peer observations are generally conducted between one new and one experienced teacher or between two experienced teachers (White, n.d). One purpose is to help teachers develop their ability to notice what is happening in the classroom and explain why things happen in a certain way (Malderez, 2003). This is with a view to making decisions about how to improve students' learning. Another purpose is to develop teachers' ability to judge their own teaching and evaluate it so that they are able to understand what their pupils are doing and why (Williams, 1989). Peer observation can also encourage self-reflection and self-awareness (Cosh, 1999), and draw attention to habits or blind spots in teaching (Head & Taylor, 1997).

Novice teachers can learn from exposure to different teaching styles (Richards, 1997), select suitable methodology to use in their classrooms (Richardson, 2000) and so spread good practices (Cosh, 2004). If teachers trust each other, they can ask colleagues to observe and give feedback when they try a new method. A colleague of mine was trying out a new method for teaching stories at the secondary level and asked me to observe her teaching and discuss it later. I believe because there was trust between us she was encouraged to ask me to observe her class.

Peer observation can stimulate observers to think about teaching (Cosh, 2004), evaluate their own practices (Fanselow, 1990) and re-examine their beliefs about learning and teaching in the light of what they have observed and discussed (Malderez & Bodòczky, 1999). This process can help them question their actions and make their personal theories explicit.

The use of peer observation can "foster a sense of career-long learning" (Richardson 2000, p. 15) and prevents teacher isolation (Cosh, 1999). I myself encountered such isolation when, early in my career, I was the only primary English teacher in the school. Peer observation promotes discussions of teaching (Richardson, 2000) and develops collegiality (Richards & Lockhart 1993), although the extent to which this happens depends on the individuals themselves. If there is no trust and rapport between teachers, then I believe that peer observation cannot do much to help.

Despite all the benefits, there are difficulties in implementing peer observation. These relate to: limited time (e.g. due to timetable clashes, Malderez, 2003), teachers' reluctance or anxiety, a lack of clarity as to the benefits and uncertainty as to how to provide feedback. Anxiety results because firstly, teaching usually takes place behind closed doors and for some is a private matter and secondly because observation is usually linked to evaluation and judgement. This causes reluctance to participate. Some teachers do not see any benefit in peer observation (Richards & Lockhart, 1992), and many are unaware how to provide feedback. It is not easy to give constructive feedback, especially if the observers feel they should provide positive comments only (Cosh, 1999). So, more training is required.

The value of conducting peer observations lies in the process and not just the product, unlike observations for evaluative purposes (Fanselow, 1990). This process is not limited to the observation task; it includes the preparation and discussion

beforehand as well as the discussion afterwards. It is generally agreed that in order to be of maximum benefit, peer observation should include these three stages (Munson, 1998).

2.2 Structuring peer observations

The first step is to decide who will observe, who will be observed and which lesson. Some state that, as far as possible, teachers should be allowed to choose the observer, as they will feel less anxious with someone whom they trust and respect (White, n.d). Cosh (1999) explains that if teachers have some control over the process, they will feel more reassured that it is being used for their own development. On the other hand, teachers in general may be more likely to choose peers with whom they share similar beliefs and perspectives to observe, which therefore could reduce their exposure to different styles of teaching (Cosh, 2004). In my opinion, this reservation does not seem very logical because we see friends and colleagues getting on together regardless of what they believe in. It is nice to have freedom to choose our peers but there is one problem; what if the timetable does not allow us to do so, does it mean we are not going to conduct peer observations? Secondly, there is the matter of collegiality. If it is supposed to be promoted through peer observation, what happens if we just observe people we know best?

Another decision that should be taken is which lesson to observe. Head & Taylor (1997) suggest the observed teacher decides, while Cosh (1999) thinks the decision should be taken jointly.

The next issue is the pre-lesson discussion, when the two teachers meet. There are several suggestions for the content of this discussion. It could focus on the aims of the lesson and establish a context (Martin & Double, 1998, Munson, 1998). It could also centre on an observation focus identified in advance by the observed teacher to give the observer a clear aim (Richards & Lockhart, 1992). In some cases, the focus can be chosen from a list of suggested topics (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Cosh, 2003).

During peer observation, a general procedure is that the observer sits at the back of the room, although Richardson (2000) suggests the observer sit at the front in order to see the students. The observer is not expected to participate in any way. In order to be objective when giving feedback, it is better if the observer notes down what actually happening with the focus in mind and does not rely on memory to avoid giving interpretations without evidence (Gosling, 2002).

With regard to the post-observation discussion, various procedures are suggested. Both the observer and the observed teacher should have some time to think about what happened in the class (Head & Taylor, 1997) and then discuss while the experience is still fresh in their minds (Martin & Double, 1998). The observed teacher should start by reporting what happened and reflect on it (Munson, 1998). The observer then reports on what was observed in a non-judgemental way, preferably discussing the observed teacher's reflections and the observation focus, if there was one.

Many observers find this discussion difficult, perhaps because they feel they are expected to give only positive feedback or because the observed teacher would not accept their comments. Mento & Giampetro-Meyer (2000) suggest feedback should

be tailored to teachers' needs, with negative feedback not excessive. To avoid giving evaluative feedback, Cosh (2004) suggests limiting the discussion to teaching and pedagogic issues in general. However, I believe this might limit the benefits for the observed teacher. I think teachers can discuss teaching in general without the need to observe others. To avoid being judgemental, observers can provide alternative methods, with observed teachers asking for suggestions (Head & Taylor, 1997).

To recap, there are various ways of conducting peer observations, but most importantly, the value lies in the process. Munson (1998) emphasises the importance of pre- and post-discussions because teaching is a cognitive activity which requires understanding of why things happen; discussion can help teachers link their beliefs to classroom actions.

2.3 Peer observation in Oman

A Ministry of Education document in Arabic specifies aims for teachers of all subjects using peer observation. These relate to: learning teaching methods and increasing creativity, developing self-evaluation and problem-solving, building cooperation and respect between teachers, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and comparing pupils' participation across classes and schools.

Most of these aims have been discussed in the literature. However, evaluating the curriculum through peer observation is something I have not come across before. In the Omani context, though, it seems a good idea, as the country is experiencing curriculum renewal. Through comparing classes, observers can see what helps pupils participate and get involved in classroom interaction.

The same Ministry document recommends procedures for conducting peer observation. These are general guidelines, which can be interpreted flexibly and applied in different ways in schools. Although the document asks supervisors to give teachers a clear idea about peer observation, this did not happen in my case when we were told to observe each other. No supervisor explained to us why peer observation is carried out or how.

After the observation, observers are expected to fill in a feedback sheet, which is usually designed by the senior teacher (I was asked to design one in my school). Supervisors check that peer observation is carried out in schools by looking at a file of feedback sheets when they visit.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers say they conduct peer observations?
2 How do they feel about peer observations?
3. How would they carry out peer observations if they had a choice?

I conducted the research with sixty-five English teachers from fifteen schools in the Sharqiya North region of Oman. This sample represented 33% of the schools in the region that carry out peer observations and 27% of the region's teachers. (In small schools, with 3 or fewer English teachers, peer observations are not used.)

My two data collection methods were questionnaires and interviews. I chose questionnaires to involve many subjects anonymously. This encourages honesty

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) and reduces anxiety. My questionnaire was not time-consuming to complete (it took about 15 minutes) and could be analysed quickly (as it did not have lots of open questions).

In designing my questionnaire I related it to my research questions. Following Munn & Drever (1990), I started with straightforward general questions and saved open questions to the end. I piloted it with friends who were English teachers in my previous school, listened to their comments and revised it three times. I then distributed the questionnaire to schools around the region, introducing it before I gave it out. The response rate was high (85.5%). I used a quantitative approach to analyse the closed questions (counting up responses and tabulating them). As for the open questions, I analysed these qualitatively, identifying categories.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires, to access beliefs. However, one disadvantage of interviews is that the interviewer usually has more power than the interviewee, which can affect responses (Nunan, 1992). In my case, interviewees knew me as a supervisor, although I introduced myself as an MA student. This may also have affected willingness to participate, as initially I found it difficult to find volunteers. Eventually, though, three experienced teachers did volunteer, together with four inexperienced teachers I asked permission to interview. I assured all teachers I would follow strict ethical guidelines (e.g.; regarding anonymity). Interviews lasted between 20 and 25 minutes and were analysed qualitatively, with data transcribed and categorized.

4 FINDINGS

I first present findings from the questionnaires (see Al-Habsi, 2004, for the tables).

4.1 A summary of the questionnaire data

- Most teachers surveyed were experienced. 50 of the 65 had 4 years or more teaching experience. That means the less-experienced teachers represent 23% of the participants and the more experienced 77%.
- 93% of teachers who gave a specific reply indicated they observed between 1 and 4 times per semester. Most (53%) observed three-four times. 7% reported observing 5 times or more.
- Nearly half (46%) were told who to observe, while a slightly smaller number (42%) negotiated this with the observed teacher. The remaining 12% made the decision themselves.
- The majority (55%) decided collaboratively when to conduct peer observations. Only 17% decided themselves, while 29% said they were told when to observe.
- Most commonly, the decision of which lesson to observe was collaborative (57%). An equal number of teachers (21.5%) reported that they choose which lesson to observe or were told by someone else.
- Most teachers (72%) reported they chose what to pay attention to, while a minority said they decided this with the teacher.
- If the observed teacher identified a focus, this was mostly on classroom

interaction. Teaching methods, materials used and the classroom setting were also identified as areas to look at.

- If the teachers chose the focus themselves (as 72% did), three-quarters of these looked at the whole lesson in general, while over a third identified teaching methods. Classroom interaction came next, followed by materials used, classroom setting and others (motivation, language used by pupils, pupils' concentration and pupils' behaviour).
- Nearly 30% of the teachers indicated they made no special preparations when they were going to be observed, while another 30% would prepare the materials and go over the lesson more carefully than normal. A few teachers reported they prepared a special lesson; e.g.; "in order to impress the observers so that they see new methods of teaching" or "to make the lesson lively and interesting".
- Five teachers reported they had a discussion before the observation; e.g.; to "give a summary" or "tell the observer the aims of the lesson and method of teaching". Others said they give observers an idea about the lesson, by indicating what they are going to teach, which unit and activity.
- Asked about the feedback they receive from observers, the teachers replied as follows:

Table 1 Feedback teachers receive from observers

Type of feedback received	No. of teachers
Short verbal comments e.g. good lesson	25 teachers (6 of them just get this type of feedback)
Discussion of the lesson	37 teachers
Written feedback	42 teachers (26 receive it with short verbal comments)
Another type of feedback (please specify)	None
No feedback is provided	2 teachers

As the table shows, only just over half (57%) have a post-lesson discussion. Nearly two-thirds (65%) do get written feedback. However, the majority of these (40% of all teachers) do not have opportunity to discuss the lesson and just get short verbal comments. Two teachers said they did not get any feedback at all.

- The vast majority of teachers (94%) reported they do get the chance to read the feedback sheet provided.
- The same number reported they like to read it for various reasons; mostly, to know the areas of strengths and weaknesses in their lessons or to "improve their teaching". A few said it was useful, they wanted to know how successful their lesson was or it helped them assess or reflect on their lesson. A few also said they wanted to learn new ideas.
- Those not interested in the feedback sheet gave reasons; e.g.; oral discussion was enough, it could affect relations between teachers adversely or everyone has their own way of teaching.

- Regarding teachers' attitudes towards peer observation, over 80% agreed or agreed strongly with each of the following statements. (Not more than 6% disagreed with any of them.) The teachers reported they believe:

Peer Observation:

- gives teachers an opportunity to learn from each other.
- is a way to help less experienced teachers improve their teaching skills.
- promotes collaborative work between teachers.
- provides information about teachers' own strengths and weaknesses.
- helps them to look back on their lessons and reflect.
- provides new ideas to use in the class.

- Furthermore, over three-quarters (78%) disagreed with the statement: 'I don't like having my lesson evaluated by another teacher'.
- A large majority of teachers (77%) reported some difficulties that limited their use of peer observation. These included workload (14% of all teachers), timetable clashes (22%), teachers' negative attitudes (46%), awkwardness about giving feedback (11%) and others. Some mentioned difficulties in completing the feedback sheet, pupils' attitudes and behaviour, difficulties with school administration and sudden visits from outside. Finally some reported there are teachers who do not understand the point of peer observations and do not see any reason for conducting them, which makes it difficult for the observer.
- Teachers were divided on the importance of the pre-lesson discussion. Nearly half (45%) thought it was important, while 11% thought it only a little important and 39% not important at all.
- There was strong agreement that the post-lesson discussion was important (34%) or very important (63%). So, 97% in total chose these categories.
- Asked how often teachers would conduct peer observations if given the choice, nearly half (46%) said they would like to observe others 1-2 times a semester, while a third (34%) indicated 3-4 times. A small minority (four teachers) said more often, while others gave non-specific answers.
- Asked what they would do beforehand if given the choice, the teachers replied as follows:

  Ask about the topic and the aims of the lesson and get a general idea about the lesson (23%).
  Discuss the lesson with the observed teacher (23%).
  Inform the observed teacher about the observation and decide on the time (15%).
  Prepare the lesson with the observed teacher (6%).
  Prepare the feedback sheet and look at it (5%).
  Would not discuss the lesson with the observed teacher (5%).
  "Prepare myself" (3%).
  Nothing (3%).
  Others did not understand or left the question blank.

- Asked what they would do after the lesson if given the choice, the majority (83%) replied they would have a discussion. A small minority (6%) said they would write the feedback sheet. Others did not respond.
- Asked what kind of feedback they would provide if given the choice, nearly a third indicated feedback on strengths and weaknesses (29%), while others said methods of teaching (11%) or feedback that would improve teaching (6%). Just over a tenth thought mostly of teachers' feelings and would give "encouraging", "supportive" or "motivating" feedback.
- Most teachers (66%) would provide this feedback in both spoken and written form. However 20% chose only spoken and 9% chose only written.

4.2 A summary of the interview data

I asked the interviewees the same questions, but explored their answers in more depth. Seven teachers were interviewed. Three of them had thirteen years experience or more and the other four had three years or less.

- Three teachers said they observe other teachers four times a semester and two said twice. One said she observed others six times a semester and one said she observed others once because of lack of time.
- Four said they do not choose who to observe and it is decided by the senior teacher. The other three said it is their choice and they go and ask the teacher they want to observe for permission.
- Three teachers said the senior teacher decides when they observe, two said it is done collaboratively with the observed teacher and the other two said it is their choice.
- Three teachers said the decision of which class to observe is taken with the observed teacher. Two said it was their choice and the other two said the senior teacher made that decision.
- As for what to focus on during the observation, four teachers said they have the observation form to follow but three of these said they have the freedom to add more points if they like. The other three said it was their choice.
- The teachers reported they pay attention to; classroom interaction, methods of teaching, materials used, points to improve, the whole lesson, classroom organisation and how close the teacher is to the teacher's book steps.
- Six reported they do not have any preparation or discussion with the observer, one because it is done as a duty and another because of the teachers' feelings. The teacher who did prepare said she asked about the topic of the lesson.
- Six teachers said they get written feedback. Three of these six have a discussion after the observation. The other three only get short verbal comments. The last teacher said she does not receive any kind of feedback after the observation, although there is a feedback sheet to be filled in.
- All interviewed teachers said they get the chance to read the feedback sheet, except for one who was not offered the chance to do so.
- Five said they like to read the feedback sheet. They explained it gives an idea of the observer's view of the lesson and includes points they need to improve. The other two disagreed, one because it includes positive points only.

- The interviewed teachers identified the following benefits of peer observation; learning from observing experienced teachers, seeing teaching differently, getting feedback about their lessons which would help them improve their teaching, evaluating themselves, seeing their teaching through the eyes of others, learning from experienced teachers.
- However, one teacher said she saw no benefit for the observed teacher because no feedback was provided for her when she was observed.
- Most teachers reported timetable clashes as one of the difficulties when conducting peer observation. Workload was another and other problems were mentioned: teachers' reluctance to observe others, a focus by some teachers on evaluation and weak points, teachers not knowing how to give feedback and not seeing a purpose for peer observation. One teacher argued "as peers we cannot be observers unless in an ideal world".
- Most teachers surveyed did not think it important to discuss the lesson beforehand, except to get a very general idea. However, one said pre-lesson discussions were important to establish an observation focus.
- All said discussing the lesson afterwards was very important; to learn new ideas, explain, clarify and establish points of strengths and weaknesses.
- In an ideal world, most would observe between two to four times a semester. Some added that new teachers should observe more. One said he would like to observe each of his colleagues twice (he had six colleagues).
- Prior to the lesson, three would ask about the topic and main points, while two would discuss the lesson with the observed teacher and decide on a focus. One would simply inform the observed teacher about the observation, while the last would not do anything in particular.
- All would have a discussion after the lesson. One said the observer should be frank, while another said teachers should exchange ideas. Another teacher suggested the observed teacher should explain what happened in the class.
- In terms of feedback, five reported they would start with positive points and then address points to improve. One said she would give a report about materials used, classroom management and the whole lesson, while the other said she would follow the feedback sheet.
- Six teachers would first give spoken feedback then written. The other would only give spoken, because no-one wrote honest opinions, she said, not even her.

5 DISCUSSION

In this section, I am going to relate my research questions to the findings and literature.

5.1 How do teachers say they conduct peer observation?

5.1.1 The number of times teachers observe their colleagues

It seems the great majority of teachers conduct peer observations between one

and four times per semester, with a majority of these towards the higher end (three or four). Regarding local guidelines, I cannot find advice in Ministry documents, but remember, from my own experience, supervisors asking teachers to observe others once a month (three or four times per semester). This is close to the recommendation of Richards & Lockhart (1992) (twice in ten weeks) and Munson (1998) (once a month). Perhaps, teachers who observed less had heavy workloads.

5.1.2 The organisation of peer observation (who to observe/ when/which class to observe)?

Clearly, from both questionnaire and interview data, senior teachers were influential in organizing many peer observations, perhaps too many. As White (n.d.) argues, giving teachers the choice of who to observe is important, as they can then choose someone they can trust and approach for advice. Some of the teachers felt able to choose.

5.1.3 The focus of the observation

Firstly, most teachers observing chose what to focus on themselves, and most of these said they observe the whole lesson, which might mean they do not have a focus and observe the lesson in general. The phrase "whole lesson" should have been formed differently in the questionnaire, e.g.; 'don't have a focus', 'observe the whole lesson in general'.

Responses also suggest the teachers were interested in classroom interaction. Senior teachers may ask teachers to focus on classroom interaction, as they feel it is important. I have done the same thing myself.

5.1.4 Pre-observation discussion

Although Ministry guidelines recommend pre-lesson discussions, it seems that many teachers (nearly half) do not regard them as important, which might explain the lack of focus to many observations.

5.1.5 Does the observed teacher get feedback? What type of feedback?

There were some discrepancies in the responses, as some teachers may not have understood the feedback sheet (if, for example, it included numbers) to be a form of written feedback. The great majority said they had a chance to read the feedback sheet, which would have been filed in the school for official purposes. However, only just over half had a post-lesson discussion.

5.1.6 Post-lesson discussion

Although only 57% of teachers reported having post-lesson discussions, a large majority consider them important, as do the Ministry guidelines. Lack of time and timetable clashes might explain why they are missed, as well as attitudes, fear of evaluation and lack of confidence.

5.1.7 What is the role of the observer/observed teachers?

The lack of pre- and post-lesson discussions reported by some teachers suggests that the role of the observed teacher in such cases is very limited. One of the interviewees raised this point. She said that as an observed teacher she does not see any benefit of peer observation because her role is to teach the lesson only. Others, though, do seem to treat peer observation more collaboratively, through holding discussions and agreeing a focus to give feedback on.

5.2 How do teachers feel about peer observation?

5.2.1 Benefits of peer observation

Though the majority agreed with all six statements about the benefits of peer observation, there were differences in degree. Those statements that scored highest in the questionnaire related to the benefits for observers, while the one that scored lowest (peer observation promotes collaborative work between teachers) can be seen in the light of my comments above about the roles of observer and observed teachers. On a positive note, one interviewed teacher said, through peer observation, he could see his teaching through the eyes of others.

5.2.2 What are the difficulties faced by teachers when conducting peer observation?

The difficulties the teachers talked about were mainly timetable clashes, workload, teachers' attitudes towards peer observation and difficulty in giving feedback. I predicted these difficulties in the literature review on the basis of research findings and my own experiences.

5.2.3 How do teachers feel when observed by others?

I was surprised that most teachers (78%) do not dislike being evaluated by a colleague, as my focus was on non-evaluative peer observation. Interestingly, Richard & Lockhart (1992) found that although teachers on a project were instructed to avoid giving evaluative feedback some observed teachers actually welcomed it.

5.2.4 How important are the pre- and post-lesson discussions for the teachers?

Clearly, pre-lesson discussions are unimportant to many teachers. Some observers do not even find out basic information about the lesson before they go into class. Yet, they do seem to consider post-lesson discussions important, and more research needs to be conducted into why these are not more frequent.

5.2.5 How useful is the feedback sheet they get from the observer?

Responses were mixed and much depends on the quality of the feedback sheet. Having looked at some examples, I think they could be more useful.

5.3 How would teachers carry out the peer observation task if they had a choice?

5.3.1 How many times they would observe others?

Many teachers would like to observe less often (once or twice per semester rather than three or four times). This did not surprise me for two reasons. Firstly, some teachers see teaching as a private affair, and secondly, due to the number of visits teachers get, from administrators, headteachers, senior teachers and inspectors, they might want to be left alone. In Hong Kong, Lam (2001) found that teachers observed colleagues on average three times per year but would have preferred to do so just twice.

5.3.2 Would they have pre-lesson discussions?

Given the poor response to this question, I believe many teachers might not be aware of the benefits of such discussions.

5.3.3 What would happen after the lesson?

The majority would have a discussion, which means this is important to them.

5.3.4 What kind of feedback would the observed teacher receive?

I should have formed this question differently, as I realised after reading the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Five of the interviewees said their feedback would be positive and then move on to points to improve. I expected this kind of response, a pattern of giving feedback recommended in the literature.

5.3.5 How would it be given?

Findings show that most teachers would give both spoken and written feedback, which surprised me. While spoken feedback is clearly important to peer observation, I expected them to consider the writing an extra task. However, many teachers indicated they like to read their feedback, which might explain their wish to give it to others.

6 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Implications

On the basis of the data, it would seem peer observation is addressing some of the issues the Ministry expects it to. How far peer observation is contributing to professional development is an issue for a further study. The data show that the teachers participate in taking decisions about who to observe and when to observe, giving them some ownership of the process.

Findings also show that observers have a bigger role than observed teachers, which is a concern. This might be because teachers do not have a clear idea about the process of peer observation.

On the other hand, the majority of teachers agreed with the benefits of peer observation listed in the questionnaire, which is a positive sign. If they acknowledge the benefits then, to some extent, they have awareness. The teachers talked about the difficulties, familiar ones to me from the literature and my own experience. I believe we can overcome difficulties that relate to teachers' attitudes by providing workshops that involve reflective work. Through these, teachers, working collaboratively, can explore peer observation and experiment with different strategies. Research conducted into peer observation has stressed the need for training if it is to be used effectively (Munson, 1998; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000).

6.2 Limitations

The findings above need to be set against the following limitations. Firstly, the time spent on designing the questionnaire and interview tools was insufficient. I did not have time to pilot the questionnaire which left me unaware of the ambiguity of certain questions.

Furthermore, regarding the interviews, my plan was to study the questionnaires first and then use interviews to probe additional issues. However, due to lack of time, I could not do this and started interviewing before analysing all the questionnaires. Accordingly, I feel the interviews do not add much.

6.3 Conclusion

One area that could be further investigated is how teachers' attitudes towards peer observation can be improved. This could be done using alternative methodology. Teachers could be provided workshops on peer observation and opportunities to experiment with new ideas in working together. Changes in their attitudes could be tracked and documented.

Peer observation provides an opportunity for teachers to take charge of their own development. This is an important Ministry goal; it needs to be supported.

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