

**Leading Further Education
March 21st 2014**

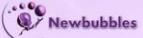
*Improving Teaching and Learning
Using Peer Observation*

With Joanne Miles



Session Objectives

- Highlight key insights from research on the value of peer observation
- Outline several models for setting up peer observation
- Identify common pitfalls and suggest some solutions



The Reflective Practitioner

According to Avis (2003; 316) **'expansive professionalism'** is characterized by 'democratic relations that are not undermined by spurious notions of performance management' but instead is something that is constructed collaboratively by means of professional dialogue between colleagues.'
(O'Leary, 2014)



'..an expansive learning environment is one in which opportunities for collaborative discussion and wider reflection on professional learning are encouraged and promoted. In relation to classroom observation, my research findings revealed a common core of principles underpinning expansive models across colleges, typically centring on notions of collaboration, trust and professional autonomy.'

(O'Leary, 2011)



'Having control over the five key dimensions of choice of observer, focus of observation, form and method of feedback, resultant data flow and the next steps encouraged them to focus on improvement of practice rather than demonstration of existing good practice.'

(McMahon et al, 2007)



Models of Peer Observation

Review the model and discuss:

1. Pros and cons
1. Potential pitfalls and ways round them



'Many teachers are effective. Their problem is lack of access to other teachers. Access would mean that they could become even better while sharing their expertise. Many other teachers are competent but could improve considerably if they were in a more collaborative environment....Interactive professionalism exposes problems of incompetence more naturally and gracefully [than punitive appraisal schemes]. It makes individuals reassess their situation as a continuing commitment.'

(Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992)



Voices from the Sector

Review the wall quotes and discuss:

1. Which benefits and challenges within peer observation do they highlight?

1. How far do these reflect your own experiences of peer observation?



'Conceptualizing observation as a tool for reciprocal learning has the potential to break down some of the traditional hierarchies and power imbalances associated with the observer-observee relationship, particularly if it is not linked to summative assessment for high stakes purposes, i.e. graded lesson observation.'

(O'Leary, 2014)



Tips and Pointers

- Maximise teacher ownership of the model
- Encourage reflection on how to peer visit in reflective, collaborative ways
- Beware too much paperwork!
- Develop a flexible model that maximises potential take up
- Create chances to reflect on what was learnt (T&L) and from the process
- Tackle the lack of time issue head on
- Be persistent and patient