

Developing a Coaching Lesson Feedback Model in your School



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“It’s the quality of the feedback rather than its existence or absence that determines its power.”

Stiggins et al. (2004)

We hear so much in schools about giving effective feedback and Hattie and Clarke’s research (2018) has proven that effective feedback is the most important factor impacting on student progress. Traditional lesson observation continues to be challenged as it provides only a snapshot of a teacher’s practice in the classroom. However, when lesson observations or visits feature within a more collaborative approach to feedback, development and learning, the highly nerve-wracking experience for the teacher can be replaced with a meaningful learning experience through effective feedback. This can therefore be a powerful tool for teachers’ and school leaders’ professional development. This paper explores how a coaching approach to giving feedback following lesson observations can support a deeper and more meaningful level of learning

for both the observed and the observer.

Chin’s work on ‘Collaborative Feedback’ (or ‘co-created feedback’) advocates the power of co-creating something between the people involved in the feedback conversation in order to ‘produce something even better’; as opposed to ‘simply throwing information or data at someone... (I call this ‘dump and run’)' (Chin, 2019).

Lesson Study (Dudley, 2011) is a ‘Japanese model of teacher-led research in which a triad of teachers work together to target an identified area for development in their students’ learning’. Its key components are shown in the diagram below (Teacher Development Trust, 2020), and show a clear link between observation and a reflective planning process that includes collaborative feedback.

“Sometimes, in the workplace, the term ‘feedback’ is used to disguise a piece of criticism... Many of us dislike giving feedback even more than receiving it.”

(Starr, 2017)

Lesson Study

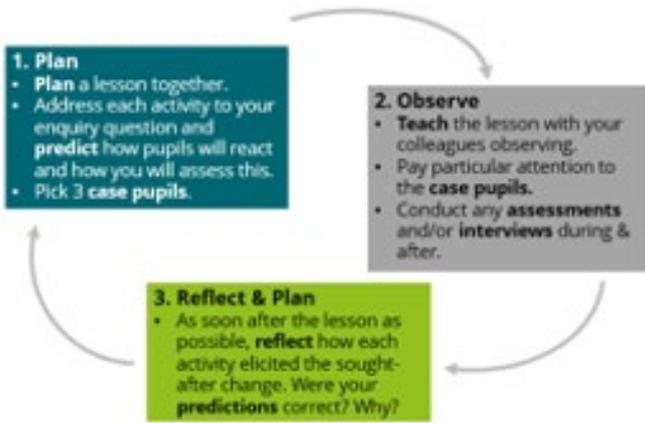


Diagram 1: Lesson Study
(Teacher Development Trust)

All three stages of the lesson study process are collaborative, co-creative and reflective; utilising a genuinely active approach to listening and feeding back where all contributors benefit equally, which resonates with Chin's view of collaborative feedback, as well as the key elements of effective coaching (Whitmore, 1992).

The issue of grading in lesson observations is a hot one because as we all know, that's what we listen out for when in the feedback conversation. Miles' (2018) work on 'ungraded developmental lesson observations' notes that 'the overriding impression is how excitingly different observation can be when framed and implemented with a developmental ethos and skills'. She cited that all the (educational) institutions she was working with 'could see the inadequacies and limitations of their current [lesson observation and feedback]

models and how much more they had to gain from changing them'. During an evaluative piece, Miles noted comments from participant educators that rather than focusing on the 'challenges of having trustful, thoughtful conversations about...practice in a graded model [where] too much is at stake', they were pleased to be engaging in something:

- 'much more tailored to the teacher's context and needs';
- 'it is much more relaxed, more collaborative and less tense/stressful';
- The observer was more interested in what they think and their wider experience in the classroom;
- It felt 'less narrow, deeper, more about me as a whole practitioner';
- It enabled a 'more authentic display of practice and an organic, evolving conversation about learning'.

"[Collaborative feedback] is a method of giving feedback that takes away the antagonism and replaces it with a positive, look-forward approach. One of the most popular models of collaborative coaching is the GROW Model."

(Brodo, 2019)

Leading international coaches such as Julie Starr and Kim Morgan both see coaching as a ‘co-creation’ process between coach and coachee to ‘enable engagement’ (Starr, 2017). Here, ‘constructive feedback’ which is given with ‘a positive intention’, features as a peer to other key coaching strategies such as active listening, ‘active enquiry’, encouraging people to think and act for themselves, offering challenge and observations, assuming that ‘other people can do more, be more’ and increasing the (coach’s) focus on the need to develop others.

The key features of coaching and key features of effective feedback are shown below in Table 1 and Table 2:

Key Features of Coaching (McGuinness, 2007)	Key Features of Effective Feedback (Iris, 2018)
Goal-setting	Goal-orientated
Looking	Tangible & Transparent
Listening	Actionable
Empathising	Timely & Targeted
Questioning	Ongoing
Giving feedback	Ongoing
Intuiting	
Checking	

Table 1: Key Features of Coaching

Table 2: Key Features of Effective Feedback

“The majority of the time, when you give feedback, you have outcomes in mind. More often than not, it’s because you want something or someone to change. Change happens when there is true engagement from all parties involved.” (Chin, 2019)

Miles’ work (2018) evaluated participants’ responses about the challenges to changing to a coaching and developmental approach to lesson observation feedback:

- ‘Finding time was a challenge’
- The move from using checklists to ‘box off aspects of practice in a reductive or rather simplistic way in graded models’ to using coaching approaches is very different ‘when you try and engage a teacher in deep reflection instead of just giving them feedback and fundamentally walking away afterwards. It still takes skill, practice, patience, commitment and persistence’
- Quality of reflective skills amongst teaching teams
- Some resistance to change from a long-standing system

What is interesting in Miles’ detailed evaluation

piece is that none of the participants felt that these challenges meant that they would like to go back to their graded, checklist-focused lesson observation feedback approach, and all felt that ‘The value of the coaching conversation was clear. Just because it is challenging doesn’t mean you should abandon the process.’

Surely, then, if we combine Tables 1 and 2, and marry that with a system that addresses the potential challenges with changing to a coaching approach to lesson observation feedback, we have a match made in constructive-reflective-lesson-observation-feedback-heaven? Through this, we can invite greater levels of reflection and consequently deeper levels of understanding and learning from both the teacher and the observer. So what does that look like in practice? The key practical differences between the types of lesson observation feedback we’re discussing here are shown here in Table 3:

Features	(Graded) Lesson Observation Feedback - Observer to Teacher Delivery	Coaching/Collaborative Feedback Conversation
Approach	<p>Reliance-based</p> <p>80:20 Talk time with narrative-style from observer</p> <p>Owned by observer, done to the teacher</p> <p>Judgemental</p> <p>Quick and short – usually one-offs within a greater Quality Assurance scheme</p>	<p>Reciprocity-focused</p> <p>50:50 Conversation with equitable talk time</p> <p>Owned by both, reflective dialogue</p> <p>Developmental</p> <p>Time investment required, ongoing</p>
Structure	<p>(Grading)</p> <p>Checklists of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours to observe</p> <p>Observation, followed by feedback delivery</p>	<p>Developmental</p> <p>‘Blank Page’ – free, unfettered observation</p> <p>Pre-discussion (Lemov, 2010), (team/peer/collaborative) observation, followed by feedback conversation</p>

Features	(Graded) Lesson Observation Feedback - Observer to Teacher Delivery	Coaching/Collaborative Feedback Conversation
Key Strategies	Telling General open questioning as a support	Active Listening Open questioning as a fundamental
Observer Questioning	General: What do you think went well in that lesson? How do you think the lesson went?	Incisive & evidence-based: Which learners do you feel contributed the most in the discussion task? How did the presentation stage support the written task? Who did you notice struggling in the writing activity? How would you enhance certain stages of the lesson, if you could do it again?
Teacher Questioning	How did I do? What did you think? What did I get?	I realise that student A was not focusing on the task in the group work activity and this is often a problem with him. Maybe I could have...? I think my questioning approach is a bit limited. What else could I do to use questions in different ways with the whole class? I was really pleased with the practical as they all followed the instructions accurately for once! I think it helped that I...?
Statements	Subjective: Led by observer, about what observer saw	Subjective to Objective: Balanced between observer and teacher

Table 3: Key Feature Differences between Lesson Observation Feedback ‘types’

“Coaching feedback means asking people to give themselves feedback instead of, or before, giving one’s own [feedback].”

(Wilson, 2017)



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