

## **Peer Observation of Teaching for Professional Development in Higher Education: Experiences of Two Novice Lecturers Across Two Disciplines**

Nomalungelo Isabel Ngubane and Sfundo Cebolenkosi Gumede  
Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), 511 Mangosuthu Highway,  
Umlazi, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa  
Email: [isabeln@mut.ac.za](mailto:isabeln@mut.ac.za) or [gumedeSC@mut.ac.za](mailto:gumedeSC@mut.ac.za)

### **ABSTRACT**

Despite the increasing indication of peer observation of teaching (POT) as a key tool for improving practice, professional development, teacher development and students' learning, university teachers rarely benefit from POT for they keep their classrooms private for fear of collegial critique and scrutiny of philosophies informing their practice. Two novice lecturers across two disciplines in a university of technology implemented POT in their context and explored its effects on their emerging practice and professional development. This paper describes their experience of the POT process within social cognitive and observational learning theories. Post-evaluation feedback from the participating peers provided data for the study. Both peers believed that the POT initiative, to some extent, enhanced their teaching philosophies and improved their practice. It also stimulated and encouraged collaborative teaching across disciplines in their institution. Furthermore, the POT process was useful for the identification of areas for development between participants. Despite the limited teaching experience of the participants, this study provides arguments that POT can be based on collegial support, and thus builds scholarship of teaching and learning among new lecturers.

**Key words:** *peer observation of teaching, formative observation, social cognitive theory, observational learning model.*

### **Introduction and Background**

Teachers in higher education are gradually expected to account for the philosophies that inform their practice and, thus, the quality of their students' learning. Despite increasing evidence linking peer observation of teaching (POT) to improved practice, professional development and quality of students' learning (Drew and Klopper 2014) university teachers, however, rarely benefit from POT for they keep their classrooms private for fear of collegial critique and scrutiny of philosophies informing their practice. Without formal staff development initiatives such as POT, many university lecturers who may lack knowledge or experience of how to teach often draw from their experiences

as students to provide learning for their students (Johannes *et al.* 2013) and this threatens the quality of teaching and learning in higher education contexts (Bell & Cooper 2013, 65).

Without doubt, quality teaching and learning is a priority for universities in South Africa and globally. To promote quality teaching and learning at a University of Technology in South Africa, two emerging academics from two disciplines, Quantitative Techniques and English Communication Skills, embarked on a POT with the aim to enhance each other's practice and to improve their students' learning experiences. This study, therefore, explores the effects of POT on the practice and professional development of two emerging academics across two disciplines at a university of technology in South Africa. Peer observation of teaching is best described by Ramsden (2003, 8-10) as a method of gaining insights of the impact of our practice on students' learning. According to Hendry and Olivier (2012, 5) POT is also a process in which colleagues observe each other with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning and when it is developmental in nature it has potential of maintaining high standards of teaching delivered across the university.

Findings accumulated by Hassan and Wium (2014, 491-511) in a University of Technology in South Africa highlights the possible benefits of constructive feedback on improving the quality of learning, content and academic performance of students. Faculty of Science members were concerned about whether their practice, or lack of effective practice had impact on students' academic performance. A study was conducted to investigate the whether the POT process will have effects on students learning and performance. Areas of the POT process included the content, pedagogy and quality of learning experience. Academics indicated that constructive feedback on content and pedagogy improved practice, and over time, it was hoped that it would improve the quality of learning and students' performance. Although the teaching experiences of the participants were not discussed, the findings accumulated support for this study, that of the possible benefits of the POT process between academics with limited teaching experience and lack of shared disciplinary knowledge.

Another evidence linking POT constructive feedback to improved reflective practice and promotion of quality learning is the one by Bovill and Caims (2013) who, through questionnaires, collected perceptions of academics on POT. The feedback from the questionnaires informed the implementation of POT in one faculty. Results of the study highlighted the importance of constructive feedback on the POT process and the significance of reflective practice to inform and improve teaching. This study, and the one by (Bell, & Cooper 2013), for example, noticeably share a constant belief that POT is more favourable under conditions where POT members have similar disciplinary knowledge and if it is between experienced academics and inexperienced colleagues (Johannes, Fendler & Seidel 2013). In view of these accepted norms on POT, there is a need for a focus on unfamiliar contexts in which POT partners are from different disciplines and are both emerging academics in higher education. In this study, it is put forward that when POT is effectively planned with clear goals and if there is mutual respect and trust (Bell & Cooper 2013) among the new academics, the POT process would be beneficial to the POT participants.

## **Literature and Theoretical Framework**

The opportunity to learn from colleagues and being exposed to innovative ideas could be a powerful force for enhancing teaching and students' learning (Drew & Klopper 2013); advancement of disciplinary knowledge (Bell & Cooper 2013); teacher development (Letloenyane 2015). Sullivan, Nicky and Atkinson (2012) also reported the value of POT peers giving each other descriptive and constructive feedback on teaching and learning and this could mean to improve quality of practice among faculty members. Despite much attention being given to the positive benefits of POT among members of the same faculty and disciplines (Drew & Klopper 2013) and between junior and senior members (Hassan & Wuim 2014, 505), there is, however, there are few reported cases of POT implementation across disciplines and when both POT peers are emerging academics. In other words, little is known about the effects of POT in contexts where POT involves new academics from different fields observing one another with the aim of concentrating on the pedagogy.

Despite views that POT between new academics limit development as Johannes, Fendler and Siedel (2013) assert 'the blind leading the blind', there is, however, there is, on the other hand, concerns that junior members may feel vulnerable, anxious and threatened by the presence of advanced senior members during the POT process and consequently feel alienated or inadequate. Paucity of literature on POT between novice academics makes us pay attention to the limited findings that has been reported on such cases. For example, Eri (2014, 630) discovered the benefits of POT by relatively new academics in a faculty of Health Sciences. Despite the limited experience of teaching in higher education among the POT members Eri' (2014) study found that the POT process shed some light on the benefits of POT among new academics such as a willingness to have their teaching philosophies scrutinised by a fellow colleague. This study seeks to make a contribution by presenting a case of POT process between emerging academics from different disciplines. It is for purposes of improving practice that peers observe one another with the aim of altering perceptions and improve teaching.

Ramsden (2002, 180) argues that for a successful POT context there is a necessity for clear aims or objectives for the implementation of the POT process and how these goals will be achieved. Eri (2014, 634) also maintains that vague objectives and inappropriate implementation method may lead to conflicts, confusion and demotivating feedback and dilemma for POT process and practice. Contrary, this POT process was methodically planned and implemented to instil self-trust, inspiration, confidence, enthusiasm and professional worth among POT peers. Gosling (2002) puts forward three main models of POT: evaluation model, development model and a peer review model. These models inform the manner in which POT is conducted, the purpose(s) and the outcomes of the process. In an evaluation model, senior staff members usually observe other staff members and results from the observation are usually used for promotion, performance appraisal and quality assurance or to judge competency of the teacher observed. Furthermore, if POT is linked to judgement, teachers are more likely to be reluctant to participate to it; if it is imposed to them, it is less likely to yield substantial gains to a teacher observed.

In a developmental model, usually educational developers observe staff members with an aim of improving their competency and usually, certificates are provided to staff members observed. In a peer review model or peer observation of teaching, teachers with equal powers observe each other and provide non-judgemental and constructive feedback. Contrary to the other two models, in a developmental model, feedback from the POT remains confidential between the peers. Developmental model is largely underpinned by Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory (SCT) and the concept of observational learning (Donnelly 2007; Henry, Graham and Gary 2012) which maintains that people learn by observing others (SCT) and what peers learn from others (modelling). Furthermore, it is believed that peer collegial observation with a supportive environment is more likely to impact on their behaviour and impacts the observed.

A developmental model implemented in this POT process to provide a non-threatening learning environment to colleagues without any fear of evaluation (Pereira 2014). Within the developmental model we became 'critical' friends. Although other models of POT are important, if necessary, we suggest that a peer review model should be a continuous practice in higher education if university teachers were to learn from each other. Although the developmental model of POT implemented in this study was confined to a context in which both peers are new academics and are from different disciplines the investigation provided a platform for covering unfamiliar POT contexts and thus contributing to literature.

## **Methodology**

This paper explored the use of POT as a constructive and developmental process by two novice academics across two disciplines (Mathematical Sciences and English Communication Skills) in a South African university of technology with the aim of answering a research question: What are the effects of peer observation of teaching on pedagogy of two novice lecturers across two disciplines in higher education? The peers willingly participated in the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics committee for students' participation. Students were informed through consent letters of the purpose of the study and of their roles within the study. The study used one cycle of the POT process, that is, each peer was observed only once for the duration of the allocated teaching session (90 minutes). Underpinned by the social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura 1994) and the concept of observational learning (Donnelly 2007) the process encouraged collegial observation within a supportive and non-threatening environment of peers with equal teaching experience, mutual trust and shared POT interests and goals. As result of observing each other in the classroom the POT process was viewed to have a potential for cognitive development on participants. The concept of observational learning encouraged our willingness to learn from observing one another in practice regardless of our limited teaching experience. On the social cognitive aspect, we noticed that the theories do not postulate perimeters on the basis of disciplinary expertise of the POT participant for the development to take place and thus we capitalised on this limitation of the theory and extended it to our unfamiliar context of new academics learning from each other. In other words, these theories were implemented and verified in the context of the study on the basis of their

potential to enhance practice of two emerging lecturers by observing each other teaching and thus providing cognitive development leading to professional enhancement.

The POT process adopted the principles formulated by Gosling and Mason O'Connor (2009) that peer review should be underpinned by 1) self-evaluation through reflection 2) peer evaluation as developmental 3) collaborative and supportive environment 4) improvement of professional practice and student learning 5) and as an on-going practice. These five principles informed five stages of POT that were implemented in this study:

- Planning
- Pre-observation meeting
- Actual observation process
- Post-observation feedback meeting and
- Critical reflection on feedback to enhance practice and student learning.

### **The POT Process (investigation)**

The POT implemented in this study pursued the five steps of POT: planning, pre-observation meeting, the actual observation process, post-observation meeting and critical reflection on feedback established by Bell (2013) for their effectiveness on POT process.

### **Planning**

During the planning stage, we met to identify our individual professional development needs and we agreed that POT within our context will focus on the following aspect of our classroom practice:

- Teaching style/approaches used and whether it/they promote active participation of students
- Student-centred learning, active participation in learning activities, student-student interactions and students-lecturer interactions
- Use of technology to enhance teaching and learning
- Presentation of lecture (delivery)- tone, gestures, volume, friendliness, approachable

Observation sheet was used to record observed behaviours in details. No tape recorder or video camera was used to gather evidence of the teaching practice. The planning stage is crucial for colleagues who seek to implement the POT for it is within this stage that the participants also choose partners based on their established purpose for POT. That is, whether the chosen peer would be able to provide constructive feedback on the identified developmental needs. Despite our limited experiences on teaching in higher education and the fact that we are from different disciplines, our participation in the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) had grounded us into effective teaching philosophies and pedagogies and equipped us with knowledge such that we were confident and willing to share knowledge of pedagogy with each other and contribute positively to each other's practice. It is within the planning stage that the participants also establish trust,

common goals about the POT and how they will maintain the confidentiality like who will see the feedback beyond the POT peers, during and after the process (Hendry & Oliver 2012).

### **Pre-observation**

The planning stage is followed by the pre-observation meeting, sometimes referred to as 'The briefing meeting' (Donnelly, 2007). This meeting was used by the participants in this study to discuss where and when the process of POT would be conducted. The following aspects were discussed:

- Teaching context or setting against which each peer was to be observed (class, times and venues) so that times for observation would be set appropriately.
- Ways in which the each observer would be introduced to the class (if he/she would be introduced) and
- Methods of giving and receiving feedback (whether feedback would be discussed orally, which section of the class or lecture room would most suitable or will provide effective observation.
- How we were to approach the Teaching and Professional Development Unit (TPDU) for additional support should the need emerge from the findings of the study.

### **Actual observation**

Two classes were observed: Quantitative Techniques 1, which is a module within the first year Marketing curriculum and the English Communication Skills (ECS) for the Information Technology students. Both observations were 90 minutes long. The ECS classroom, with movable furniture, consisted of 30 students all seated in small groups while the Quantitative class, with 90 students, was conducted in a traditional lecture room with fixed chairs. During observations both peers took descriptive notes on the teaching approaches used and whether they promoted interactions between the students and between the students and lecturer. The focus of observation was also on whether the activities were student-centred and promoted active participation. Observation criteria also included the extent to which each peer use technology as a tool to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom. Lastly, detailed observation were recorded on the delivery or presentation of the lecture. This included gestures, tone, volume, friendliness and whether the lecturer was displayed an approachable manner.

Peer B observations in the ECS classroom included the following:

Peer A used small cooperative learning groups as a teaching and learning approach. The classroom had movable chairs and table and Power Point screen and projector. Teaching and learning resources included Power Point presentation and printed worksheets. PPT technology was used to deliver the lesson not for the learning activities. In other words, it was observed that students did not use technology for learning, for example, to present their ideas. Learning outcomes were clearly projected on the projector screen prior to learning activities. Students spent more time discussing in small groups and finding solutions to the learning activities. It was also observed that more spaces

between the tables allowed the lecturer to move between the small groups to facilitate the learning process. While interactions among students were observed to support learning of the new knowledge, however, the minimum student-lecturer interactions were observed. Peer A asked more questions to guide the learning process but few students asked questions. For 90 minutes students actively engaged with their learning activities while the lecturer assisted them where they needed support. Delivery was relatively good, however, the lecturer needed more improvement on the pace, feedback on activities and use of technology for learning rather than for teaching only. The lecturer spoke too fast such that it was observed that some students would ask peers to repeat what the lecturer had just said.

Peer A made the following observations in the Quantitative classroom:

Quantitative classroom was a traditional lecture theatre with fixed chairs in rows of 20 chairs per row. There was a chalkboard and a white erasable board which could also be used to project Power Point presentations. The consisted of 90 students all seated in their chairs facing the lecturer at the front of the lecture theatre. For most of the lecture time, the traditional lecture method was used. However, the lecturer encouraged students to discuss problems in pairs and share solutions. Students had study guides as learning resources and the lecturer had copy of the study guide as a teaching resource. The lecturer moved alongside the rows to encourage active participation and to ensure all students were practicing solving probability problems. For 90 minutes, students worked in pairs on the activities. Only few students, those in the front rows, asked questions although the lecturer motivated all students to ask questions. There was no use of technology but the lecturer used the white to solve problems while students wrote the answers in their notebooks. However, to stimulate interactions and student talk the lecturer randomly chose pairs to come to the front of the class to share their solutions. This provided students opportunities to ask questions. The size of the classroom was big and without technology like speakers the natural voice of the lecturer was low. It was observed that students seated at the back of the class missed some of the information. After observations, both peers analysed descriptive feedback in preparation for the post-observations meeting in which the feedback will be discussed.

### **Post-observation Feedback**

Post-observation meeting provided us opportunities for face-to-face conversations about the observation process and to obtain maximum learning opportunities from the post-observation sessions, we conducted them immediately after the observations while both of us could still recall the observation process. Bell & Cooper (2012) suggest feedback is most developmental when peers provide each other opportunities to comment on their own practice before they receive feedback from each other. For example, peers can describe how successful they think their classroom sessions were, what they think was effective and why, what they think was less effective and why, and lastly, what they would do differently next time in their classroom (Gosling 2002). This way, Gosling (2002) maintains that feedback from a peer becomes an 'add-on' to reinforce good practice and to provide further insights on areas of development. .

King (1999) further argues that 'giving feedback is not to provide judgement or evaluation but rather it is to provide insight'. King (1999) summarises effective feedback as:

- Descriptive of the behaviour observed instead of the personality.
- Specific, addressing the key issues identified during pre-observation, rather than general.
- Sensitive to the needs of the receiver and the giver
- Directed towards what can be changed or improved
- Timeous, immediate after observation or as soon as possible

Keeping in mind suggestions from Gosling (2002) the aim of the post-observation to encourage constructive dialogue about pedagogy and to provide each other ways of improving our practice based on the feedback provided. Constructive feedback, was thus focused on aspects agreed upon during the pre-observation meeting. That is, the feedback was based on teaching style/approaches; interactions between students and between the lecturer and students; use of technology to enhance teaching and learning; delivery skills gestures, tone, volume, friendliness and approachable personality of the lecturer.

- **Teaching Style/ Approaches**

On the teaching style, feedback from Peer A included:

*I liked the strategy of randomly selecting students to come and solve problems on the board. It kept them attentive and actively participating in the learning.*

A constructive feedback on teaching approaches from Peer B included the following:

*Learning was student-centred and I learned how to facilitate group work.*

Feedback was constructive and focused on aspects that peers can change. For example, Peer B could not change the infrastructure of his traditional classroom and therefore the feedback paid more attention towards providing learning opportunities despite the seating arrangement. That way, feedback was sensitive to the needs of the peer and also provided a learning opportunity. Another area of observation that both peers needed feedback on was on the extent to which technology was used to enhance teaching and learning.

- **The use of technology to enhance teaching and learning**

On the use of technology constructive feedback from included:

*Use of technology was minimum, introduce learning tools like blackboard to blackboard increase time on task and student independency. You Tube can be a learning tool for challenging probability problems.*

Peer B provided the following feedback on the use of technology:

*Students can create videos on different topics and bring into the class for sharing with peers. Students can also provide each other with feedback or help them to design criteria for feedback. You can use these out class video to assess to encourage the use of English and to assess how much interactions students make beyond the classroom context.*



During the post-observation stage the peers also informed each other on how the pedagogy could be improved given the circumstances under which POT was made. For example, Peer A provided the following feedback to improve pedagogy:

*Instead of assuming that all students learned and understood the concept make sure by asking them, at the end of the lesson, to write down one or two things they learned (one minute paper) and put their responses in a box.*

Peer B's feedback identified the weaknesses and the following suggestions were made for the improvement:

*I observed that you did not provide feedback during students' presentations. Feedback, either general, for the whole class, or for each group, is important because it informs students on how well they performed the task and where they need improvement*

Post-observations feedback and suggestions for improvement were only based on individual peers' observations and therefore peer were not judgemental but supportive of one another's areas of weakness. In summary, suggestions offered to improve each other's practices included:

- Try to speaker louder because your classroom is big so that all students can hear you
- Smile now and then to make students feel at ease and can feel free to approach you and to ask questions
- Make a follow up on a question to clarify if students seem not to understand the question
- Speak slower and stop now and then to make sure your students understand
  
- Try to provide feedback on students' presentation so that they learn from the activity and improve their skills.
- Provide more student-student interactions and peer support
- Bring more diverse learning resources, do not only rely on study guide to support learning
- Integrate technology into your teaching

### **Critical Reflection**

During feedback stage, individually we had to reflect on the feedback discussed and developed plans for the enhancement of the weakness observed and whether we needed interventions from the TPDU. Critical reflection is an important aspect of POT because it provides POT peers with chances to reflect on their practice in the light of feedback from the POT process. Critical reflection involved peers informally reflecting on what they have learned from the POT experiences and how they plan to use the feedback to improve their practice. Some of the critical reflection by peers included:

Peer B:

*I also became aware strategies to promote student interactions even though I use a traditional lecture classroom. For example, I can divide them into group and allocate different sections of the task and have each group report back to share their section with the class.*

**Peer A' critical reflection included:**

*Accepting feedback that was not positive was not easy but it was my first step to learning and development. Choosing a peer at my level of experience and from a different faculty allowed me to feel at ease about aspects I needed to improve as I knew that he was also learning from me.*

**Results**

**Observed Benefits of POT**

The aim of the study was to explore the effects of POT on, firstly, their emerging practice and secondly, on their professional development. Both peers agreed that the POT process, however, only for one cycle, as opposed to continuous observations, provided them a platform to reflect on their practice, within a collegial environment that was supportive and developmental, irrespective of their different disciplines, confirming the ideologies put forward earlier in this study that POT can be effective across disciplines.

**Effects of POT on professional development of emerging academics**

From the post reflection feedback it emerged that both peers identified the fact the constructive feedback they provided each other, to a certain extent, enhanced their teaching practice and influenced their teaching methods. However, both peers acknowledged that a teaching philosophy is often based on beliefs, assumptions, and experiences from the past and present, therefore, required, observation over time. They also found that professional development encompasses various aspects of practice, some of it that could not be observed in one cycle and be achieved. Despite these limitations, it was evident from the feedback provided by Peer A that the process yielded positive effects on professional practice of the individual involved:

*I have also learned to be objective and to set aside my beliefs about teaching and learning in order to accommodate and embrace alternative pedagogies from my peer. In that aspect, this POT, process was very developmental for me in sense that what I learned from my peer I would to implement in my classroom.*

Peer B also shared similar experience about the effects of POT on professional practice:

*We shared 'best' classroom practices like modelling, punctuality, turning a traditional lecture room into a more stimulating student centred environment in which students learn in small cooperative learning groups which provide them with support from each other and from the teacher.*

Peer B further highlighted the point made earlier in this section that professional practice in the classroom embraces other aspects such as arriving on time for class, respect for students and

colleagues, respect for the profession, to mention a few. The effects of the POT implemented were perceived to have had some positive influence on the practice of the colleagues involved. This was clear in the feedback provided by one Peer A:

*We also shared practice on time management during learning, pacing of activities and varying them to accommodate all students, managing heterogeneous learning groups, presentation styles, motivating students to participate in classroom discussions, dealing with students' late coming in a more professional way, and how to ask questions and to rephrase for clarity" All these aspects were hardly provided within my discipline.*

### **Effects of POT on collaborative teaching across disciplines**

On this aspect, both peers felt that the POT promoted collaboration across two disciplines, as seen from the reflection of Peer B:

*Experiences obtained from observing a peer from a different discipline provided me with a glimpse of how colleagues from 'hard-pure' sciences approach teaching and gave me an opportunity to share my philosophy with my peer with an aim to share pedagogical expertise that has worked for our various contexts.*

Furthermore, Peer A clarified that:

*I have never been observed before and I had never observed a colleague in action before. This POT process opened my mind about mind to a lot of possible learning methods that I can use to promote learning in my classroom.*

The peers also confirmed that the social cognitive theory (Bandura 1994) and the concept of observational learning (Donnelly 2007) made it possible for them to model 'good' practice for each to internalise the process, learn from it, and to accept constructive criticism from each other for that was how they also learned. This is how Peer A articulated the experiences:

*It was important that I model 'best practice' that will contribute to my colleagues' practice. Although, moments of being 'observed' sometimes provided some fear, however, the certainty that the POT was not based on any appraisal aspects or promotional expectations, that alone, made the experience very developmental for me.*

### **Effects of Constructive Feedback on professional development of emerging academics**

Peers also highlighted the value of giving and receiving feedback to each other as one way of improving their practice. Peer felt that both the key to development was in embracing both the negative and positive feedback from the peer: Peer A commented:

*Accepting feedback that was not positive was not easy but it was my first step to learning and development. Choosing a peer at my level of experience and from a different faculty allowed me to feel at ease about aspects I needed to improve as I knew that he was also learning from me.*

## Discussion

The study explored the effectiveness of POT process between two emerging academics in higher education and across different disciplines: Quantitative Techniques and English Communication Skills. Despite limited experience of POT peers, they both agree that the POT provided insights and development on four aspects they observed: teaching styles/approaches; students' participation and active learning; the use of technology to enhance teaching and delivery strategies. Our different disciplines and emerging practice provided a relaxed POT atmosphere that was non-judgemental and non-threatening which promoted willingness to critically reflect on our practice and thus learn from each other. Contrary to views by Johannes et al (2012) that POT between new academics limit development as "the blind leading the blind", this study has proven that POT among new academics can be a rich environment for professional development as both POT peers are less anxious, and less vulnerable and this lead to increased critical reflection and willingness to learn from the peer. One peer emphasised

Despite limited teaching experience among us, POT was useful in exposing us to each other's different teaching styles that we have not used before and in that way we learned and were willing to try new strategies in our teaching spaces. Against the concept of observational learning which underpinned this study, watching one another's practice also helped to reaffirm our individual teaching strategies and when our own practice was complemented we developed self-confidence and motivation to improve. As envisaged by Bandura's (1994) theory of social cognitive developed, the POT experience provided us with new perspectives on teaching styles and we gained more insights on the of various strategies to enhance our practice, thus, was viewed as cognitive development of participants.

Peer feedback session was effective in encouraging constructive dialogue about pedagogy and to provide each other ways of improving our practice based on the feedback provided. Most of feedback provided suggestions and advices to each other and the led to gaining better ways of teaching. The feedback session enabled us to reflect on our practice against the peer feedback and we were able to think about how to use feedback to improve our practice. These findings are inline with Bell & Cooper's (2013) suggestions that feedback is most developmental when peers provide each other opportunities to comment on their own practice before they receive feedback from each other as this is how they learn and develop.

Findings indicates that this POT promoted collaborations across disciplines. New teaching strategies were learned by POT and they were eager to try the new approaches within their disciplines, thus, extending good practice across disciplines. We also gained insights on how different teaching approaches work best in different disciplines and this necessitated that we respect each other's beliefs about teaching. Friendship and trust was developed between academics in different disciplines and POT peers viewed this as a motivation for future institutional collaborative teaching across disciplines and promote quality teaching across the disciplines.

Overall, this study provided more grounds on the effectiveness of POT between emerging academics and across disciplines. Opening each other's classroom for peer observation and scrutiny of teaching philosophies was regarded by POT peers as the first step to growth and development. Despite their limited teaching experiences in higher education both peers benefitted from observing each other's practice and from constructive feedback each peer provided. The POT experiences improved their practice and, to some extent, developed their professional development. However, both peers acknowledged that a teaching philosophy is often based on beliefs, assumptions, and experiences from the past and present, therefore, required, observation over time. They also suggest that professional development encompasses various aspects of practice and one cycle of POT might not be able to achieve measurable and desired transformation.

### **Conclusion**

Two emerging academic from different disciplines participated in the POT with an aim to support each other's new teaching experiences, share pedagogy styles, provide feedback on each other's practice and enhance their practice. Observing each other teaching, as postulated by Bandura's (1994) concept of observational learning, provided both POT peers with new teaching strategies they wanted to try in their classes and improve their practice and students' learning experiences.

Both peers in the study found that the effects of peer observation of teaching on teaching philosophies of two novice lecturers across two disciplines in higher education to some extent, enhanced their teaching philosophies, improved their developing practice and unpredictably, improved their skills of providing feedback, which provided insights into research questions. Although these findings are in line with those from other POT studies like Rowe, Solomonides and Handal (2010), and Bell and Cooper (2013) they are, however, unique in a sense that they are from different context in which the POT peers were both new and from different fields of practice, and thus, the makes contribution to the literature on POT in higher education. It is, therefore, probable that if institutions can use POT not only for promotional or judgemental purposes, academics are likely to learn from the process and hence improve students' learning and their own practice. Follow-up on feedback is also viewed by POT peers as important as it ensures that advices, suggestions and learned strategies are implemented to improve practice and professional development.

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