Genuine Peer - Observation of Teaching

Project: to develop a peer-observation system that is genuinely an interaction between equals and will demonstrably lead to improvements in the learning experience of students.

Stage 1: The Pre-observation Meeting
- I supply a detailed briefing on the session to be observed. This includes information about where the session fits into a programme or module and the characteristics of the students as a group.
- I introduce the observer to the students in the agreed manner and teach the session.

Stage 2: The Observation
- I start by saying how I felt the session went. I then discuss the observer’s comments and ideas. Together we draw up an action-plan for specific improvements in the students’ learning experience.

Stage 3: The Post-observation Meeting – Producing an Action-plan
- I produce a definitive version of the action-plan with targets and dates.
- I work towards my action-plan targets.

Stage 4: Implementing the Action-plan
- I give feedback on my observation and contribute to the discussion on how to improve the students’ learning experience. Together we draw up an action-plan. If asked, I will become a party to a learning-contract based on the action-plan.

Stage 5: Reporting Achievements
- A final report on how the observation(s) led to improvement in the learning experience of students might be lodged in one or more of the following: 1. A personal, professional development portfolio. 2. A portfolio-for-promotion. 3. A professional reflective diary. 4. An internal paper for co-workers. 5. An article in a refereed journal.

As the person observed, I decide who observes, when and (most importantly) what happens to the report.

I volunteered to join a panel of trained observers. The panel list gives details of my interests and expertise. If someone asks me to observe his or her teaching, I set up a pre-observation meeting.

I make sure that we have agreed: 1. Time, Date and Place of the Observation. (TDP). 2. How the students will be briefed about the observation. 3. The focus and conduct of the observation. 4. How I will record my observations. 5. TDP of the post-observation meeting.

I arrive on time and stick to the agreed process.

I give feedback on my observation and contribute to the discussion on how to improve the students’ learning experience. Together we draw up an action-plan. If asked, I will become a party to a learning-contract based on the action-plan.

I produce a written version of my feedback from the observation and / or a written record of our post-observation discussion.

If asked, I will help review the results of the action-plan. This might take the form of confirming completion of a learning-contract and / or co-authoring the report.

This model produces genuine peer-observation by equalising the power relationship between the observer and the person observed. Because control of all derived data remains with the latter, the threat to career prospects inherent in situations where the results of observations might be communicated to managers disappears; and so does the temptation to simply showcase existing strengths. The imperative is switched to one where teachers actively seek the help of colleagues in improving the learning experience of students.