

## Teachers and supervisors negotiating identities during post observation feedback

### What this research was about and why it is important

Teacher identity is important. Identity is central to the beliefs, assumptions, values, and practices that guide teacher actions inside and outside the classroom. This study aimed to investigate the identities negotiated by teachers and a supervisor during post observation feedback meetings. The post observation feedback meeting is one of the few opportunities teachers have to talk about themselves and their teaching, making it an ideal site for identity work. This study analyzed extracts from feedback meetings in order to answer two questions: (1) Which identities do experienced language teachers and their supervisor make relevant during post observation feedback talk? (2) What does identity negotiation reveal about the role of feedback? Results revealed that identities of experience and power were prioritized, so feedback was primarily evaluative, despite institutional requirements that a focus on teacher development should be included. This compromised the ultimate aim of improving teaching and learning within the institution.

### What the researcher did

- The study featured four experienced and well-qualified English language teachers and a supervisor who worked in a Gulf-state federal tertiary institution, preparing Arabic speaking students to study bachelor degree courses delivered in English.
- One-to-one post observation feedback meetings were recorded and six extracts were chosen for analysis.
- Linguistic analysis involved a four-level examination of talk in order to identify how identities were enacted and negotiated.
- Contextual detail gained from researcher knowledge of the research site / participants and from interviews was added to the linguistic analysis.

### What the researcher found

- Teachers and the supervisor constructed and negotiated identities of power and experience.
- By prioritizing these identities, feedback participants shaped the role of feedback, making it predominantly evaluative.
- The focus on evaluation meant that there were few developmental opportunities for teachers to reflect or to discuss and solve problems. Thus, the ultimate feedback aim of improving teaching and learning within the institution was compromised.
- Identities were fluid and co-jointly constituted, moment by moment, by both participants.

### Things to consider

- A key recommendation is that more research examines different instances of teachers' work-based talk to see how identities are negotiated and developed and how this impacts on teachers' practice and development.
- One practical implication highlights the importance of researchers and institutions finding out what is happening in feedback and whether it fulfils institutional requirements. If teacher development is an institutional goal, teachers need opportunities to experiment with and explore different identities without being concerned about presenting a good image of themselves.
- A second practical implication is the recommendation that supervisors are given opportunities to examine their own practice. Supervisors could be guided in analysis of extracts from their own feedback talk, looking at the identities which are manifested and how this impacts the goal of the meeting, a process which may help them shape their practice.
- A final practical recommendation is for institutions to critically examine the use and influence of artefacts such as institutional observation forms in feedback.