

Faculty members' experiences receiving feedback in summative peer reviews of teaching

Isabeau Iqbal, Department of Educational Studies and
Centre for Teaching, Learning & Technology, University of British Columbia

Findings



Lack of Quality Feedback

- Following a summative classroom observation of teaching, faculty members **rarely received verbal or written feedback** from their reviewer(s).
- On rare occasions when feedback was received, it was of **poor quality** (unspecific, brief, only communicated verbally, and not linked to pre-established criteria for good teaching).

Institutional and Departmental Cultures

- Whether or not the reviewer shared feedback with a candidate depended largely on the individual reviewer and was **not a function of any departmental or institutional guidelines**.
- Department heads rarely discussed peer review results** with candidates for promotion and tenure.
- Participants believed that, in the evaluation of teaching, the **student evaluation of teaching scores carry more weight** than summative peer review results.

The Study



Illustration: James Yang

Purpose: To explore faculty members' experiences receiving feedback from their departmental colleagues following classroom observations of teaching, which were conducted to inform tenure and promotion decisions (summative peer review).

Participants: 20 tenure track faculty members working in a large, research-intensive Canadian university (11 female; 9 male; 8 assistant, 10 associate, and 2 full professors).

Methods: Semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Perspective

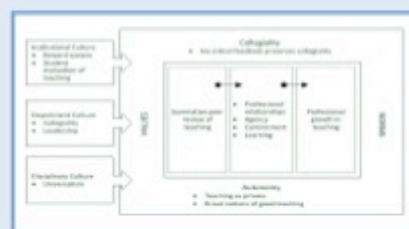


Figure 1: Model for Faculty Member Engagement in the Summative Peer Review of Teaching and Professional Growth

Key concepts (illustrated above)

- Academic culture:** the role of values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions in higher education (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Trowler, 2008).
- Institutional, disciplinary and departmental cultures** shape feedback practices (e.g., institutional reward system, an absence of criteria for evaluating teaching, lack of departmental leadership, and a desire to maintain collegial relationships).
- Faculty professional growth:** growth is a professional and personal need, in every academic's life, regardless of his or her career stage (O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann, 2008)

Conclusions

Feedback from the summative peer review of teaching is **rarely helpful for nurturing professional growth in teaching**.

Faculty members frequently **dismiss summative peer reviews as unimportant** because the institutional **reward system favours research productivity over teaching quality** and because, in the evaluation of teaching, **student evaluations carry more weight**.

Consequently, many academics do not want to invest time and effort in summative peer reviews.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: PhD supervisory committee: Dr. Gary Poole, Dr. Tom Igoe, and Dr. Amy Metcalfe. Funding for this research has been in large part provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Research Assistantship/Canada Research Scholarship. Original poster design by Steve Tomkinson, adapted by Maria Trujillo.

REFERENCES: Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2008). Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress. New York: Routledge. O'Meara, K., Laporte, Terosky, A., & Neumann, K. (2008). Faculty careers and work lives: A professional growth perspective. ASHE Higher Education Report, 14(2). Trowler, P. K. (2008). Culture and change in higher education: Theories and practices. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Please contact Isabeau Iqbal: isabeau.iqbal@ubc.ca or <http://teach.ubc.ca/iqbal/>