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Facilitators and Barriers to Implementing Peer Observation of Teaching: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Peer observation of teaching (PoT) is a valuable platform for disseminating best practices within university teaching. However, the implementation and sustainability of PoT practices can be challenging. This qualitative study explored observers' and observees' perspectives on the facilitators and barriers to implementing PoT in a private Malaysian health sciences university. A descriptive qualitative research design was adopted. A total of 21 faculty members who completed the PoT process as observers and observees were purposely sampled and interviewed via focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six phase approach to thematic analysis. Seven themes emerged: three facilitators and four barriers to PoT implementation. The facilitators included: (a) the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between observers and observes; (b) a clear and systematic PoT process; and (c) institutional support. The barriers included: (a) observees' pressure and fear; (b) observers' subjective evaluation; (c) observers' workload and time constraint; and (d) observers' lack of confidence in providing feedback. PoT provided opportunities for both observer and observees to reflect on and improve their teaching practices. It fostered motivation and professional growth through peer learning and learning by observation, making the process a shared reflective experience. Conversely, observer bias and limited confidence in giving feedback highlighted the need for structured training to ensure effective and objective evaluation. Institutional planning for PoT implementation should consider these multifaceted challenges. Consistent leadership and faculty engagement are essential to support participation and sustain PoT practices.

Keywords: *Peer observation, Facilitators, Barriers, Faculty development, Teaching evaluation*

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INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of teaching effectiveness in higher education is commonly conducted through student evaluations of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, student evaluations present several challenges, including unclear construct definitions, gender bias, low response rates, and limited use of findings (1, 2). To obtain a more comprehensive picture of teaching quality, data collection and triangulation from multiple sources—such as students, peers, programme administrators, and faculty self-evaluation—are recommended. Such a multisource approach provides a more balanced and less biased assessment of teaching effectiveness, ultimately supporting faculty development.

Another multi-pronged approach to enhancing teaching and learning quality in higher education is peer observation of teaching (PoT) (3). PoT involves a professional relationship between faculty members, in which one serves as the observer and the other as the observee (i.e., the observed faculty member), with the purpose of providing descriptive feedback on learning and teaching practices. Formative peer observation is widely regarded as a powerful tool for disseminating effective disciplinary practices and fostering a culture of evaluative enhancement (4). O'Sullivan et al. (5) reiterated that PoT can be used to update and refine teaching content and delivery, as well as provide valuable feedback to teaching faculty.

Gosling (6) classifies three models of PoT, which are: (a) evaluation model (or management model) involving senior staff observing, (b) developmental model involving educational developers, expert teachers, or learning and teaching practitioners in the observation process, and (c) the peer review model involving teachers observing teachers. Each model has its own potential strengths and limitations. The evaluation model is summative, while the developmental and peer review models are formative in intent. The essence of the peer review model lies in fostering dialogue about teaching, as well as self- and mutual reflection on good practices among academic staff. This approach tends to be less judgemental and more collegial (7). In the present study, PoT was implemented based on the peer review model, with the aim of formatively improve faculty teaching practices.

Studies have shown that PoT, when effectively implemented, can provide reciprocal benefits for both the observee and the observer (8, 9). These benefits include improvements in teaching practices, enhanced confidence in teaching and learning more about teaching, the transformation of educational perspectives (8), and the development of collegiality—fostering greater respect for colleagues' approaches to teaching and learning (9).

Despite the availability of studies and guidelines (7) to facilitate the development and implementation of PoT, multiple gaps remain—particularly during the initial implementation phase, when the foundation for an effective PoT framework is established. PoT can sometimes be perceived as intrusive, potentially challenging academic freedom, and lacking in representation, generalisability, and objectivity (10). Competing priorities, such as balancing the time required for meaningful PoT with teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, often limit faculty engagement. The tension between the affordances and constraints of PoT may lead to uncritical or insensitive feedback and insufficient time for meaningful reflection and dialogue (11). Many studies on PoT in health professions education have focused on single disciplines (e.g., clinical and medical sciences, pharmacy), where faculty expectations tend to be more uniform (12–16). These gaps raise a critical question: how can PoT genuinely foster improved teaching practices within multidisciplinary faculties that encompass diverse teaching methods, disciplinary norms, and expectations?

This study aimed to examine these gaps by exploring the facilitators and barriers to the effective implementation of PoT within an institution that is in the early stages of adopting this practice. By identifying potential barriers during the introductory phase and examining the feasibility of PoT in a multidisciplinary setting—where faculty members teach across multiple academic programmes—this study seeks to advance understanding of how PoT can evolve from a procedural task into a meaningful developmental tool. The findings are expected to inform strategies for implementing peer review—based teaching observation and to support the adoption of evidence-based practice in PoT.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, employing focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews to explore facilitators and barriers to implementing PoT. Focus groups were deemed appropriate because they facilitated dynamic discussions among participants, allowing for the co-construction of meaning around the facilitators and barriers to PoT. The interactive group setting provided opportunities for participants to exchange opinions, ideas, and experiences, thereby stimulating deeper reflection and generating richer insights (17). Moreover, the interactive nature of focus groups may have aided participants' recall through shared memory and social reinforcement, further enhancing the depth of the findings. Semi-structured individual interviews were also conducted with participants who were unable to attend a focus group session. The use of both individual interviews and focus groups allowed for methodological triangulation, helping to corroborate information and reducing individual biases in the study.

Setting

This study was conducted at a private medical and health sciences university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The research team developed and implemented a pilot PoT programme for the institution (Figure 1). The PoT framework was guided by Bell's model (8), which consists of three key stages: (a) a pre-observation meeting where the participants discuss the process; (b) the observation or actual classroom visit; and (c) a post-observation meeting. Classroom activities included lecture-based and problem-based learning (PBL) sessions delivered either face-to-face or online, depending on faculty teaching schedules and availability.

Faculty observations were guided by an instrument known as the Peer Observation Tool, developed at the university level and informed by best practices outlined in the published literature. Two types of the tool were used: one for lectures sessions and another for PBL sessions. The lecture observation tool provided guidance on aspects such as lesson structure, flow, and student engagement, while the PBL tool focused on facilitating brainstorming, teamwork, and self-directed learning. Each instrument included both quantitative components. Quantitative data were collected using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, whereas qualitative (narrative) feedback captured evaluative comments on teaching performance—specifically on areas such as engagement, delivery, structure, and strategies for improving learning. Observers were identified by the research team and selected based on a combination of teaching experience, subject matter expertise, and gender balance. Consenting observers and observees were

given three months to complete the pre-observation meeting, classroom observation, and post-observation discussion. Upon completing the PoT programme, faculty members were invited to participate in focus group discussions.

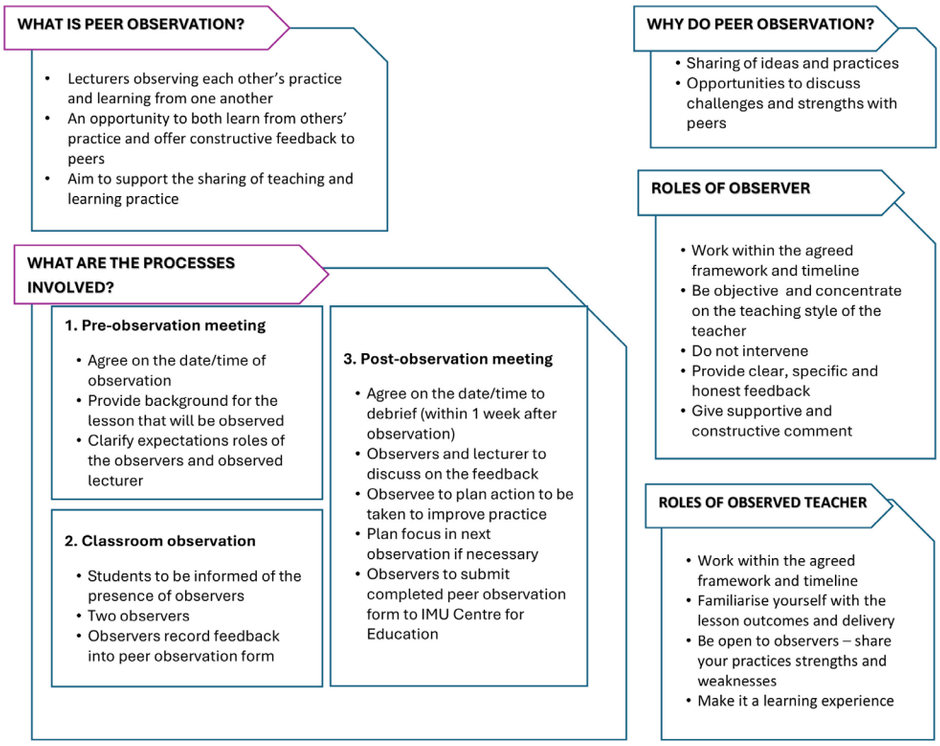

Figure 1: Summary of PoT faculty roles and processes.

Participants and Sampling Methods

A total of 21 teaching faculty members from the university's undergraduate medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry programmes participated in the study, serving as either observers or observees. Data were collected through three focus group discussions and eight semi-structured individual interviews. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant's demographic distribution

Participants	Method	Programme	Roles	Observations
P1	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observee, Observer	Lecture
P2	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observer	Lecture
P3	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observee	Lecture
P4	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observee, Observer	Lecture
P5	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observer	Lecture
P6	FG (1)	Pharmacy	Observee	Lecture

(*Continued on next page*)

Table 1: (*Continued*)

Participants	Method	Programme	Roles	Observations
P7	FG (2)	Medicine	Observer	PBL
P8	FG (2)	Pharmacy	Observer	Lecture
P9	FG (2)	Medicine	Observee	PBL
P10	FG (2)	Medicine	Observer	PBL
P11	SSI	Medicine	Observee	PBL
P12	SSI	Dentistry	Observee, Observer	Lecture
P13	FG (3)	Dentistry	Observer	Lecture
P14	FG (3)	Dentistry	Observee, Observer	Lecture
P15	FG (3)	Dentistry	Observee	Lecture
P16	SSI	Pharmacy	Observer	Lecture
P17	SSI	Pharmacy	Observee	Online lecture
P18	SSI	Pharmacy	Observer	Online lecture
P19	SSI	Pharmacy	Observer, Observee	Online lecture
P20	SSI	Pharmacy	Observer, Observee	Online lecture
P21	SSI	Pharmacy	Observer, Observee	Online lecture

Note: FG = Focus group; SSI = Semi-structured interview; PBL = Problem-based learning

This study utilised purposive sampling to identify and recruit participants. Faculty members were selected based on their completion of PoT activities—either as observers or observees—as well as their academic discipline and the types of teaching activities they conducted. Decisions regarding the sample size were made progressively during the data collection and analysis phases, consistent with qualitative research principles

Research Team

The research team comprised five researchers (PSW, NHM, YSC, HME, VDN) from different disciplinary backgrounds, professional experiences, and personal perspectives. This diversity enriched the analysis by bringing multiple interpretive lenses to the study findings. All team members were actively engaged in faculty development activities within the institution. VDN, HME, and PSW are heavily involved in developing institutional policies and guidelines related to teaching and learning. PSW served as the primary interviewer and held a postgraduate qualification in education, with prior experiences conducting qualitative research and publishing studies involving faculty and students. NHM was trained in educational psychology and taught in the Health Professions Education Programme, while YSC chaired the university's interprofessional working group, facilitated faculty training in teaching and learning, and had prior publications in medical education. To reduce perceived authority or power dynamics, participants were clearly informed that their discussion would remain confidential. All interviews were conducted in neutral, non-judgemental settings, which appeared successful, as participants openly shared their experiences, challenges, and concerns.

Data Collection

Participants were invited to participate in the study by e-mail after completing PoT activities. The objectives of the study were explained clearly, and informed consent was obtained at two stages: first, upon agreement to participate, and again before the start of the recording. Consenting participants then attended a briefing session on the pilot PoT programme and the associated study activities (focus group or semi-structured interviews).

A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on a review of the literature and aligned with the study objectives. The guide focused on four key components: (a) experiences with PoT; (b) facilitators and barriers encountered during PoT implementations; (c) perceived implications of PoT; and (d) recommendations for improvement. The guide was piloted with one faculty member and subsequently used for both focus groups and semi-structured interviews. During data collection, the facilitator ensured that key topics were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to share their perspectives naturally.

To promote equal participation in focus groups, several strategies were employed. Ground rules were established at the beginning of each session, emphasising respect for diverse perspectives and equitable participation. The facilitator used direct prompts and turn-taking techniques to engage quieter participants while managing dominant voices to maintain discussion balance. Additionally, open-ended and follow-up questions were strategically used to encourage deeper reflection and meaningful contributions from participants across different backgrounds. These strategies were designed to foster an inclusive and open discussion environment, thereby enhancing the credibility and richness of data collected.

All focus groups and interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. To minimise potential bias, all interviews were facilitated by the first author. Three focus groups (involving three to six participants each) and eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private meeting room on campus or online using Microsoft Teams. Open-ended questions guided participants to reflect on their perceptions of PoT implementation. Each session lasted approximately 40 minutes. Recruitment and interviews continued until data saturation was reached, defined as the point at which no new insights emerged from the data.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, all interview and focus group transcripts were checked against the original audio recordings to ensure accuracy and completeness. Thematic analysis was conducted following the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (18): (a) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (b) generation of initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and (f) producing the final report.

Initial coding was conducted independently by two researchers (PSW and NHM) to enhance reliability. The researchers then compared and discussed their codes collaboratively, refining and consolidating them into broader themes through multiple rounds of discussions. Analytic memos and notes from these discussions were used throughout the process to guide theme development and facilitate consensus among the research team. Any discrepancies in interpretation were resolved through discussion and consensus, with reference to the original data to ensure fidelity to participants' perspectives. Data

organisation and management were supported using NVivo 10 software. All data, including transcripts and audio recordings, and analytic notes, were password-protected and securely stored to maintain confidentiality and data integrity.

Researchers Reflexivity

To mitigate potential biases and enhance the rigour of the study, the research team engaged in regular reflexive discussions throughout the data analysis process. These discussions enabled members to critically examine how their own perspectives, assumptions, and disciplinary orientations might influence their interpretations of the data. Given their dual roles as teaching faculty and researchers within the same institution, the team was acutely aware of the potential for bias. Regular meetings were held to reflect on their potential bias with their involvement in this study. Additionally, researchers independently analysed segments of data before comparing interpretations to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Any discrepancies were resolved collaboratively through discussion to ensure that the final themes genuinely represented participants' perspectives rather than the researchers' preconceptions. By acknowledging and systematically addressing these influences, the study sought to enhance the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the study findings.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data generated seven overarching themes—three related to facilitators and four to barriers in implementing PoT. The facilitators included:

a. Establishment of a reciprocal relationship between observers and observes;
b. A clear and systematic process of PoT for implementing PoT; and
c. Institutional support for the PoT initiative.

The barriers identified were:

a. Observees' pressure and fear associated with being evaluated;
b. Observers' subjective evaluation of teaching performance;
c. Observers' workload and time commitment; and
d. Observers' self-confidence in providing constructive feedback.

Facilitators to Implementing PoT

Establishment of a reciprocal relationship between observers and observees

Most participants acknowledged that PoT offered benefits for both observers and observees, fostering the development of a reciprocal and mutually enriching relationship. To most observees, feedback from observers helped highlight areas for improvement or aspects of teaching that might have been overlooked. Likewise, observers benefited from engaging in reflective practice, prompting them to reconsider and refine their own teaching approaches. Some observers were motivated to adopt effective teaching techniques that they had witnessed during observations.

> So, I feel it's a good exercise to do once in a while, to keep in check of your skills level or you know, the teaching level, because sometimes when we do a certain thing over a period of time, we get overconfident and such thing. (P1)

Some participants viewed PoT as a collegial and developmental process, in which the observee's motivation to improve and the observer's willingness to provide constructive support were key facilitating components. Observees who were open to feedback and actively sought opportunities for professional growth were more likely to engage positively with the PoT process. Conversely, the observers' sense of collegial responsibility and commitment—including the time invested and the effort to provide meaningful feedback—contributed significantly to the overall success and developmental value of PoT.

> One important thing is the reviewers (observers) we need to be interested with the review (observation). The observer needs to be interested in helping. A lot of times feel like kind of forced. (P19)

Clear and systematic process of PoT implementation

Participants described the pre-observation, observation, and post-observation phases of PoT process as clear, systematic, and easy to follow.

Having two observers was considered advantageous, as it offered multiple perspectives on teaching performance. Several participants noted that pairing a content expert with an observer possessing a background in education or technology-enhanced learning enriched the feedback process. Observers with similar subject expertise provided content-specific feedback, whereas non-context experts tended to focus on teaching approaches, such as communication skills and classroom engagement. One participant even suggested including colleagues from the e-learning department to provide insights into the technical aspects of teaching.

> Maybe we can get a person who was into E-learning, whose expert in E-learning. They can be one of the observers, because they can see the technical aspect of it. The other observer can see the orientation aspect of it; how are we talking, our tone, the way we talking, increasing, or decreasing, the way we stressing, those kinds of things, and how are we making it interesting or engaging to students. And technical aspect, what kind of tools are we using during teaching, the IT people can really help us. I think if we can mix those people in giving feedback, it would be great. (P11)

Observers also highlighted the advantages of observing online recorded lectures, which provided flexibility to watch recordings at their own time and pace, allowing for multiple viewings. This approach was perceived as beneficial not only for observers but also for observes, who could reflect on their teaching performance by reviewing their own recorded sessions.

There were various opinions on how observers should be selected. Most participants believed that criteria such as teaching experiences, seniority, content familiarity, and subject expertise were important to ensure that observers could provide relevant and constructive feedback. Allowing observers to select their own observers was seen as a way to reduce anxiety, address specific developmental needs, and or gaps (e.g., eLearning), and increase buy-in for PoT. However, several participants cautioned that familiarity between observers and observes could introduce bias.

> Yes, it's comfortable to have people you know but preferably in the same area then, it will be helpful, more relevant feedback. Because sometimes can be very bias when it's your friend speaking (giving feedback), where you close to them. (P4)

Participants also emphasised the importance of transparent communication with students regarding the presence of observers in the classroom. They suggested that explaining the purpose of PoT to students could minimise misunderstanding reinforce that the process was part of a broader institutional initiative rather than a targeted evaluation of the presence of other faculty in class.

> I think that we should ever, sort of, if we ever have such policy, should we inform the students of the presence of policy so that they understand, all lecturers are subjected to it and nothing to do with this. (P8)

Several participants highlighted the need for follow-up processes to ensure that feedback provided during PoT was acted upon and had a tangible impact on students' experiences. They viewed the implementation of feedback and its subsequent effect on teaching and learning as important indicators of PoT's success:

> Is there any, is it useful or just like that I'm just attending, giving feedback on it is not useful at all. I really want to see the implementation of my feedback. (P16)

> Yeah, so I personally think, a lot of work to the reviewer. But how effective it is in helping the student in getting a better experience. (P21)

Most participants agreed that the observation instruments were user-friendly and provided a helpful guide to expected teaching standards. However, some cautioned that the instruments could inadvertently restrict feedback if used too rigidly. To some participants, subjective criteria such as "student engagement" and "rapport building" were open to interpretation, and that reducing PoT to a checklist exercise might limit its developmental value. To encourage faculty participation and honest reflection, participants emphasised that feedback confidentiality should be maintained and that observer training was essential to ensure consistency and fairness in evaluation.

Institutional support of PoT

Some participants suggested the importance of institutional support and the establishment of a formal policy to guide the practice of PoT. They believed that introducing PoT as an institutional policy would normalise the practice and encourage consistent participation among faculty members. Once embedded within institutional culture, PoT could gradually become a normative practice in teaching development.

> Make it as a policy like, any of you all have experience you need to ask. See, when you are new to institution, you tend to follow all the rules. So, you implement in the people who have come new and then of course we are trying to, and as the time goes it becomes a norm in the university. (P7)

At the organisation level, participants highlighted the need for clear articulation of the purpose of PoT. They strongly preferred PoT to be positioned as a formative process aimed at enhancing faculty development, rather than as a summative evaluation tool tied to performance appraisal. Linking PoT with formal evaluation was seen as counterproductive, as it could increase anxiety and hinder open, constructive engagement.

> I'm not feeling happy with evaluating the teaching, observing still okay. I had one department member who was subjected to peer evaluation of teaching and I know the amount of stress went through and he was not happy, really, he was not happy about it. (P2)

Participants also suggested PoT be integrated into existing institutional structures, such as student evaluations and the faculty mentoring (buddy) system. They suggested that faculty could use students feedback to identify teaching sessions for observation, thereby enabling triangulation of feedback from students and peers. The buddy system could further support this process by fostering mentorship and sustained peer learning.

> It's very interesting to look for a correlation with peer observation session, feedback and the students' feedback for a particular facilitator. For example, for the last two, three years, I got letter say that on 10 PBL sessions feedback from students. So, look at that feedback and look at there might be feedback or maybe look at some correlation. (P4)

By linking PoT with existing evaluation and mentoring mechanisms, participants believed the institution could enhance faculty engagement, ensure continuity of feedback, and monitor longitudinal improvements in teaching practices. Such integration would position PoT not as an isolated exercise but as part of a broader institutional strategy to promote teaching excellence and continuous professional development.

Barriers to Implementing PoT

Observees' pressure and fear

Despite recognising the benefits of PoT, many participants described experiencing feelings of fear and pressure when being observed. This emotional response stemmed primarily from the perception of being evaluated or judged, which created anxiety and self-consciousness during the observation process. Participants noted that such feelings could negatively affect faculty receptiveness to PoT and hinder authentic teaching performance: "He (observer) is constantly evaluating yourself. That could be a fear factor" (P15).

Observers' subjective evaluation of teaching

Participants highlighted that the interaction between observers and observees could also negatively influence the outcomes of peer observations. In particular, the approach to giving feedback was identified as a crucial element in ensuring the effectiveness of PoT and participants explained their expectations of feedback as that it should be objective, non-judgemental, professional, and fair. There was a great emphasis that observers should not compare observees to their own teaching.

> Some lecturers try to do things very seriously and professionally. To me, that is not my style, and I do not like it because it makes the class very serious and rigid to me. But probably to some people, some people will think that that is the most practical and effective way to run the class. So, there is no right or wrong in that sense. (P19)

This comment reflects participants' awareness that teaching practices are diverse and shaped by individual preferences, subject matter, and student needs. Therefore, comparisons rooted in personal teaching styles could undermine the constructive and developmental nature of PoT.

Some participants further stressed that feedback should be framed in a supportive and encouraging manner, focusing on shared reflection and growth rather than on identifying faults. They cautioned that corrective or overly critical feedback could lead to feelings of demotivation among observes, potentially discouraging engagement in future PoT activities.

> It's not to make people feel demotivated. I think it (feedback) could be discussed openly also, care for the feelings of both parties. (P4)

Overall, participants agreed that effective feedback should promote mutual respect, psychological safety, and professional dialogue between peers. By emphasising development over judgement, institutions could cultivate a more trusting and reflective culture that enhances the long-term success of PoT.

Observers' workload and time commitment

Participants acknowledged that PoT adds to faculty members' existing workload and requires a significant time commitment from observers. One of the main barriers identified was the difficulty in coordinating schedules between observers and observes, particularly for live teaching sessions. This challenge was perceived to be less critical for recorded lectures, as observers could review recordings at their own convenience. Recorded sessions also allowed for more flexible and repeated viewing, enabling observers to provide more considered feedback. For example, one participant shared that they had reviewed over ten recorded lectures, noting that such engagement would not have been feasible with face-to-face teaching.

Participants also highlighted the need to balance observation frequency with workload demands. Most agreed that conducting one or two observations per year would be more practical and sustainable, allowing sufficient time for meaningful reflection and improvement without overburdening faculty members.

> Then those two lectures can be separated, it's like you observed one lecture on the first half and then second half or like, then come back give another observation and then another feedback. Instead of like two lectures, one after another in a very short time. (P5)

Scheduling conflicts were also cited as a practical challenge, particularly when both observers and observees had overlapping teaching or administrative commitments.

> The reason is because sometimes both observers, is a bit hard to match their time. When I am delivering my lecture, they may have some other meeting or work that clash with the same time. (P15)

In addition, participants noted that the selection of teaching sessions plays a key role in the value of peer observation. Some faculty members tended to choose sessions in which they were already confident, potentially limiting the developmental benefits of PoT. Participants suggested that greater flexibility in the types of sessions selected—for example, including clinical sessions, PBL tutorials, or online lectures could benefit tailor observations to individual faculty members' specific teaching skills gaps. For example, a clinical teacher would benefit from receiving feedback on their bedside or clinical teaching sessions compared to lectures and PBL sessions. Such strategic selection would enhance the relevance and impact of feedback, making PoT a more meaningful and personalised professional development tool.

> It's an option if you can add in peer observation. I think many of us would choose clinical feedback rather than PBL. Because many clinicians hardly have PBL, they have maybe like every 10 classes (lectures) eight to nine are clinics (clinical sessions). (P11)

Observers' self-confidence in providing feedback

The self-confidence of observers can hinder or facilitate the feedback they provide to their peers. Some participants admitted their reservations about giving feedback when they were not content experts or less experienced (seniority in teaching). While some felt confident even if they were not content experts, as feedback should focus on other aspects, such as the delivery of teaching.

> I'm not very strong to convey my point to other people. For example, in my view, I think that is not right and can be improved. Maybe during the discussion, the lecturer (observee) will say, "No, that is like this, like this." (P18)

DISCUSSION

Achievement of teaching goals relies on individual teachers openly and actively engaging in teaching with reflection on their performance (19). Our study supports using PoT as a platform for exchanging the ideas of teaching practices and reflection on one's own teaching. The benefits of PoT are not limited to the recipient of feedback but also to the observers. Observation of other teachers not only exposed observers to different teaching techniques but also triggered their reflection and motivation to improve teaching. This supports the notion of social cognitive theory in PoT, where humans learn behaviours by observing others and choosing which behaviours to be reproduced (20). The exchange of views and expectations about teaching could improve the ways of teaching for all involved in the peer observation process (12).

Framework Consideration

The participants in this study were in favour of the formative nature of the peer review model which is not linked to the promotion or appraisal systems. This finding is not unexpected as peer evaluation has generally been reported as an inherently stressful process (21). Formative assessment would typically be oriented towards the improvement of teaching and a part of faculty development. To implement a successful PoT, the framework i.e., processes, frequency of observations, type of observations, instruments, selection of observers, data confidentiality, documentation, and reporting needed to be clear and transparent to all faculty, taking into consideration the purpose and nature of PoT (formative vs summative), faculty workload, and institution support (policies and resources). Technology can be leveraged to facilitate the PoT process. Peer observation of online lectures is well received as it offers convenience and flexibility to the observers to conduct the evaluation from anywhere at any time. Peer observation of face-to-face teaching and learning sessions is also feasible with the availability of lecture capture technology, therefore removing one of the barriers to PoT due to logistic challenges.

PoT Instruments

Instruments are commonly used in teaching evaluation. Universities either develop an instrument from their existing item pool or use pre-existing instruments for the observation (7). The participants reported the observation instruments that provided qualitative and quantitative data on teachers' performance useful in guiding the feedback process. There was no item in the instrument that participants identified to being unclear or unreasonable. This may be because items in the instrument have been introduced to them in other faculty development activities (22) and informally used by some teachers in guiding their development and conduct of teaching. The lack of confidence as observers and subjectivity of evaluation highlighted by participants can be addressed through observers' training on using rubrics to improve consistency and reduce bias and subjectivity. Actively involving faculty in PoT with a comprehensive peer coaching and mentoring support system could also build expertise, promote collaboration, and encourage continuous improvement.

Barriers and Strategies

Faculty workload and time commitment, consistent with previous studies (11, 15), are barriers to faculty engagement in PoT. Using multiple observers offers diverse perspectives but potentially introduces additional constraints to PoT. Our study participants had variable perspectives when considering their selection of observers, but overall have a general inclination towards trustworthy observers who can offer objective feedback and have credible expertise, which aligns with their developmental goals. Strategies to address these needs include allowing self-selection of observers, so that observees have the flexibility to select observers from different areas of knowledge or expertise, and selection from trained observers. Another potential strategy suggested was to consider periodic group discussions to supplement PoT, in which faculty could present their teaching challenges and gain feedback from the expertise of senior educators, even without direct pairing as observee-observers (15).

Feedback Dynamics

Feedback was found to be a critical element of the PoT process. Participants' concerns related to the quality of feedback and the implications of the feedback. Using anonymous feedback (where observers were not known to observees), could also enhance objectivity (23), but is often impractical to implement in live, unrecorded classroom settings. Consistent with participants' views, training of observers, especially in giving feedback, is an important part of the implementation of PoT. Effective feedback should be non-judgemental and detailed, with information regarding specific observed performance and centre on actionable behaviours. The content should be objective, focused on the teaching style of the person and the interactions observed and free of any reference to personal characteristics or non-observed behaviours (7). Effective conversations are bidirectional, and feedback sessions should be no different. Bing-You et al. (24) compared optimal feedback exchange to the tango. The tango metaphor illustrates the dynamic partnership between learner and teacher based on listening, trust, and awareness of the other person's emotional state and surroundings to facilitate effective communication. In PoT, partnership can occur when peers work together to reach goals and collectively create opportunities to use feedback in practice. Reflection and documentation of strengths, weaknesses and improvement plans could guide action and support the closing of the learning loop. Steinert et al. (25) stress the importance of contextualising faculty development to establish "a direct link to teachers'

ongoing educational activities". PoT appropriately addresses this by aligning teaching practice to the theoretical frameworks of experiential learning and reflective practice.

Role of Technology

The role of technology, including mobile devices and internet platforms, in facilitating feedback is increasingly discussed in the literature (26, 27). Mobile technology can offer a timely and efficient platform for longitudinal workplace-based assessment and encourages dialogic feedback (28, 29). The advance of artificial intelligence (AI) to read and interpret human language and analyse transcripts of teaching sessions could also support the feedback process by identifying conversational patterns and delivering consistent, automated feedback without human subjectivity (30, 31).

Adoption of PoT at Institutional Level

While the aspects of PoT with clear goals and alignment with goals can be adapted across institutions, institutional adaptation should consider the institution's culture (e.g., organisation values, beliefs, and norms), resources (e.g., human resources and system to implement and monitor), and stakeholder needs (e.g., leaders and faculty expectations). A culture that embraces feedback, values receptiveness and prioritises growth is essential for adopting PoT. Rijt et al. (32) highlight the importance of a psychologically safe work environment to encourage higher feedback-seeking and giving levels. Previous work among medical residents (33, 34) has shown that an institutional feedback culture of politeness positively influences feedback seeking, receptivity, and bidirectional feedback exchanges. Institutions' cultural perspectives of teaching and learning, such as what encompasses good teaching, the power dynamic between teacher and student, and teaching innovation values, could influence peer observation. These strategies can be discussed during faculty training, where sharing experiences and exchanging ideas, particularly from senior educators, can provide valuable insights. Leadership commitment is needed to develop a sustainable and supportive PoT initiative. Two important approaches of leadership are deemed useful: (a) bottom-up approach in faculty engagement to elicit their challenges and expectations and obtain buy-in; and (b) a top-down direction set at the institution level through policy, which aims to provide consistency in leadership amongst the institution, school, and programme leaders. Communication among employees and leaders at all levels is critical to finding common ground to build a trusting and safe environment.

The lessons learnt from this study were consideration of the overall process of PoT implementation when designing and implementing a peer observation programme (Figure 2). The implementation of PoT will be encouraged across all faculty regardless of seniority, years of experience and position held. In particular, the participation of those in leadership positions is a form of encouragement and assurance to the other faculty, especially on the developmental purpose of PoT. The emphasis on faculty development rather than evaluation should be transparent and consistently practised.

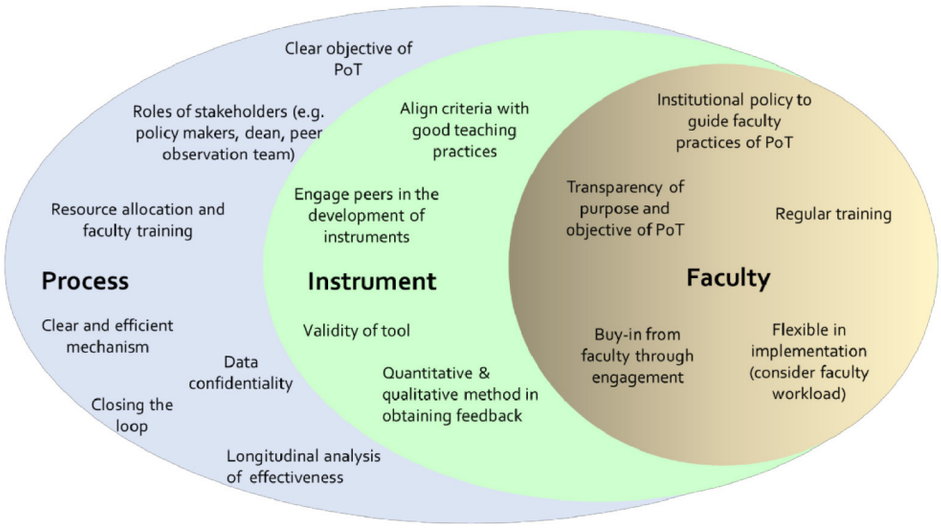

Figure 2: Considerations in implementing PoT.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study has several limitations. Member checking was not carried out in this study. This decision was made to preserve the natural flow of discussion and to reduce the risk of being judged when their words were reviewed. Instead, methodological triangulation was employed by combining data with note-taking during interviews. Collaborative analysis among the research team was used to minimise individual bias and ensure consistency in theme development. These strategies helped support the trustworthiness of the data despite the absence of participant verification.

Since participation in the study was voluntary, the participants may have been more motivated for faculty development and had a more positive attitude toward peer observation.

Given that participants are new to the PoT process, their insights into how faculty integrate peer feedback into their teaching over time are limited. This study was conducted in a single institution. As previously discussed, the potential transferability of the findings, although relevant, will have some contextual limitations. An institute's robust and established faculty development structures, which contribute to its receptiveness towards growth and the belief that the framework and leadership can effectively support PoT practice, may not always be replicated in another institution. Insights such as the importance of leadership in PoT development and the need for a supportive environment for teaching observations are broadly relevant. The observation tool that served as a guide to PoT in this current study, was not formally validated, as the focus of the primary research was not on tool development or teaching performances. The tool offers useful insights into teaching performance; future research may benefit from formally validating the tool to enhance its reliability and applicability.

This study provides initial insights into faculty perceptions of PoT, but it does not capture long-term changes in teaching practices. Future investigations of PoT should consider qualitative and quantitative longitudinal studies of the development of the observers and

observees over time to understand how their confidence and teaching skills evolve with PoT experiences. With the greater introduction of technology, it is worthwhile to explore further roles of technology, such as video online observation or AI, that can be used to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of PoT.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of PoT provided opportunities for both the observer and observee to reflect and improve their practices. The presence of clear benefits and a well-defined PoT framework is a key facilitator of PoT. Summative PoT and observers' availability, as well as confidence, are notable barriers that warrant consideration when developing a PoT programme. This study provides some direction for policy or practice. Firstly, the success of PoT is predicated on a cultural context that embraces growth and faculty who are willing to engage with it. PoT adopted in a superficial, mechanistic manner is unlikely to lead to change and improvement of teaching skills. Secondly, the institutional planning to introduce PoT must consider multiple implementation aspects. The processes will require consistent leadership and engagement with faculty to encourage PoT implementation and enhance the sustainability of supporting faculty development. Lastly, the PoT framework should mandate observers' training to prepare observers' understanding of effective teaching and address feedback delivery.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study received ethical approval from the International Medical University Joint-Committee (IMU-JC) of the Research and Ethics Committee (IMU 338/2015).

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