

Chapter 5

Empowering Novice Teachers Through Blended Feedback

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ABSTRACT

There have been high rates of increase in teacher attrition, especially during the first years of teaching. Novice teachers experience high levels of stress, disappointment, and challenges in the classroom due to lack of teaching experience. This chapter highlights the impact of feedback. It is believed that high-quality feedback coming from various sources during the initial years of teaching can significantly impact teacher retention by developing collegiality among teachers and providing the essential support novice teachers need. A background for the role of peer feedback in teacher education and the importance of its quality are explained, peer coaching and its benefits are clarified, the relationship between peer feedback and teacher efficacy are provided together with a brief information about teacher induction process in Turkish context. A model that employs different sources of feedback is suggested to empower teachers during pre-service, induction, and in-service period. An example peer feedback training lesson plan with worksheets is also provided.

INTRODUCTION

What makes a teacher and his teaching effective? Do they have an inborn talent for teaching or do they develop their efficacy in time through training and experience? In either case, how can we attract these people into the teaching profession or convince them to stay in the profession? The novice teacher often lacks experience or robust enthusiasm when they first start teaching. Therefore, they must be equipped to cope

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with the challenges of complex, context-specific classroom situations whilst meeting the changing demands of their students (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009). It is not enough to teach prepackaged professional knowledge or teaching tactics during pre-service education or induction period. Prospective teachers should be viewed as “active agents of their learning-to-teach processes” (Richards, 1998, p. 65). Therefore, the pre-service teacher education and induction period should aim at training teachers who pursue to be life-long learners as teachers.

In the Turkish context, like in many other countries, new teachers are often assigned to the least desirable contexts with socially and economically disadvantaged students and with heavier work load (Howe, 2006; OECD, 2014; SETA, 2017). As Holland, Clift, Veal, Johnson, and McCarthney (1992) noted, new teachers strive hard to bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, they are usually isolated during their struggle under disadvantaged conditions because contrary to common belief, teaching can be considered a lonely business (Bowman, 1995; Friedman, 2000; Gemmel, 2003; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Teachers rarely come out of their shells (i.e., their classrooms) to visit other classes. Expressions such as “sink-or-swim”, “trial-by-fire”, or “boot-camp” are used to describe the teaching experience of novice teachers (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Howe, 2006). Observation or supervision in teaching is associated with trouble. Therefore, inexperienced teachers are not willing to reveal their needs as it is deemed a sign of weakness. Frustration and failure experienced during induction impact their efforts to succeed; resulting in teachers believing that some students are beyond reach or are too difficult (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Furthermore, continuous burnout and diminishing beliefs of self-efficacy lead to early attrition in profession.

There has been a movement from traditional, hierarchical roles and relationships in teacher education towards more collaborative and interactive practices (Goodnough et al., 2009). Previously, teacher education failed to effectively promote awareness and opportunities to collaborate on instruction and learning. There was insufficient encouragement for developing or practicing skills and attitudes for cooperating with colleagues that might provide the support and encouragement needed to prolong their efforts to tackle with the challenges of profession (Bowman, 1995; Holland et al., 1992). Given today’s education context where there is a greater emphasis for putting theory into practice through negotiation between educators i.e. teachers, university supervisors etc., there is a greater need for collaborative professional practice in teaching (Goodnough et al., 2009). In doing so, teachers will find support and guidance to cope with problems and gain confidence. Starting from pre-service training and through induction and in-service training, there should be a deliberate effort to develop cooperation and collegiality among teachers until it becomes a norm of the profession (Britton & Anderson, 2010; Zwart et al., 2008).

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