



## Peer observation: Critical reflection as a catalyst for change

### Key Words

peer observation, critical, self-reflection, team, growth, participation, technology, identity, values

### Abstract

Fossilisation and stagnation can occur when advisors fall into a routine of relying on the same advising tools and techniques. Therefore, it is important to critically reflect as an individual, with peers and as a team to enable continual, accountable professional growth (Brookfield, 1995; Kato, 2012). This self-reflection and peer observation is particularly powerful when engaged in as a team, and when rooted in shared values and understandings of best practice. The benefits of peer evaluation have been well-researched. Brockbank and McGill argue that 'dialogue with others offers possibilities to restructure one's established assumptions and beliefs' (as cited in Kato, 2012, p. 79). Chester (2012) cites a variety of worthwhile results for educators who take part, including emotional (confidence and collegiality) and pedagogical (new methods and knowledge). Hence, critical reflection is a way of equipping ALL educators and teams with tools and techniques to cater for the evolving needs of a diverse student population. Similar to the students, the Navitas ALL advisor team is spread across the country and communicates largely in the digital space. The peer observation process is centred around both utilising technology to enhance critical self-reflection and to refine online communication skills. The team developed a set of observation tools through examining the team's values and goals. Each observation takes place with two educators, in four steps: goals and focus, observation, reflective dialogue, team showcase and refinement. An unanticipated outcome of this process is that through participation ALL educators can develop an understanding of students' potential feelings of vulnerability when seeking support. Much like Kodate & Foale found, a further benefit was the strengthening of the ALL educator team's collective identity as ALL practitioners. The workshop will start with a summary of the theories, goals and process underpinning this model of critical reflection. The participants will then explore how they see themselves as ALL practitioners; their team's values, skills and goals for ALL and support; and how these translate into useable tools for peer observation, critical reflection and in-house professional development. This will be followed by a panel discussion, providing participants with the opportunity to ask questions about the impact, challenges and outcomes of this Peer Observation Project.

### References

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