

**The case for delayed feedback  
after teaching practice (tp) and observation**

by *Richard Denman*

One of the most pressing concerns for any teacher trainer involved in observing and supervising the teaching practice of trainees, whether at an initial or more advanced level, is the feedback session itself. Clearly we would all agree on encouraging self-criticism and self-awareness in the trainee and that our conduct as teacher trainers in the feedback session is inextricably linked to our inter-personal skills of counselling and personal supervision. If we are to encourage our trainees to give adequate thought to their own evaluation of their lesson, we would be well advised to consider delaying this feedback until either later in the same day or even the following day. While it is no doubt true that trainees are anxious to know how their TP Supervisor views their lesson, there is a strong case to be made out for allowing a process of mature, reflective judgement to take place. This needs time and it has often been my experience that trainees who have feedback delayed in this fashion are better able to perceive their lesson not only in its entirety but also within the context of other lessons that were given during the same morning or afternoon by other trainees. Comment very often is more constructive and insights are clearer. More than once a trainee in delayed feedback has noted that they see their lesson in a different light compared to their immediate response after TP. There is not the rush to judgement that characterises a feedback session held at the end of what may well turn out to be a very long day. Instead, the trainee is asked to consider overnight whether she/he has not only achieved the teaching aim of the lesson but also what she/he has achieved on a personal level. Sometimes it may be necessary for the TP Supervisor to pose a few questions for the trainee to reflect on, e.g. balance of activities; staging; unanticipated problems; student participation; adequate controlled practice and concept checking etc. These questions should not be meant to focus only on those parts of the lesson seen by the supervisor as problems. Trainees should not feel that these are loaded questions indicating only areas of weakness. A question may well be posed to get the trainee to consider a particular micro-teaching skill which in practice she/he has improved on. In this way the trainee is given some guidance in her/his post-lesson evaluation. This process should also include those trainees who did not teach but who were given observation tasks set either by the teaching trainee(s) or supervisor.

I believe that a further benefit resulting from delayed feedback lies in the nature of the focus on their lessons by trainees. The more constructive comment mentioned earlier manifests itself in global observations on the lesson as a whole, eschewing the narrower point-by-point, stage-by-stage criticisms that tend to be chronological but not wholly evaluative. Delayed feedback therefore gives the trainee the opportunity to come to a more mature, more balanced appraisal of the lesson and rejects the notion of instant judgement as a basis for TP feedback. We implemented delayed feedback on our RSA Certificate courses\*) at International Teaching and Training Centre a few years ago, not without a certain reservation, it must be admitted, but our view now is that it does constitute a more productive and altogether happier procedure for teacher training and development.

\*) Now called UCLES/RSA CELTA.