

# Impact of peer coaching on self-efficacy and instructional skills in TEFL teacher education

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## Abstract

The goal of the study was to test whether student teachers trained using a peer coaching training program after teaching practicum sessions in teaching of English as a foreign language would demonstrate greater improvement on measures of a number of identified instructional skills and self-efficacy than those just receiving traditional supervisor visits. Two groups of student teachers (32 in total) from English language teaching Department of European University of Lefke, North Cyprus doing their Teaching Practicum course (EDU 420) as part of a B.A. teacher education program were compared in regard to their (a) self-efficacy, and (b) development of (clarity) instructional skills. Results showed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental condition on 7 variables measured. The findings also have implications for how peer coaching can be a vehicle to develop self-efficacy.

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## 1. Introduction

From the 1970s to the present there has been a marked shift in our understanding of what we mean by teacher preparation in teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL).

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In the earlier period, teacher training was dominant, but beginning in the 1990s teacher development assumed a central role. Teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of the teacher's general understanding of teaching and of himself or herself as a teacher. It often involves examining different dimensions of one's own practice as a basis for reflective review, and can hence be seen as "bottom-up" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Learning from examining one's own teaching, from carrying out classroom research, from creating teaching portfolios, from interacting with colleagues through critical friendships, mentoring and participating in teacher networks, are all regarded as ways in which teachers can acquire new skills and knowledge. This reflects the prevailing educational philosophy of constructivism which is currently popular in education including language teacher education: knowledge is actively constructed and not passively received (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001; Pickering, 2003).

By viewing teacher development as a coordinated effort and a lifelong process from the first days in a teacher education program and extending throughout one's career, we can look forward to more accountability with better instructional results, higher self-efficacy and better working conditions.

What is professional preparation in the field of TEFL? Pre-service TEFL programs offer student teachers tailored and highly specialized knowledge in language and linguistics, TEFL methodology and testing, practice teaching, and a variety of other areas depending on the program. Teachers are prepared with the knowledge base (Maclean, 1999; Freeman and Johnson, 1998).

In addition to knowledge, pre-service programs are expected to prepare teachers with a variety of techniques and strategies for acculturating into their profession. There may be more opportunities for student teachers in these programs through teacher practicum courses to build skills to lead or supervise teachers and other staff; to build a tailored, needs-based curriculum for a special program; or to create a reflective learning community.

Yet current teaching practicum courses actually tend to implement more structural, guided and traditional formats for this type of courses which involve faculty observation–supervision and feedback (Bean and Stevens, 2002; Farrell, 1998; Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Linn and Gorrell, 2001; Shrum and Glisan, 2000).

Considering recent developments based on reflective practices in the field, I argue that these courses could aim to create reflective learning communities where student teachers would also be trained as reflective practitioners through peer coaching, because it affords unique benefits that cannot be simply orchestrated in the other types of experiences.

A very useful area of teacher development is conducting classroom research with other teachers with the same interests in order to reflect on teaching practice. Some language education researchers imply that action research involves working together with at least one colleague and possibly with faculty teams (Carrier, 2003; Crookes, 2003; Ferguson and Donno, 2003; Jacobs and Farrell, 2001; Pickering, 2003). All participants will benefit from initiating dialogue with colleagues and using a model for how to communicate effectively when reflecting on improving teaching performance in a reflective learning community.

One strategy for teacher development particularly well suited to the formation of a reflective learning community is that of peer coaching, defined as the process of two teachers working together in and out of the classroom to plan instruction, develop support materials, and watch one another work with students. Peer coaching is non-evaluative, based on classroom observation followed by feedback, and intended to improve specific

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