Practising Peer Assessment: Four Teacher Educators’ Experiences

Lyn Wright, Alison Stephenson, Deborah Wansbrough, Anita Mortlock
Larger research project - TLRI

Current assessment practices across three different types of tertiary providers

Victoria University,
Massey University,
Manukau Institute of Technology
Te Whare Wānaga o Awanuiārangi

Where we come in

To collaborate with tertiary instructors to implement and evaluate valid and do-able assessment best practices.

Four sub groups: large classes, peer/self/group assessments, culturally appropriate, and creative assessments.
Our projects

• First Year: Pre assessment (article review)
  Post assessment (poster)

• Second Year: Post assessment (group participatory exercise)

• Third Year: Pre assessment for essay (over three sessions)
“Help others, help yourself”
Year one peer assessment

Alison Stephenson
and ECE Year one students
A voluntary peer assessment process

• 68 completed the consent form
• 84 students out of class of 140 chose to take part and complete questionnaire
• Formative written feedback on a written task
Feedback about the task
Hattie & Timperley (2007)

“Peer assessment improves students’ learning by…. providing students with a better understanding of what is required …”
(Ballantyne, Hughes & Mylonas, 2002)
Peer task helped me to understand how to do the assignment

- 69% somewhat agree/strongly agree
- 13% somewhat disagree/strongly disagree
- 18% neutral (neither agree nor disagree)

“Gave me a better understanding of what was expected”
Assessing my peers helped my own work

• 73% agree/strongly agree
• 12% disagree/strongly disagree
• 15% neutral

“Looking at my peers’ work made me realise what I missed”
“Could see own work from others’ perspectives – they pick up on different things”
I made changes to my work according to feedback

- 59% agree/strongly agree
- 18% disagree/strongly disagree
- 21% neutral
- 12% did not answer

“I hadn’t done 1.5 spacing”

“It helped me know where I was going wrong”
Students’ lack of confidence in their own and peers’ abilities to assess (Ballantyne, Hughes & Mylonas, 2002)

Did they lack confidence?
Did they feel comfortable doing it?
I felt capable assessing my peers

- 52% agree/strongly agree
- 19% disagree/strongly disagree
- 26% neutral
- 3% did not answer
I found it hard to give useful feedback to my peers

- 31% agree/strongly agree
- 33% disagree/strongly disagree
- 34% neutral
- 2% (2 people) did not answer

“Judging another person’s work based on my limited skills to assess their efforts”

“Hand out ear muffs!”
I felt uncomfortable assessing my peers

- 30% agree/strongly agree
- 44% disagree/strongly disagree
- 23% neutral
- 1% did not answer

“Giving an honest mark”

“It should be anonymous”

“Helping someone else who has challenges”
I enjoyed assessing my peers

- 45% agree/strongly agree
- 20% disagree/strongly disagree
- 31% neutral
- 1% (1 person) did not answer

“Was helpful, enjoyable. Confirmed I was on the right track”
I would like regular peer assessment

- 50% agree/strongly agree
- 18% disagree/strongly disagree
- 27% neutral
- 5% did not answer

“Do it more often”
Was it helpful for students for whom English was a second language?
21 other ethnicities

- 4 Pasifika (1 Tokelauan, 2 Samoan, 1 Pasifika)
- 2 Indian Fijian
- 3 Chinese
- 3 Indian
- 2 Filipino
- 1 Japanese
- 1 Sri Lankan
- 1 Indian/NZ European
- 1 South African
- 1 Other Asian
- 1 Other European
- 1 Other
The peer task helped me to understand how to do the assignment (ESL)

- 69% (81%) agree/strongly agree
- 13% (5% - 1 person) disagree/strongly disagree
- 18% (14%) neutral
I felt capable assessing my peers

- 52% (76%) agree/strongly agree
- 19% (20%) disagree/strongly disagree
- 26% (4% - 1 person) neutral
- 3% did not answer
I enjoyed assessing my peers

• 45% (66%) agree/strongly agree
• 20% (10%) disagree/strongly disagree
• 31% (24%) neutral
• 1% (1 person) did not answer
Assessing my peers helped my own work

• 73% (71%) agreed/strongly agreed
• 12 % (14%) disagreed/strongly disagreed
• 15% (10%) neutral
• (5%) did not answer
I made changes to my work according to feedback

- 59% **(62%)** agree/strongly agree
- 18% **(0%)** disagree/strongly disagree
- 21% **(19%)** neutral
- 12% **(19%)** did not answer
I would like regular peer assessment

- 50% (52%) agreed/strongly agreed
- 18% (5%) disagreed strongly/disagreed
- 27% (24%) neutral
- 5% (19%) did not answer
It gets easier with practice

Anita Mortlock
and First Year ECE students
2008
Year 1 Follow Up study

• 71 students out of 140 chose to complete the questionnaire

• Added three new statements:
  - Peer assessment becomes easier with repeated opportunity to give it.
  - I found it easier to give feedback for the poster task than the journal review.
  - It is easier to give feedback for some tasks more than others.
Structure of delivery

- Summative- after grading
- Voluntary
- Could choose which poster to give feedback to
- Also gave option to be interviewed (2 students accepted)
Immediate pattern

• High number of students selecting ‘neither agree nor disagree’
• 24% ticking this box for 44% or more of the questionnaire

• What does this mean?
Ethnicity

- No discernable pattern
- 2 students identified as ‘Samoan’ or ‘Pasifika’
- Actual participation in feedback task?
Usefulness vs wanting more

- Useful (Peer feedback helps me learn)
  - Agree/ Strongly agree: 47%
  - Disagree/ strongly disagree: 12%
  - Neither agree or disagree: 25%
Wanting more opportunities:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/ strongly agree</td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Student 1

“It would have been better to have a chance to use the feedback to make changes before we did the session for marks”
Student 2

“I don’t really like the thought of peers marking me- they don’t really know enough. A good idea would be if we could have done peer feedback and be able to change things before doing the final poster- more scaffolding, team cooperation, nurturing, like what we’ll be doing in ECE”
Not wanting more

Student 2

“…Lots of students are younger so they don’t have much life experience and they don’t know much, so they can’t give you good feedback, and can be more timid so not willing to give honest opinions”
Wanting more

Student 1

“When you see good feedback from more than one person’s point of view it can be quite encouraging; usually marking is based on one person’s view and their personality”
Feeling capable = more?

- 40 students felt capable;
- 27% did not want further opportunities
- 33% did
- 40% neither agreed nor disagreed
Not feeling capable = less?

- 18 students not feeling capable;
- 56% did not want further opportunity;
- 28% did;
- 16% neither agree nor disagree.
Are some tasks easier?

I found it easier to give feedback for the poster task than the journal review:

- Agree/ strongly agree: 45%
- Disagree/ strongly disagree: 9%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 35%
Are some tasks easier?

It is easier to give feedback for some tasks more than others:

- Agree/ strongly agree: 42%
- Disagree/ strongly disagree: 15%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 37%
It becomes easier with practice?

Peer feedback becomes easier with repeated opportunity to give it:

- Agree/ strongly agree: 49%
- Disagree/ strongly disagree: 10%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 40%
Structure

Student 2:- A comment on choosing

“The worst thing was that the poster session became a bit of a popularity thing: if you were well-liked you got good feedback if not well-liked you got criticised. So it’s better when teachers mark you because they are neutral, not biased like that…it didn’t seem like our comments on the posters contributed to the marks, and it wasn’t in-depth enough- not taken seriously enough.”
Structure

Student 1

“There were too many people…groups should have been split up”

“It would have been better to mix up the classes…you get more honest answers from people you don’t know”
Comfort, capability and connected to teaching?

Thoughts from year 2 students’ feedback about peer assessment

Lyn Wright
and year 2 ECE students

2008
Year 2 peer assessment project

• To gather data about students’ experiences of the process of giving and receiving feedback within the context of a mandatory class task - facilitating a 10 minute group music and movement experience for their peers, and participating in similar experiences facilitated by their peers (23-24 students maximum per class).

• 84 students (all female) out of cohort of 118 (5 classes) responded to the questionnaire on the feedback process
Data collection

Participant response sheets
Feed up: meeting criteria of task
Feedback: about the content of the session – assessing learning
Feed forward: how to build on learning/where to next?

Survey evaluating your experience of giving and receiving feedback
Statements: strongly disagree ------ strongly agree
Feedback can be about:

**Feed up** – did they understand the task/do what was expected in the task?

**Feed back** – on where they currently are – in relation to the content of the task

**Feed forward** – on what they can do next to move forward – in relation to the content of the task.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable assessing peers</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capable of assessing peers</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed assessing their peers</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to give useful feedback</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want more peer assessment</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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I felt uncomfortable assessing my peers

- 50% felt uncomfortable
  - 21% neutral
  - 29% felt comfortable

- Not wanting to appear too harsh
- Having to critique others
- Not wanting to upset students with whom you still had to work for another 1-2 years at least
- I found it hard to know what to write but it got easier
- Effort required. Thinking of how it met the criteria. It’s the teachers job to mark”
- Not very nice to say your peers work could be better
- Having to be completely honest
Questions arising

• How do we support students to offer (and receive) feedback that is not interpreted as a personal attack – that it is related to the task and not the person?

• Why is it that suggesting possible ways forward or alternative options is seen as something negative?

• How do these students understand giving feedback in their role as teachers (with children and with teaching teams)?

• Is it okay to give feedback to children but not to your own peers – power? Or would these students not expect or feel comfortable to give feedback to children as well?
Comfort and capability

An in-depth analysis of the responses of the 50% students who identified as uncomfortable in assessing their peers

• Despite being uncomfortable 48% of these students felt capable of assessing their peers
• 31% selected a neutral response to feeling capable
• 21% did not feel capable
• 48% indicated they did not enjoy assessing their peers
• 26% somewhat agreed that they enjoyed it
• 26% chose a neutral or no response
Feeling uncomfortable
(50% of overall students)

- Not capable: 21%
- Neutral: 31%
- Did not enjoy: 48%
- Neutral: 26%
- Did enjoy: 26%

50% enjoyed
25% did not enjoy
25% neutral

75% did not want more peer assessment
15% wanted more peer assessment
10% neutral
Comfort and giving feedback

• 69% of the group who felt uncomfortable giving feedback also found it hard to give feedback
• 21% somewhat disagreed with this statement
• 9% neutral

Of the 48% who felt uncomfortable yet capable
70% indicated they found it hard to give useful feedback (leaving 30% who did not find it hard)
33% Enjoyed assessing my peers
38% did not enjoy
29% neutral

- 39% of the group who enjoyed also felt comfortable in assessing their peers
- 39% felt uncomfortable
- 21% neutral

- 36% of this group did not find it hard to give useful feedback
- 43% did find it hard
- 21% neutral
Wanting more peer assessment

- 68% of students said that giving feedback to peers helped them learn
- 56% said that the feedback they received from peers helped them learn
- 51% of students said they felt capable of assessing their peers
- 19% of students wanted more peer assessment in other courses
What is being assessed

- Success of your routine
  “Great to know what you are doing right”

- Ideas for moving forward – what else to do
  “Understanding on how well we performed and what we could improve on”
  “Getting others ideas”
  “Helped focus on the task and elements”
Assessment and being a student

“Puts you in the markers role which help you when you write other assignments”

“Seeing how teachers mark us”

“It helps me to learn and assess my own learning”

“Helps me to become more confident /relaxed the more times I am assessed”
Assessment and being a teacher

“You get to mark your classmates”

“Hearing how others see you as a teacher”

“Got you to think critically about peers work”

“Feeling that I wanted to be positive & constructive but felt rushed”

“I wasn’t always sure what they could improve on”
Peer feedback to inform assessment tasks

Deborah Wansbrough

3rd year Bachelor of Education (Teaching) EC and 4th year BA/BTch students

46 students 20 (43%) participated in questionnaire
Hattie (2007) – feedback effective when it was about a specific task and how to do it more effectively

- 3000 word essay on mathematics in early childhood education
- 35% of course assessment
- 5 main criteria given
- 3 tutorial sessions where 20 minutes given to feedback task
Structure of feedback sessions

- Students were in random groups of 3
- 2 feedback sheets were provided on which they could record feedback for their peers
- Students showed their work (mind maps, initial notes) and discussed readings that were informing their preparation for the assignment
- Tutor mingled at times, answered questions, provided clarification if needed.
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<thead>
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<th>Strongly/somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly/somewhat disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable assessing peer</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoyed experience</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felt capable of giving feedback</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thought other students capable</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved my understanding of the assignment expectations</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard to give feedback</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Positives about the feedback task

- Was a good chance to talk about the assignment and discuss ideas with my group(2)
- Finding out more info from others to help with my assignment
- My peers were honest
- Read more
- It allows other people who English was second language to be able to understand what was being asked for in our assignment
- Learnt different ways of looking at this
What students liked least

Others not having participated in the task

“The student who gave me feedback had not done the readings or the task – disappointing”

Working ahead of everyone else (to a different timetable)

“Not everybody works the same way, while some students may have benefited from this, others (myself) found it frustrating and a waste of time”

Having trouble giving feedback

“I don’t explain myself well”

Seen as extra work

“Something you need to remember to do”
One student summed it up

• I felt it was a very frustrating task as I would do a large amount of assignment preparation, as I do for every assignment, however, many other students did not and do not and therefore I ended up doing the research and evaluation of articles for them. This felt very unfair and I found it a very negative experience
What did I learn?

- Need to structure the task more clearly e.g. Should be signalled in the course outline to formalise it as a participation requirement
- May need to make it count towards the assessment mark to ensure all do it
- Tracking of grades for similar assessment tasks might highlight if the time spent on this contributed to improved outcomes
What did I learn? continued

• Track how the student acted upon the peer feedback given might give a better picture

• Students approach their assignment preparation and writing in different time frames and 3 weeks was too long
What students recommended

- Perhaps we could be given different readings in small groups (3) so that we all read the same article

- Different assessment for end of maths section, found grid set out didn’t really work

- Don’t do it  *(person who said she was only one in her group to do the task)*
What student’s recommended continued

- Feedback shouldn’t be part of a course. Feedback can be readily received elsewhere if wanted

- We did readings in small groups to create a debate regarding a forthcoming assignment topic. That was useful as it gave new perspective on the subject
Emerging thoughts

• Structure of peer assessment tasks
  – Public/private
  – Pre and post
  – Written and verbal

• Structure of peer assessment research process
  – Tool
  – Timing

• Teachers’ role- feedback professionally