

Peer Observation in Higher Education: Research Evidence and Implications for Teacher Education

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Abstract

Peer observation (PO) is recognised as a promising strategy for professional development in higher education teaching, as it fosters critical reflection, the sharing of practices, and the strengthening of a collaborative culture. However, its adoption remains limited, especially in contexts such as Angola, where structural challenges persist in the pedagogical training of university teachers. This study aims to analyse the available scientific literature regarding the benefits and challenges of PO in higher education, discussing its implications for teacher education. It is an extension of previous research, in which no studies with the same focus were identified. A systematic review methodology was adopted. The terms “peer observation”, “peer coaching”, and “higher education” were searched in EBSCO, Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO databases to identify studies published between 2014 and 2023, in Portuguese, English, or Spanish. From the initial 248 studies, 25 met the inclusion criteria and formed the corpus for analysis. The results highlight pedagogical benefits associated with PO, such as the development of instructional skills, the adoption of new teaching practices, and the encouragement of collaboration. The practice of reflection is also valued. However, challenges remain, such as the absence of institutional policies promoting PO, teacher resistance, and a lack of specific training. The study concludes that structured PO protocols and targeted training are essential to enable their use as an effective strategy for professional development and pedagogical quality improvement in higher education, particularly in contexts where such practices are still emerging, such as Angola.

Keywords: peer observation; higher education; teacher professional development; teaching quality.