Teachers' Reflection on Implementation of Innovative Feedback Approaches in EFL Writing*

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In second language writing, while much research has focused on teachers' act of feedback *per se*, scant attention has been paid to how they attempt to bring innovation to their feedback practices and how they cope with the contextual challenges arising from the innovation. This study seeks to explore two teachers' perspectives on their own attempts at innovative feedback approaches in their writing classrooms. Drawing on data gathered from individual teacher interviews and their personal reflections, the results of the study show that their engagement in feedback innovation served as a significant source of their continuing professional development. While they encountered some challenges during the innovation, they also exercised their professional agency to address these challenges and reaped benefits from their innovative attempts. The paper concludes with some implications for feedback innovation in EFL contexts and how teachers can be supported in their continuing efforts to develop effective feedback approaches in writing.

Key words: feedback, innovation, teacher reflection, EFL writing

1. INTRODUCTION

Although providing feedback on student writing is one of the most important tasks for writing teachers, it has always been presented as a problematic practice in the literature. Ideally, feedback is used by teachers to build relationships with students and help them improve their writing. In many EFL contexts, however, teacher feedback tends to

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discourage and confuse students and is not producing the desired outcomes in terms of enhancing student learning. Despite the strenuous efforts of feedback researchers and the "best practices" principles they have come up with, there exists a huge gap between the ideal and the reality with regard to feedback in EFL writing classrooms (Lee, 2013a). In Hong Kong and similar EFL contexts, conventional feedback practices prevail (Furneaux et al., 2007) and remain entrenched within the recalcitrant school system (Lee, 2011). The vicious cycle of conventional feedback has produced rather damaging effects on teaching and learning, resulting in burnout among teachers and low motivation and confidence among students.

A simple, yet intricate question that has informed the feedback research agenda in L2 writing is how feedback can be made more effective to improve student learning. While research effort has been devoted to finding out what feedback strategies work best in the writing classroom (e.g., with regard to error feedback) (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007; van Beuningen, de Jong & Kuiken, 2008, 2012), such research is largely decontextualized (Goldstein, 2006). There is a paucity of work that explores teachers' own attempts to explore the feedback strategies that might work best in their specific contexts. Lee (2011) has argued for the need of a feedback revolution in traditional writing classrooms dominated by unproductive feedback practices, where teachers take active steps to enhance their feedback practices. The dilemma for teachers, however, is that while they may be ready to change conventional feedback approaches, they are likely to be constrained by their situated contexts, such as the prescribed curriculum, unsupportive school management and examination pressure (Lee, 2011), which could militate against their innovation. Given the pivotal role of teacher feedback in students' learning as well as the complexities and challenges involved in reforming the current feedback approaches, there is a need for more research on how teachers attempt to bring innovation to their feedback practices in their specific contexts and how they cope with the contextual challenges during the change process. Such research can contribute to existing writing feedback research by shedding light on how innovative feedback approaches can be implemented in classrooms and what impact it may have on teachers' professional work and continuing development. It can also provide useful implications in terms of what support is needed for writing teachers to improve their feedback practices in specific contexts.

The present paper reports a study about two Hong Kong secondary teachers' attempts at innovative feedback approaches in their writing classrooms, focusing mainly on the teachers' own reflections on their feedback innovation. The study addresses two research questions:

1. Why did the teachers decide to undertake innovation in their writing feedback

approaches and how did they go about it?

2. As they reflected on the experience, what challenges did they encounter, how did they cope with the challenges, and what benefits did they gain?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Feedback in L2 Writing: Recommended Principles

As a result of the proliferation of research on feedback in L2 writing, a number of "best practices" recommendations have been delineated in the literature. Such advice, which is based on the works of a number of researchers (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris 2012; Ferris, 2003, 2010, 2011, in press; Goldstein, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2008, 2009; Liu & Hansen, 2002), are useful in guiding teachers' practice. The salient principles are summarized below:

1) Focus of teacher feedback: Insofar as the focus of teacher feedback is concerned, there should be balanced coverage on all important aspects of writing, i.e., content, organization, language, mechanics, style and genre.

2) Feedback at different stages of the writing process: As a rule of thumb, teachers should give feedback on issues relating to content and organization early in the writing process and leave language issues to the later stage of the writing process. Feedback is most effective when delivered to intermediate drafts rather than terminal drafts.

3) Extent of error feedback: Feedback on written errors is more effective when it is directed at selected patterns than all errors comprehensively. Comprehensive error feedback is time-consuming for teachers and frustrating for students.

4) Error feedback strategies: For students' long-term benefits, indirect error feedback (i.e., not providing correct answers for students) is more beneficial than direct error feedback (i.e., providing correct answers), as the former provides students with opportunities to reflect on and engage with teacher feedback, fostering their independence and self-editing skills.

5) Feedback that caters for individual student needs: In spite of the feedback advice delineated in the above, teachers have to be flexible and deliver feedback according to individual students' needs.

6) Feedback sources: Students should receive feedback not only from the teacher but also their peers. Where possible, students should be encouraged to engage in self-evaluation.

7) Peer feedback: Students need training in order to give effective feedback to their peers; therefore, teachers should model effective feedback and provide training to students. Teachers should also take into account issues like grouping, language use (e.g., L1 or L2 in EFL contexts) and feedback mode (i.e., oral, written, electronic) as these may impact the effectiveness of peer feedback.

8) Written commentary: Teacher written commentary should be clear, concrete and text-specific. Teachers should avoid appropriating student texts and cater to student needs when giving feedback. There should be a good balance of praise and negative comments, with the latter couched in constructive terms.

9) Teacher-student conferencing: One-to-one or pair/group writing conferences may reap more benefits than written commentary. Students can be encouraged to take greater responsibility for learning by co-setting the agenda before the conference, and to set goals for their future development after the conference.

10) Feedback without scores: Research on assessment for learning has suggested that feedback is most effective when delivered without scores, as the latter will naturally draw students' attention away from teacher feedback (Butler, 1987).

While the above feedback principles serve as a useful blueprint to guide EFL writing teachers' practices, the realities of the classroom might make it difficult for teachers to implement the recommended principles. Nonetheless, for teachers keen to innovate and improve the effectiveness of feedback, the "best practices" advice provides a useful point of departure.

2.2. Feedback in Hong Kong Secondary Writing Classrooms

In Hong Kong, the feedback advice provided in local curriculum guides is in line with the recommendations in the international research literature. However, local research has shown that teachers mainly adopt conventional feedback approaches that depart hugely from recommended feedback principles (Lee, 2008). A common classroom scenario is that teachers require students to compose single drafts within limited time (Lo & Hyland, 2007). In responding to student writing, teachers usually give scores, which are used mainly for reporting and administrative purposes. Their feedback is primarily informed by broad assessment criteria such as content, language and organization (rather than task-specific criteria), with meticulous attention paid to the language form (Lee, 2008). Self-/peer evaluation and conferencing are rare in Hong Kong English classrooms. Current feedback practice in Hong Kong language classes is generally ineffective with a minimal impact on teaching and learning (Lee, 2007, 2011). Students are overwhelmed by the detailed error feedback, feel discouraged and demotivated, and make little

progress despite teacher feedback. Although teachers recognize the need for change and support a "feedback revolution" (Lee, 2011), they feel discouraged by the myriads of obstacles in their teaching contexts. To address this conundrum, the present study focuses on two teachers' attempts to bring innovation to conventional feedback practices in their own work contexts, focusing on how they went about their feedback revolution and their reflections on the innovation.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Participants and Context

The study reported in this paper was part of a larger study that investigated teachers' innovative feedback practices in secondary classrooms. Two teachers from two different secondary schools (band 1 and 3[1]) in Hong Kong took part in the study (teachers from bands 1, 2 and 3 were involved in the larger study). In the paper, they are referred to as Gwen and Rebecca (pseudonyms), who were teaching in a band 3 and band 1 school respectively. Both teachers are native speakers of Cantonese and took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Rebecca has a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in English Language Teaching (ELT), whereas Gwen has a Bachelor's degree in ELT and was pursuing her master's degree at the time of the study. While Gwen had three years of teaching experience, Rebecca had nine years' teaching experience and was recently appointed as the English department head in her school. Both Gwen and Rebecca taught Secondary 3 (Grade 9), with 34 and 15 students respectively in their classes. The teachers agreed to take part in the study due to the personal contact the researcher established with them through a series of professional development seminars. These seminars given by the researcher focused on teacher feedback and assessment in writing, which aimed to enhance teachers' knowledge of recent development in feedback and assessment research, and help them reflect on the teaching and assessment of writing and explore possible ways to improve their practice. After the seminars, the two teachers decided to return to their schools and implement some alternative feedback strategies they had learned from the seminars, which was the focus of this study. Informed consent was obtained from the teachers and their schools before the study commenced. The study lasted one whole academic year.

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[1] There is a three-band system in Hong Kong secondary schools, with Band 1 schools being the top academically.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The study relied on two sources of data: in-depth interviews with the two teachers and their personal reflections shared at a post-study teacher professional development seminar organized by the researcher. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and audio-taped at the beginning and end of the study. The first interview aimed to gather background information about the teachers' prior practice in the writing classroom, with feedback as the main focus, as well as their motivations for undertaking feedback innovation in the writing classroom. The second interview focused on the teachers' actual experience of implementing alternative feedback approaches in their class, the difficulties they encountered and their coping strategies, as well as the benefits they reaped. The teachers' personal reflections were collected from a teacher professional development held by the author, during which the two teachers were invited to share their experience in implementing innovative feedback approaches with participating teachers from other schools in Hong Kong. Such personal reflection data were triangulated with their interview data, adding to our understanding of the teachers' professional experience in bringing innovation to their feedback approaches.

The interview and personal reflection data were transcribed verbatim and sent back to the teachers for verification and clarification. Then a qualitative inductive process was adopted in data analysis. The interview transcripts were read and re-read to identify the common themes in relation to their motivation and implementation of innovation, their challenges, how they coped and the benefits they reaped from the innovation. As for the teachers' personal reflections, relevant ideas pertaining to the research questions were extracted to triangulate with and enrich the themes generated from the interview findings. All the themes were then contrasted and modified within and across cases, which led to the final interpretation of the data.

4. THE FINDINGS

In this section, I first present the research findings concerning the teachers' motivation for feedback innovation and the process of their implementation. Then the challenges the teachers encountered, their coping strategies and the perceived benefits were presented.

4.1. Motivation for Teacher Feedback Innovation

Before joining the study, Gwen mainly adopted a product-oriented approach, where terminal drafts were collected. The feedback Gwen gave students predominantly focused

on language issues, which was direct and unfocused, i.e. giving correct answers for all the grammatical errors students made in their writing. Reflecting on her feedback approach, Gwen was uncertain about its effectiveness as students made the same mistakes repeatedly in their writing despite her efforts in locating, categorizing, and providing correct answers for all their errors:

> *Even if I wrote down something like you should use past tense and gave the correct verb forms, maybe next time I still found the same mistakes in their compositions.* (Interview 1)

Also, her personal communication with students indicated that they were frustrated with the red marks over their writing, which "took away their interest in revising and polishing the drafts" (personal reflection). For some students with special learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia), their motivation towards writing was particularly low and "they almost did not revise the compositions" (Interview 1).

The abovementioned problems thus gave Gwen an impetus to seek changes in her teacher feedback approach. First of all, she hoped to enhance students' awareness of the importance of teacher feedback and promote their autonomy in the learning of writing:

> *I hope I can help students understand their strengths and weakness in writing and then they can make use of my feedback to write better next time.* (Interview 1)

Particularly, she planned to enhance the interaction between teachers and students, which was lacking in the writing classroom:

> *I expect to see a change. I want to have a culture that teachers and students can talk about their writing and then they use the feedback to improve their writing.* (Interview 1)

In addition to the potential benefits the innovation could bring to her students, she also regarded it as an opportunity for her own professional development:

> *I would like to learn how to give more valuable feedback and how to do it more effectively.* (Interview 1)

In Rebecca's case, she had been using conventional feedback approaches such as detailed error feedback in a product-oriented writing classroom since she started teaching. As she mentioned in the interview, while the students were good at daily

communication, they did not perform well in writing:

> *I don't think they have enough vocabulary and their organization skills are very weak. Sometimes they don't know the conventions of some text types.* (Interview 1)

Also, when they received teachers' feedback, they mainly cared about the scores instead of thinking about how to revise and improve their writing based on teachers' feedback. As a result, "they repeated the same mistakes over and over and did not show much progress in writing even if they wrote a lot" (personal reflection).

The problems described in the above prompted Rebecca to search for more effective feedback approaches. For instance, she wanted to adopt selective marking by focusing on specific areas in students' writing, which would be more manageable for students. She hoped to develop students' independent thinking and self-editing skills through engaging them in peer evaluation, and to conference with them so as to cater for students' individual needs. However, given the time constraint and school policy that required quite a number of compositions for the school year, she was uncertain, to begin with, whether the new feedback approaches could be fully implemented in the writing classroom:

> *In our school we have a target number of writing to do every year…they are also time-consuming.* (Interview 1)

As the English Department head of her school, Rebecca hoped to take a leading role in the English language education reform in her school. By trying out new feedback approaches and introducing them to her colleagues, she wanted to develop a common vision and work out "an effective and standardized feedback policy which can be implemented in different grades in her school" (Interview 1).

4.2. The Process of Teacher Feedback Innovation

Being aware of the drawbacks in the conventional feedback approaches, Gwen and Rebecca were keen to experiment with alternative approaches which, hopefully, could produce desirable effects on the teaching and learning of writing. Through the professional development seminars on teacher feedback provided by the researcher, they learned a number of alternative feedback approaches, such as focused error feedback, the use of teacher feedback forms, peer evaluation, error logs, student goal-setting and post-writing reflection. Relating these innovative approaches to their teaching contexts, the teachers selected a few that were deemed suitable for their students and began to

implement them in their classrooms.

After deliberating on the feasibility of the alternative feedback approaches, Gwen decided to adopt focused, coded error feedback in writing. First of all, she selected a few error types for each writing task and informed students of the target error types before writing, which were linked to her instructional focuses. This approach freed her up to give feedback on other important aspects of writing:

> *This year, I tried to focus on the structure first and the purpose of the writing, and the macro components first.* (Gwen, Interview 2)

Besides, she used coded feedback which could foster self-reflection on the part of the students:

> *As we write marking code instead of writing the correct words for them, they can think about their errors and what options they can have to make it right.* (Gwen, personal reflection)

Further, Gwen decided to play down scores in classroom writing assessment and provided comment-only feedback, as she believed that scores had a damaging effect on students' motivation and confidence. Thus a feedback form was used to evaluate student writing. Specific commentary was provided on the feedback form with reference to success criteria set up in the pre-writing stage, together with terminal commentary written on student texts:

> *This is a new thing. Students do not know their mark; they just see the ticks on the form. I think it is more encouraging because we try to look at different items we have on the form only and if they are weak at some areas, they can still have something good in some other areas.* (Gwen, Interview 2)

Another innovation is that Gwen shared responsibility with students by engaging them in peer evaluation on a regular basis. A peer feedback form (similar to the teacher feedback form), which contained the success criteria covered in the pre-writing instruction, was provided for students to give comments to their peers:

> *It provides a chance for students to learn from each other and if their peer can do something good, they can learn from it. And if they find there is something that they have to improve, they can reflect on their own work and, they will not make the same mistakes, and they can also know their own standard when compared*

with their peers, the less able ones, maybe they can push themselves a bit. (Gwen, Interview 2)

In order to enhance student-teacher interaction, Gwen also conducted conferencing with students to help them understand and act on her feedback and build up their confidence in learning to write:

I tell them that I know your language may not be perfect, but you have shown progress in format and organization. I also communicate with them about my expectation. (Gwen, Interview 2)

Similar strategies were implemented in Rebecca's classroom. First of all, she strengthened the pre-writing instruction in which task-specific rubrics were used to help students focus on both the content and structures and "form a clear understanding of the desired objectives/assessment criteria in the writing task" (personal reflection). Like Gwen, she also provided focused, coded feedback on students' writing in order to "help them focus on specific areas for further improvement and construct their confidence in writing" (Interview 2). Instead of giving a score, diagnostic comments were given in line with the criteria set during the pre-writing instruction:

Informative feedback was given rather than a mark, which can identify the strength and weakness of students and provide a direction for their continuous learning. I also try to write more encouraging feedback to motivate students. (Rebecca, personal reflection)

Peer evaluation was also adopted at the post-writing stage with specific evaluation forms, in which students engaged in mutual learning with each other:

I hoped to engage students through peer evaluation. It is very different from the traditional approach where teachers played a dominant role—marking and correcting errors, and students as passive receptacles of learning. (Rebecca, Interview 2)

What's more, she put great emphasis on post-feedback error treatment in order to help students reinforce what they had learned in the writing tasks:

After their revision, some follow-up grammar teaching was provided with focused editing exercises to help them consolidate. I also suggested they keep an error log

to keep track of the errors they usually made. (Rebecca, personal reflection)

Rebecca felt that through her implementation of innovative feedback approaches, her colleagues could learn from her and develop professionally.

To sum up, both Gwen and Rebecca actively sought innovation in the ways they approached feedback. A range of new pedagogic practices, such as focused, coded feedback and peer evaluation were implemented to build up students' confidence and improve their writing abilities. They also integrated the concept of assessment for learning (Black & Wiliam, 2006) into their teaching practice by allowing students to take greater responsibility for learning. By setting up learning objectives in writing tasks and guiding students to promote and gauge their learning in line with the objectives, they hoped to develop students' self-regulating and reflective abilities in the process of learning to write.

4.3. Challenges Encountered, Coping Strategies, and Benefits Reaped

While the two teachers managed to effect change in feedback, two main challenges surfaced during the study. The first challenge was the lack of collaboration with and support from colleagues. For Grace, while the school was generally supportive of her innovation, she was implementing change with only one colleague, which made her feel isolated because what she did differ hugely from the practices of the rest of the English department. Some students also raised questions about her innovative practice and compared her teaching with that of other teachers, who mainly adopted conventional approaches:

> *The students will be like "Oh, my teacher is doing something and then so how about your teacher?" Students compare and colleagues also compare. We have composition inspection and they (the colleagues) will question why I am marking in a different way, like using focused marking but why they have to spot out every mistake.* (Gwen)

In Rebecca's case, despite her efforts as English department head in promoting feedback innovation among her colleagues, she also faced "doubts and pressure from the school management who is more concerned with students' academic results in the public examination" (personal reflection).

The time constraint presented another challenge, which influenced the extent to which the new approaches could be successfully implemented. The teachers felt that it took a lot of time and energy to train students to engage in new learning activities with regard

to feedback in order to achieve the desired results. While the teachers were positive about the innovation, they felt that some students were still skeptical and would need more time to discover its benefits. Take peer evaluation as an example:

> *I think maybe they need more training on that (peer review). They're still not very accustomed to giving feedback to each other and they may not see why they have to do it. . . . I explained (the purpose) to them but it takes time.* (Gwen, Interview 2)

As the teachers were trying to integrate different approaches (e.g., multiple drafting, peer evaluation, and post-feedback instruction) into their teaching of writing, their workload increased significantly, having to juggle various demands such as preparing for lessons to strengthen pre-writing instruction, designing feedback forms, and providing timely feedback for students:

> *I need to collect all students' work before doing peer evaluation in order to give them appropriate guidance. I also need to design feedback sheets and prepare more activities. Time is always a concern.* (Rebecca, Interview 2)

Nevertheless, Gwen and Rebecca adopted a range of strategies to cope with the challenges. To involve their colleagues, they took the initiative to "share their innovative experience with other teachers in the English department and invited them to observe and comment on their teaching" (Rebecca, Interview 2). They also introduced their innovation to the parents and the school management and explained its rationale in order to seek their support. Moreover, they enhanced their communication with the students by "making explicit the learning objectives and assessment criteria of each writing task" (Gwen, personal reflection) and also attempted to vary their feedback according to students' needs:

> *Sometimes some strategies work better for some students and some might not well. We can be flexible and modify our approaches to help students learn how to write.* (Rebecca, personal reflection)

The time issue, however, was a knotty one. The principals in the participating schools did not reduce the teachers' workload as a token of support for their participation in the research project, and as a result, during the study, Gwen and Rebecca had taken on more work than before. They believed that they had to be persevering and give students time to get used to the new feedback approaches—e.g., peer evaluation.

Despite the challenges, the teachers believed that they benefited from the feedback

innovation in a number of important ways. First of all, by integrating their acquired knowledge of alternative feedback approaches into their own practice, they formed a better understanding of effective feedback in writing, which contributed to their self-efficacy and confidence as a writing teacher.

> *I've become more confident in trying out new feedback approaches in my teaching as I can my students benefit from them.* (Gwen, Interview 2*)*

As they put effort into the innovation, they also developed a deeper appreciation of the realities of the teaching of writing, especially the obstacles that they might encounter, which guided them to seek possible solutions within the constraints of their working settings. For instance, reflecting on their current practice, they would like to adopt a whole-school approach by involving the entire English department in the feedback innovation:

> *We would gain more support from the students and school management if innovation could be implemented across the board.* (Gwen, Interview 2)

The teachers took up different professional roles and engaged in various activities during the innovation, which gave an impetus to their continuous learning. For example, Gwen mentioned how she tried to play the role of a "change agent," aside from an innovator, in her school:

> *I tried to tell my colleagues the effectiveness of these new feedback approaches which can also be adopted in other forms. I showed them it not only saved teachers' time in marking, but it also builds up students' confidence in writing.* (Gwen, personal reflection)

Similarly, as the English department head in her school, Rebecca tried to influence her colleagues by "offering them opportunities to learn the new pedagogy and strategies" through group sharing and collaborative work (Interview 2). Furthermore, she became the "ambassador" who "communicated the rationale and implementation procedures to the school management and parents" (personal reflection). She also played the role of a "collaborator" who tried to "work with her colleagues and bring the innovative ideas into the whole school curriculum" (personal reflection). Her innovation created some ripple effects in the school. Some colleagues from the same grade asked for her teaching materials and tried out some new feedback strategies in their own teaching. Through engaging in mutual reflection and discussion, together they tried to formulate "a

feedback polity which could be applied to the form they were teaching" (Interview 2).

Overall, these new experiences strengthened the teachers' motivation to continue to effect change in order to promote students' learning and their own professional growth:

> *I will focus on students' needs and learning while staying open-minded in experimenting with innovative ideas. Also I will be more proactive in establishing collaborative relationships with my colleagues and promote reform at the school level.* (Gwen, personal reflection)

Through undertaking the feedback innovation, the teachers were empowered and felt encouraged to take charge of their professional development.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper explores why and how two secondary teachers implemented innovation in their feedback practices, the challenges they encountered and how they coped, as well as the benefits they gained. The findings suggest that the teachers in the study were agentive and reflective practitioners committed to the ongoing improvement of their teaching and professional development (Johnson, 2006). The teachers' professional agency could be reflected in their strong motivation to make changes in their feedback practices despite the deep-seated problems they had faced in the traditional writing classroom. Also, in face of the contextual challenges, the teachers actively adopted different strategies to guide their students, negotiate with the school management, and promote new feedback approaches among their colleagues, which pushed their innovation endeavor forward. Through participating actively in teacher learning by undertaking a bottom-up approach to change, the teachers enriched their understanding of effective feedback approaches in writing and deepened their awareness of the possible obstacles embedded in their work contexts, which contributed to their ongoing development as teachers of writing.

While the study shows pockets of success in teachers' feedback innovation, it also identifies different challenges, including lack of contextual support and time constraints. The challenges related to the school culture and management brought them a sense of isolation and anxiety and impeded their innovation (Bakkenes, et al., 2010). As the teachers attempted to navigate their innovation through the difficulties, they also expressed the need for collegial and institutional support so that systematic changes and reform could be facilitated (Hargreaves, 2004). If their needs can be addressed appropriately, teachers will not only have the opportunity to enhance their professional

learning through new practice, but they can also become role models and leaders who can provide guidance and direction to bring their vision of feedback into reality and produce greater impact on others at the school level (Lieberman & Pointer-Mace, 2008).

Admittedly, the study was limited by the small sample size and the self-reported nature of the data. Nevertheless, a number of implications can be generated, which could be of relevance to similar contexts. First, though feedback is often considered a problematic practice in the writing classroom, the study shows that teachers can seek possible changes to improve entrenched feedback practices through reflection and participation (Farrell, 2001). Second, to implement effective change in feedback practices, the entire school has to be involved. Good practices have to be disseminated not only at the school level but also at the community level. Schools could also bring in outside experts to stimulate new ideas and help teachers with their continuing professional development in the teaching of writing (Lee, 2013b). Further, schools can continue their effort in fostering professional learning communities among the English teachers so that they engage in an ongoing professional dialogue about how best to go about providing feedback and assessing student writing (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Specifically, English teachers could work together and re-visit their feedback practices with regard to the use of focused versus unfocused error feedback, the development of rubrics / feedback forms, peer evaluation training, etc.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that systematic efforts at the implementation of new feedback approaches could provide important opportunities for teachers' continuing professional development. Future research can investigate teachers' innovative feedback practices in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as colleagues, school leaders, and university researchers. The impact of teachers' feedback innovation on student learning is beyond the scope of this article, though findings of the larger study do indicate positive outcomes of the feedback innovation on student learning. Future research could delve into the impact of innovative feedback approaches on students' writing, how students perceive innovative feedback approaches vis-à-vis conventional ones, and how the former may facilitate student engagement and enhance their writing.

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Applicable levels: All

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