Chris Watkins

Feedback which leads to learning

Lots of what gets called "feedback" is really summative judgement. Many people have appropriate defences to this sort of thing, and do not learn or apply much from it.

The challenge is how to convey a perspective so that it promotes the sort of *learning* we seek, in which the learner is also evaluating and learning and applying.

One possibility is to organise our contribution (shown in purple below) in such a way that it mirrors and develops the stages of the learning cycle (green) we hope they will go through:

Some examples:
- a teacher is responding to a draft of written work. They first relate their experience of reading the text, then move on to identify two or three key issues and then explain why these issues are important for the writer to achieve their goals in the text. Each step leads to discussion and ends with proposals for redrafting.
- a tutor is reviewing the last week with one of their tutor group. They mention some of the events they are aware of and ask the tutee to do the same. Successes are identified since the last discussion, and these are analysed to learn from how they were created. Looking ahead, what has been learned is applied to forthcoming situations to create more success.
- a mentor is having a discussion following a lesson observation. It starts with them giving a brief summary of what they observed (especially on themes agreed beforehand) – using their extra set of eyes. Then a review of the issues which mentor and beginner teacher respectively identify, with both parties contributing. Then the mentor adds their analysis of why the issues identified are important ones in the classroom (this reduces the possibility of the dialogue degenerating into a debate): here the beginner hears more about how the experienced teacher sees and "reads" the classroom. Finally, ideas of what could be different, lead to proposals for what might be done next time.