The Role of Classroom Observation, Its Impact on Improving Teacher's Teaching Practices

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Abstract:
Classroom observations are part of any classroom environment. Observations are part of a teacher's entire career, regardless of whether they are part of routine supervision or monitoring by school leaders. Providing a positive critical framework for evaluating one's practice, improving skills and developing strengths can be considered advantages of conducting classroom observation. At worst, they can create stress and test the confidence of the person being observed. Teacher observation is one step in the process of identifying changes that teachers may want to make. Measuring Teacher Professional Growth Observation requires specific tools that align with the professional growth and effectiveness framework. These tools facilitate the observations of the Head of the school, and bring the documentation protocol to collect the data during the observations. The analysis of teaching observation relies on structured national and international instruments. The aim of the study is to analyze teachers' perception of standardized classroom observation tools. Methodology used: the main instrument of data collection is the questionnaire, focusing on the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The survey questionnaire for the interviewed teacher consisted of six questions to know their perception of the observation tools and process in class, choosing the answer in the desired column based on the Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Statistical analysis used Microsoft Excel in tabulating and analyzing the data collected. The study concluded that a standardized classroom observation tool serves as a guide for teachers to evaluate their performance and plan for their improvement, thereby increasing teacher preparation and competence. Results and relevant recommendations for professional development accompany the paper.

Keywords: observation, observation measurement, observation instruments, performance.

Introduction
Classroom observation is an incredibly important tool that a school principal can utilize not only to assess the performance of teachers within the school but also to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to find ways to improve the teaching and learning processes. What could be the instruments and techniques of classroom observation? Classroom observations conducted by principals, peers, and the teachers themselves, serve as a crucial source of data for determining teachers’ strong points and the areas where they require professional development. The elements of observation should reflect research-based practices for enhancing teaching and learning. It is essential
for all teachers to be familiar with and utilize a common terminology for these practices, as well as to have ample time for reflection and dialogue on how to improve. There is an expectation for school principals and peers in the observer role to undergo professional training on how to conduct these observations, and how the data can be related to professional learning and/or support structures in place. Studies indicate that there is a complex relationship between teaching and learning, hence observing classroom teaching is simply one method to analyze this relationship. Furthermore, teachers should conduct self-assessments of their teaching and learning improvements. The process of preparing recorded lessons can act as a tool for deepening teachers' analysis regarding teaching and learning improvement, encouraging them to exchange and seek suggestions from colleagues for enhancing the practices they follow.

The analysis of teaching observation requires leaders to be professional and well-informed about the best methods for improving teaching and learning. The analysis of teaching observation enables school principals to define various objectives through pedagogical dialogue, supported by either open-ended tools or more structured instruments. Professional Standards for Teachers include the quality criterion of the teacher and encompass the quality of the teacher's performance in the classroom. Asio and Riego de Dios (2019) mentioned several professional qualities that a valued teacher should possess to assess these practices in the classroom, as much as to identify strengths and areas for improvement, a classroom observation tool based on the new set of professional standards has been developed. This is to more accurately create professional development programs, targeted at the specific needs of teachers. Through classroom observation, the teacher’s performance can be enhanced through various parameters, which is vital for achieving quality education.

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**Study Findings**

The primary tool for data collection was the questionnaire, focusing on gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey questionnaire administered to the interviewed teachers consisted of six questions aimed at understanding their perception of classroom observation tools and processes. Respondents were asked to select their responses from the desired column based on the Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to tabulate and analyze the collected data. The paper includes the results obtained and relevant recommendations for professional development. The data were analyzed in accordance with the research questions guiding this study. From the conducted analyses, several findings were identified. These findings are supported by interview data and are connected to prior research.

**Finding 1**

Teachers seek immediate feedback following an observation. Specifically, teachers expressed a desire for observational feedback and dialogue from their supervisor following the observation, in the form of a post-observation conference. This discovery is supported by prior research (Boyd, 1989; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Jewell, 2017; Khachatryan, 2015). These researchers demonstrated that regardless of the method, timely evaluative feedback is crucial for teachers to adjust their instructional practices. According to Darling-Hammond (2013), teachers need to receive feedback promptly after a classroom observation and should be given the opportunity to reflect on the feedback provided to enhance their instructional practices.

This enhancement emphasizes the critical role of timely, constructive feedback in the professional development of teachers. Immediate responses enable educators to reflect on their teaching methods, fostering a growth mindset and
continual improvement. The link to prior research highlights the universal value of feedback in the teaching profession, suggesting that a systemic approach to post-observation feedback could significantly benefit instructional quality. Moreover, establishing a culture of open dialogue and continuous learning within schools not only supports teachers’ development but also enhances student outcomes by refining teaching practices.

**Finding 2**

Teachers desired feedback to enhance their instructional practices, pedagogy, or strategies that could improve student achievements from teaching experts or from leaders with a strong educational background. When asked about the kind of feedback they need and want, teachers indicated a preference for effective feedback with suggestions or examples for improvement. This finding is supported by the researches, which concluded that teachers are more likely to improve their instructional practices when provided with specific feedback. Classroom observation feedback is crucial for the enhancement of instructional practices and, consequently, for achieving higher levels of student success.

This highlights the importance of not just any feedback, but targeted, constructive feedback that provides clear directions for improvement. Teachers are looking for actionable insights from those with expertise in education, which can lead to tangible enhancements in their teaching methods. This specificity is key to ensuring that the feedback is not only received but also effectively implemented. The need for examples or models as part of the feedback process suggests that teachers value practical, applicable advice that they can visualize and incorporate into their own classrooms. Ultimately, the goal of such feedback is to foster an environment where continuous professional development is encouraged, leading to improved teaching quality and better student outcomes.

**Finding 3**

Teachers sought clarity regarding the assessment and observation process, their feedback, and how to improve their instructional practices. When asked about the transparency of the teacher assessment process, teachers indicated that, whether in the present or in past years, they have always been clear about the process and expectations for classroom observations at some point in their careers.

This is supported by the research of Boyd (1989), which describes an effective teacher evaluation system as one that "provides teachers with useful feedback on classroom needs, the opportunity to learn new teaching techniques, and advice from administrators and other teachers on how to make changes in their classes" (p. 1).

This emphasizes the significance of transparency and clear communication in the teacher evaluation process. For teachers to fully engage with and benefit from evaluations and observations, they must understand the criteria, methods, and goals of these assessments. Providing feedback that is not only constructive but also actionable and supported by opportunities for professional development is crucial. This approach not only helps teachers address immediate classroom needs but also encourages continuous growth and adaptation of teaching methods. Moreover, fostering a collaborative environment where teachers feel supported by administrators and peers in making classroom adjustments can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the evaluation process. The ultimate aim of such evaluations should be to support teachers in refining their instructional strategies, thereby improving student learning outcomes and contributing to a positive and dynamic educational environment.

**Finding 4**

Teachers identified and expressed the need for more administrative support. One of the interview questions asked participants to respond to "What do you think leaders need in order to provide timely, effective feedback for improving instructional practices?" Teachers indicated that leaders need time to provide effective feedback following classroom observations. "I believe they could mentor better; they could meet with teachers and develop relationships. Many
other things could happen if there would be more supportive staff," they noted. This is supported by the research of the Reform Support Network (2015), which reported that administrators in large schools do not have enough time to adequately observe all teachers. Adding additional administrators would allow for a more manageable number of teachers to be evaluated, both formally and informally.

This highlights the critical role of administrative support in the effectiveness of feedback and teacher development processes. It suggests that in order for school leaders to provide meaningful and constructive feedback, there must be adequate time and resources. This could be facilitated by reducing the teacher-to-administrator ratio, allowing for more personalized and frequent interactions. Furthermore, establishing a culture of mentorship and professional development within the school can enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The call for more supportive staff underscores the necessity for a collaborative approach to education, where administrative support structures are designed to facilitate ongoing dialogue, mentorship, and professional growth. By addressing these needs, schools can create a more conducive environment for teacher improvement and ultimately, student achievement.

Finding 5

Teachers indicated that three observations, and only observations, were not sufficient to adequately assess the quality of classroom teaching or teacher effectiveness. Teachers mentioned that three observations were insufficient to accurately judge a teacher’s performance and would prefer more frequent observations. In Boyd’s (1989) research, teachers reported that assessments occur rarely after probationary years, and they were dissatisfied with the amount of time leaders spent conducting classroom observations or not being evaluated by their administrators often enough. Researchers have determined there is a need to improve teacher evaluation systems or to expand the systems to include more than just classroom observation and timely feedback (Hill & Grossman, 2013).

This emphasizes the teachers’ call for a more comprehensive approach to evaluation that goes beyond periodic observations. Teachers advocate for a system that allows for ongoing, consistent feedback and a closer, more regular engagement with evaluators to truly reflect their performance and effectiveness. The cited research underscores the importance of reevaluating current evaluation practices to ensure they are not only frequent enough but also diverse in methods, incorporating various forms of feedback and assessment to provide a fuller picture of a teacher’s capabilities. Enhancing evaluation systems to include a broader range of assessment tools and more regular interactions can help in capturing the nuanced aspects of teaching and learning, ultimately leading to more effective teaching practices and better learning outcomes.

Finding 6

Teachers highlighted that the relationships between leaders and teachers are crucial. In response to questions about what administrators need to conduct classroom observations and provide effective feedback, teachers emphasized the significance of trustful relationships with their administrators. Teachers mentioned that a good relationship with the administration is important; and three teachers highlighted the importance of trust and respect for the administrator. A study by Mathers et al. (2013) supported this finding by showing that building leadership characterized as participatory demonstrated that principals need more time to be visible in classrooms, approachable, and available for teachers.

This elaboration underscores the critical role of positive, trust-based relationships between teachers and administrators in facilitating effective evaluations and feedback. It suggests that beyond the technical requirements for observations and feedback, the interpersonal
dynamics between educators and their leaders significantly influence the process’s effectiveness. Establishing a culture of mutual respect, trust, and open communication is fundamental to creating an environment where teachers feel supported and valued, which, in turn, can lead to more meaningful and productive feedback and professional development. The findings indicate that for evaluations to be truly effective, administrators must invest time in building strong relationships with their staff, underscoring the need for leadership styles that prioritize visibility, approachability, and supportiveness.

**Conclusion**

The use of standardized classroom observation tools is not intended to add to the burden of our teachers but to assist them in planning their teaching process and other stages involved in the profession. Aimed at professional development, this would empower teachers to reflect on their teaching and identify pedagogical needs and initiate innovations for the benefit of students. They fully understand that the direction and use of the classroom observation tool have been primarily for the improvement of the teaching-learning process. It serves as a guide for them to assess their performance and to plan their improvements, thus the enhancement of teacher preparation and competence is evident. Teachers stated that they feel more confident after conferences because their strengths are being acknowledged by their school leaders. It is purpose-focused, integrated into technology in a constructive manner that a teacher can follow. It also builds relationships between the teacher and the school leader during post-conferences, as it can provide them with a meaningful moment in which they can speak freely in a positive manner resulting in a sympathetic connection and trust.

This underscores the importance of classroom observation tools in fostering a supportive and growth-oriented environment for teachers. By facilitating reflective practice and ongoing dialogue between teachers and administrators, these tools contribute to a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect within schools.

The emphasis on technology integration and the constructive framing of feedback highlight a modern approach to professional development, where tools are designed to enhance, not hinder, the teaching experience. The building of trust and positive relationships through such interactions further solidifies the value of these tools in promoting a collaborative and supportive educational community.

**Recommendations**

In light of the research findings, we wish to make the following recommendations:

- Observers, such as school leaders, should be adequately trained to administer observations and provide the best supervisory advice.
- School leaders should ensure there are transparently defined policies that regulate the promotion and placement of teachers based on qualifications, merits, and the effectiveness of classroom observation tools.
- The implementation of classroom observation tools should not be the final step. Follow-up interventions should specifically address areas needing growth in the teaching-learning process.
- Mentoring sessions should be held where teachers find ways to work on their weaknesses.
- Training and seminars for teachers should be implemented, focusing on understanding the classroom observation tool.
- The classroom observation model has helped improve relationships between teachers and leaders.
- Classroom observation tools offer a good understanding of classroom culture.
- The classroom observation tool has aided teachers in growing and enhancing student learning.
- The classroom observation tool is sufficient for determining the success of the teaching and learning process.

These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of classroom observations as a tool...
for professional development and to foster a positive educational environment. Emphasizing the need for comprehensive training, clear policies, and continuous support, these suggestions strive to create a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration within the educational community. Implementing these measures can significantly contribute to the professional growth of teachers and, consequently, to the improvement of student learning outcomes.

References


