

## Seasoned Teachers' Views on Classroom Observations as a Catalyst for Professional Growth



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**ABSTRACT:** This qualitative study investigated seasoned teachers' views and experiences of classroom observations in Santa District, Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. Employing a phenomenological research design, the study aimed to understand how these teachers viewed and experienced classroom observations as part of their professional practice. Five key informants with 15 to 33 years of teaching experience participated through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and classroom observations, focusing on teachers' emotions, views, and responses. Content analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, providing insights into the complexities of classroom observation practices among seasoned teachers.

The study identified five significant themes: professional development and improvement opportunities, a shift from evaluation to growth mentality, reflection and emotional responses with coping mechanisms, long-term impact on student performance, and advocacy for authentic assessment. The findings revealed that instructors saw observations as critical to their professional development, moving from early anxiety to embracing them as chances for reflection and improvement. They established effective coping mechanisms to deal with observation-related stress and used feedback to improve their instructional approaches, which boosted student engagement and academic outcomes.

The study emphasized the transformative change from perceiving classroom observations as evaluations to viewing them as learning opportunities. It also advocated for real assessment procedures that were consistent with instructional strategies. However, limitations such as sample specificity and inherent biases warrant caution when generalizing the findings. Future research should look at these patterns in different educational situations to have a better understanding of classroom observation methods.

**KEYWORDS:** seasoned teachers, classroom observations, professional growth and development

### I. INTRODUCTION

Classroom observations have long been recognized as a catalyst component of educational practice, providing educators with opportunities for professional growth and instructional enhancement (Feng & Sass, 2018; Hunter, 2016). Within the realm of educational research, the perspectives and experiences of seasoned teachers regarding classroom observations constitute a valuable area of study. Drawing on years of classroom experience, these teachers possess a wealth of pedagogical knowledge and insights that shape their understanding of observation practices and their impact on teaching effectiveness.

Classroom observation is a systematic process of assessing teaching practices and student interactions to inform improvement initiatives and to enhance teaching quality and student outcomes through evidence-based decision-making and

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ongoing professional development within the OECD (2019) framework. Yego (2020) highlights that classroom observations are a key element of instructional supervision. They typically involve administrators, peers, or external evaluators visiting classrooms to observe teaching and learning processes. Observations are followed by feedback sessions where strengths are acknowledged and areas for improvement are identified. These observations provide a realistic picture of classroom dynamics, teaching strategies, and student engagement (McGhee et al., 2021).

The significance of classroom observations extends beyond mere evaluation; they serve as foundation for professional development, offering teachers a platform to reflect on their instructional methods, refine teaching strategies, and ultimately improve student learning outcomes (Feng & Sass, 2018; Hunter, 2016). For seasoned educators who have navigated various educational reforms and adapted to evolving student needs over their careers, classroom observations represent feedback and an opportunity for continuous learning and adaptation (Mouza, 2018).

Historically, classroom observations were often perceived as top-down, evaluative processes focused more on accountability than development (Aseltine, 2019). However, according to the study by Hofman (2014), recent trends emphasize a more collaborative and supportive approach, recognizing teachers' professional autonomy and expertise. The shift towards formative assessment aims to create a more positive and constructive teacher experience, promoting professional dialogue and reflection. Additionally, research into the perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding classroom observations offers valuable insights into their attitudes, emotions, and evolving perspectives. A study by Mengistu (2021) revealed that during classroom observations, beginner and even experienced teachers often report a range of emotions, including anxiety, nervousness, and self-consciousness. For Aseka (2016), effective instructional supervision can mitigate these feelings by providing constructive feedback, fostering a supportive environment, and emphasizing professional development.

In the United States, where classroom observations are intricately linked with teacher evaluation systems like the Danielson Framework or Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model, researchers have identified concerns regarding the reliability and validity of observation tools, the time-intensive nature of the process, and the potential for observations to induce stress or be perceived as punitive rather than supportive (American Educational Research Association et al., 2018).

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, where classroom observations are frequently utilized for teacher appraisal and performance management, studies have underscored issues such as inconsistent feedback from observers, the pressure to deliver during observed lessons, and discrepancies between observation criteria and effective teaching practices (Richards & Farrell, 2019). Australian studies have also highlighted challenges related to aligning observation criteria with the diverse needs of students and the subjective nature of observer judgments. Educators in Australia have also voiced frustrations over the limited opportunities for meaningful dialogue and reflection following observations (Ts, 2021). In Singapore, Comighud et al. (2020) assert that classroom observations, crucial to a comprehensive teacher appraisal system, emphasize teacher quality and professional development. Identified challenges include clearer criteria for effective teaching, concerns about observer objectivity, and insufficient support for teachers to implement observation feedback.

Despite Finland's renowned emphasis on teacher autonomy and trust, studies have revealed challenges related to potential mismatches between observed teaching practices and student-centered learning principles, along with concerns about the standardization of observation procedures (Kangasniemi et al., 2019). In China, Li & Zhang (2021) note that educational reforms prioritize enhancing teacher quality and accountability, leading to increased use of classroom observations for teacher evaluation and professional development. Studies have highlighted concerns about the reliability and consistency of observation data and emphasized the need for clearer guidelines and support mechanisms to aid teachers.

In the Philippines, the release of DepEd Memo No. 008, S. 2023, consistent with DepEd Order No. 2, series 2015, on the guidelines and implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), marks a significant advancement in the assessment of teacher performance within the Philippines' educational system. This memo signifies a transition towards a multi-year approach to evaluating teachers' effectiveness, aligning with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as mandated by DepEd Order 42, s. 2017. The RPMS-PPST outlined in these frameworks comprises four phases, with Phase II focusing on Performance Monitoring and Coaching. This phase includes a pivotal activity: classroom observation conducted throughout the academic year. To facilitate this process, Classroom Observation Tools (COT) have been introduced, featuring distinct sets of observable indicators tailored for Proficient Teachers (Teachers I-III) and Highly Proficient Teachers (Master Teachers I-III). By implementing this multi-year approach and incorporating the PPST into the evaluation framework, DepEd aims to provide a more comprehensive and structured assessment of teacher performance. This initiative promotes continuous improvement and fosters professional development among educators, ultimately enhancing the quality of education delivered to students across the Philippines (Department of Education, 2023).

This study identified critical gaps in classroom observation research: theoretical gaps in understanding specific supervisory practices and their impact on teacher attitudes and effectiveness; empirical gaps in studying supervision practices within

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educational divisions and teachers' perceptions of supervision and observations; methodological gaps in exploring differences in attitudes among experienced teachers and perceptions of observation practices; and a literature gap in regionalspecific research on instructional supervision particularly in classroom observation within the context of the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur.

Macalisag (2023) shed light on seasoned teachers with several years of teaching practice who bring knowledge and insights into the classroom observation processes. Their perceptions are shaped by accumulated experiences, professional development, and interactions with supervisors and peers (Castroverde & Acosta, 2019). Subsequently, the study on classroom observations among experienced teachers draws upon Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) By integrating SCT the study aimed to delve into the perceptions and practices of seasoned teachers regarding classroom observations and their role in professional growth. Understanding the perspectives of seasoned teachers is crucial for informing educational policies and practices aimed at promoting teacher development and improving instructional quality (Goe, 2017). By illuminating the experiences of these educators, this study contributes to the broader discourse on effective professional development strategies and the cultivation of reflective teaching practices within educational settings.

### II. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological research design to explore seasoned teachers' views and experiences of classroom observations. Phenomenology focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences of these phenomena, allowing researchers to delve into teachers' subjective experiences, including their perceptions, emotions, and meanings related to classroom observations. The study was conducted in Santa District, particularly Mabilbila Integrated School in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. Key informants were seasoned teachers with 15 to 33 years of public service, primarily from Mabilbila Integrated School. Purposive sampling was used to ensure rich and relevant data. In-depth interviews and observational data served as primary data-gathering instruments. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used in interviews to explore teachers' experiences, emotions, and views on classroom observations. Observational data documented classroom interactions, teaching methods, and teachers' responses during observations. The cool and warm analysis uncovered patterns and insights from interview transcripts and observational notes. Initial codes were generated and organized into themes and sub-themes through constant comparison and refinement. This iterative process ensured accuracy and consistency in the interpretation of the data. This methodology aimed to provide a detailed understanding of seasoned teachers' perceptions of classroom observations, contributing to educational research and practice.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Professional Development and Growth Opportunities

Seasoned teachers view classroom observations as catalysts for their professional growth. They appreciate the insights from observers, which help them identify blind spots and recognize effective practices they might overlook. One teacher highlighted, "Observations have been instrumental in my development. They provide a mirror to reflect on my teaching methods and refine them continuously." This feedback encourages teachers to engage in reflective practice, continually refining their instructional techniques and exploring innovative approaches. One of the participants also noted, "Embracing observations as a tool for development has created a culture of learning in our school. We're constantly striving to improve, not just for ourselves but for the benefit of our students." Parallel to the theme, classroom observations play a catalyst role in evaluating teacher performance and fostering professional growth across diverse educational contexts globally, as argued by Buagas and Ching (2023). Studies conducted in various countries shed light on the multifaceted challenges encountered by educators during these observational processes.

Observation can help teachers uncover blind spots and obtain useful insights into their teaching practices. Participants have underlined that observations provide areas for improvement that might otherwise go overlooked. This method feeds into reflective practice, in which educators constantly improve their teaching techniques by reflecting on what worked and didn't after each observation. Such reflective techniques are vital for professional development. Furthermore, teachers utilize observation feedback to investigate creative teaching approaches, using the experience as inspiration to introduce and experiment with new ways aimed at improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

Research by Buagas and Ching (2023) emphasizes that classroom observations serve as tools for evaluating teacher performance and as catalyst for professional growth. The study underscores how feedback from observations helps teachers identify areas for improvement and refine their instructional practices. This resonates with the experiences of participants who valued observations for uncovering blind spots and fostering a learning culture within their schools.

Furthermore, studies by Leko and Brown (2021) highlight the transformative impact of reflective practice on teacher development. They argue that reflections prompted by observation feedback enable educators to critically examine their teaching

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methods, leading to more effective instructional strategies. Moreover, research by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) emphasizes the importance of fostering a culture of innovation in schools through professional development activities such as classroom observations. By encouraging teachers to explore innovative approaches in response to observation feedback, schools can enhance instructional quality and effectively meet students' diverse needs.

### B. Shift from Evaluation to Growth Mindset and Reflection

The evolution from perceiving observations as assessments to embracing them as growth opportunities signifies a transformative shift among seasoned teachers. Initially apprehensive about being judged, seasoned educators have learned to value constructive feedback that supports their professional journey. One teacher shared, "I used to dread observations, fearing criticism. Now, I see them as chances to learn and grow. Each observation brings new insights that help me refine my teaching." This mindset shift promotes openness to feedback and fosters self-reflection. Teachers are motivated to make proactive changes in their teaching strategies to enhance instructional quality and student learning experiences. As expressed by another participant, "Observations push us to innovate. They challenge us to think differently and adapt our methods to meet the diverse needs of our students." This theme highlights the transition from viewing observations as assessments to embracing them as opportunities for growth.

Teachers regard constructive criticism as an essential component of their professional development, and many express gratitude for the useful insights received from observations. This input not only helps them grow, but it also fosters an open and receptive atmosphere towards suggestions for change. Accepting feedback as a tool for improving teaching skills, rather than as a form of criticism, demonstrates a shift in perspective toward continual improvement. Educators are inspired to make proactive changes in their teaching practices, motivated by a desire to innovate and develop their approaches in response to observations. This commitment to continual improvement demonstrates instructors' dedication to provide engaging and effective learning environments for their pupils.

### C. Emotional Responses and Coping Mechanisms

Emotional responses to observations vary widely among teachers, influenced by their experience levels, the quality of feedback received, and the institutional culture surrounding observations. While initial anxiety and stress are common, seasoned teachers have developed effective coping strategies. One teacher explained, "Preparing meticulously and maintaining composure during observations has been crucial for me. It helps me stay focused on delivering my best teaching." Over time, teachers become more resilient, viewing observations not only as opportunities for self-improvement but also as chances to demonstrate their expertise. They leverage feedback to refine their practices continually. "I've learned to see observations as part of the job. They're moments to shine and show what I can do," remarked a participant, reflecting the resilience developed through experience. Emotional responses and coping strategies are crucial aspects of how teachers perceive observations.

While anxiety and stress are often initial responses to observations, teachers have learned to manage these feelings more effectively over time. By developing coping strategies like thorough preparation and staying composed during observations, educators are better equipped to handle the pressure that comes with being observed. This ability to stay focused and maintain composure not only helps in managing anxiety but also contributes to building resilience. As teachers grow more resilient, they begin to view observations as chances to demonstrate their expertise, ultimately boosting their confidence in their teaching abilities.

Observations prompt teachers to critically assess and adapt their teaching strategies based on the feedback they receive. Insights into classroom dynamics, student engagement levels, and instructional effectiveness inspire teachers to innovate and adjust their approaches. A teacher noted, "Observations have helped me fine-tune my lessons. They provide insights into what works well and where I can improve to engage my students better." This adaptive response ensures that teaching methods remain responsive to student needs, creating an inclusive and stimulating learning environment. Teachers engage in iterative processes of reflection and adjustment, enhancing teaching efficacy and enriching the educational experience for students across diverse settings. Observations prompt teachers to assess and adapt their teaching strategies critically.

Observations in the classroom offer valuable insights into dynamics and student interactions, crucial for understanding their engagement in the learning process, as one teacher noted. These insights inform innovative teaching approaches, where educators adapt methods based on observed feedback to better cater to student needs, exemplified by experienced teachers who continually refine their strategies. This iterative process, driven by observation and reflection, significantly enhances teaching efficacy by allowing educators to pinpoint effective practices and adjust accordingly, fostering continuous improvement in their instructional methods and student outcomes.

Thus, the parallel findings from research highlight that observations serve as pivotal tools for enhancing teaching strategies, promoting innovation, and ultimately improving educational outcomes for students. The iterative nature of

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observation-driven reflection underscores its role in continuously refining teaching practices, ensuring they remain dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of learners in diverse educational settings.

### D. Long-Term Impact Student Success

Seasoned teachers emphasize the link between effective classroom observations and long-term student success. Modifications in response to observation feedback contribute directly to improved student engagement, comprehension, and academic achievement. "When I adjust my teaching based on observation insights, I notice my students are more engaged and grasp concepts better," shared a participant. Teachers' commitment to continuous improvement through reflective practice ensures that their teaching remains dynamic and responsive. This dedication ultimately benefits student learning outcomes, fostering a supportive learning environment where all students can thrive academically and personally. The focus here is on how observations contribute to long-term student success.

Teachers use observation feedback to execute changes targeted at increasing student engagement and academic accomplishment, as participants emphasize the importance of crafting more interesting classes based on these insights. This drive to continual improvement reflects their dedication to responsive teaching approaches, with educators always modifying their methods to better serve students and adapt to their changing requirements. Observations also help educators adopt student-centered teaching approaches, in which they modify their curriculum to accommodate varied learning styles and emphasize student needs, resulting in better learning outcomes and a more supportive educational atmosphere overall.

The research aligns with the perspectives of seasoned teachers regarding the impact of classroom observations on long-term student success. This meta-analysis explores the impact of various forms of teacher coaching, which often includes classroom observations, on instructional quality and student achievement. It provides insights into how structured observation and feedback mechanisms can contribute to long-term improvements in student outcomes by enhancing teacher effectiveness (Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D., 2018).

### E. Advocacy for Authentic Assessment

Teachers advocate strongly for authentic assessments during observations. They value assessments that provide a comprehensive view of their teaching practice, going beyond superficial evaluations. "Authentic assessments capture the complexities of teaching—how we interact with students, the strategies we use, and the outcomes we achieve," explained a teacher. These assessments enable observers to understand teaching effectiveness, supporting teachers in delivering impactful and inclusive education. By advocating for authentic assessments, seasoned educators ensure that observations contribute meaningfully to their professional growth and ultimately benefit student learning. This theme underscores the importance of authentic assessments during observations.

Teachers advocate for the use of realistic assessments that provide a full perspective of instructional strategies and student results, while participants underline the need of assessments that capture the intricacies of teaching. These assessments provide detailed insights into teaching efficacy, demonstrating educators' advocacy for evaluations that are consistent with their instructional approaches. Furthermore, they promote professional development by providing valuable feedback to educators, allowing them to fine-tune their teaching methods and improve their classroom performance. This emphasis on real assessments highlights their importance in fostering continuous development and assisting instructors in achieving educational excellence.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This study of seasoned teachers has varied views on classroom observation. There should be continuous classroom observation by seasoned teachers. It provides mindset shifts adaptation to be able to adapt to new technologies. It also highlights a shift from viewing classroom observations as mere evaluations to embracing a growth mindset and fostering reflective practices for continuous improvement. Teachers reported first feeling anxious, but they learned coping skills and saw observations as opportunities for professional development. They stressed the relevance of emotional responses in controlling observation-related stress and using feedback to alter teaching approaches, resulting in increased student engagement and academic performance. The study supports for authentic assessment approaches that are closely aligned with teaching practices in order to provide relevant feedback and enable continuous improvement of instructional procedures. However, limitations such as the study's specific context and dependence on self-reported data highlight the need for additional research to generalize these findings across a variety of educational environments.



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### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study exclusively looked at experienced instructors in the Santa District, Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. It investigated the perspectives and experiences of seasoned teachers during classroom observations. Using a phenomenological methodology, the study demonstrates that these instructors regard observations as critical for professional development, progressing from early fear to viewing them as opportunities for reflection and improvement. Key findings show that teachers use ways to handle observation-related stress and change their teaching approaches depending on feedback, hence improving student engagement and academic outcomes. The study's shortcomings include a limited, context-specific sample size, potential researcher bias, and reliance on self-reported data, all of which may limit the findings' generalizability. Future study should explore larger, more diverse samples and different educational situations in order to provide greater insights.

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