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# TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, PEER OBSERVATION AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Hoang Thi Man<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Teachers should be responsible for their own growth and development, and classroom observation is one of the practical approaches that help teachers enhance their teaching capabilities. Studies indicate that classroom observation is an integral part of every stage of a teacher's career, especially with the aim of professional development. It would empower teachers to reflect on their teaching and identify pedagogical needs for the benefit of students. However, in Vietnam, the observation process has mainly been used as an authoritative tool and functioned as an administrative task regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training. This study examines school teachers' perceptions of existing classroom observation and their expectations for the classroom observation process. The researcher adopted a quantitative research methodology with 2 surveys as the primary instrument for collecting data. The findings indicated that teachers responded positively to classroom observation and perceived its importance to their teaching. Based on teachers' perceptions, some suggestions are provided for educational institutions in a similar context to implement the classroom observation process more appropriately and practically.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom observation, teachers' perception of classroom observation, peer observation, collaboration.*

## INTRODUCTION

Most professional development should build upon teachers' existing interests and concerns within their classrooms as teachers are the drivers of their own practice, making decisions and reflecting on their effectiveness. Professional development for teachers after graduation is crucial for maintaining and enhancing their teaching skills. However, in many Asian countries including Vietnam, opportunities for workshops, conferences, or other forms of professional growth can be limited. As a result, classroom observation becomes a primary source of teacher development. Indeed, classroom observation is one of the most important approaches for teachers to improve their teaching quality since it is "the bridge between the worlds of theory and practice" (Reed and Bergemann, 2001). Studies show that classroom observation can improve instructional quality and teaching effectiveness as "it is one of the essential tools for teachers to develop their teaching through feedback gained from observers and new teaching techniques from other teachers" (Halim *et al.*, 2018).

Unfortunately, current classroom observation practices in these regions often fall short of their potential as observation is frequently utilized as an authoritative tool for evaluation, leading to

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negative connotations for teachers. Teachers and students may alter behavior when being observed and observers might focus on isolated incidents without considering context (Malekshashi, 2019). Additionally, teacher anxiety on observation days can lead to inaccurate data about usual classroom practices. The pressure to perform well during observation can create anxiety for teachers and potentially distort student behavior, affecting the data collected. This anxiety can even lead to a decrease in teaching effectiveness. To improve observation effectiveness, a transition to a developmental rather than judgmental approach is needed (Halim *et al.*, 2018). As Tsukui (2022) suggests, training programs encouraging teacher reflection can be particularly beneficial in the Vietnamese context. School leaders and educational authorities should develop observation plans that address both school and teacher needs (Halim *et al.*, 2018).

This study aims to move beyond this limited approach by exploring Vietnamese teachers' perceptions of the existing classroom observation process. By understanding their perspectives, we can work towards developing a more collaborative and supportive observation model and we can develop strategies to bridge the gap between current practices and international best practices, ultimately improving the effectiveness of classroom observation for teacher professional development. In the long run, can contribute its part as creating a system that fosters teacher development, improves the quality of classroom instruction, and benefits both teachers and school administrators through efficient, timely, and meaningful observations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Classroom observation

Classroom observation is generally defined as a practice, a method or a process with different stages of learning. Halim *et al.* (2018) define the practice of sitting in another teacher's class to observe, learn and reflect as a method of evaluating and recording specific information about what is going on within a classroom. They help the observer perceive the happenings systematically to understand and analyze them (Wajnryb, 1992). Wragg (1999) defined classroom observation as one of the effective methods used by educators to develop the teaching and learning process. A process during which the observer sits in one or more study sessions records the teacher's teaching practices and students' actions and then meets with the teacher to discuss the observations. Wilcox (2000) regards classroom observation as a primary method of collecting data on what is happening in the classroom. Whereas other scholars suppose it is "an opportunity to observers experienced teachers" and plays its roles an essential part in teachers' formation and development by preparing beginning teachers with enough skills and knowledge to improve their teaching continuously through analysis and reflection, seeing the various interpersonal interactions between the teacher and those interactions among students (Good, 1988). For school leaders' and educational authorities, observations establish their role as essential for evaluating and observing a teacher's improvement (Sheilla, 2020). In many Asian countries, including Vietnam, the importance of classroom observation is highlighted in circular 32 (2018) of the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training about the function of classroom observation as one of the primary tools in teacher education and teacher development. In Philippines, the Republic Act 10533 features that classroom observation as one gauge for ensuring quality.

Typically, there is no particular approach for the class observation process, but the standard steps are pre-observation discussion, during a class visit and the post-observation discussion. (Iranian GSI Teaching and Resource Center, 1991). Observation as a supervision process consists of pre-observation planning, observation implementation, and post-observation monitoring (Ghavifekr *et al.*, 2019).

Historically, classroom observation is perceived to play a significant role in teacher formation. Its process has undergone various stages with different terms adopted since 1830 (AL-Balushi and Mat Saad, 2021). Between 1830 and 1850, observation assessed teachers' performance under inspection. The next period, 1850-1910, changed nature to focus primarily on teachers and their teaching abilities. The focus on teachers continued for the next decades with various terms such as scientific, bureaucratic, human relations and later collegial, collaborative with mentorship as a type of supervision to help teachers improve their teaching. Class observation's focus has clearly become more balanced between disciplinary and professional development purposes.

### **Peer observation**

Subsequently, the term mentorship is added to the roles of supervisors or mentors who help teachers grow professionally. The mentors can vary from qualified, professional supervisors to experienced teachers in their school and peer teachers with whom they want to collaborate. Peer observation is regarded as "teachers working together regularly sharing their knowledge contributing ideas and developing plans for achieving educational goals" by Leonard (2003). It is used for both professional and collaboration tools: Bell (2005) believes that the collaborative development activity in which the faculties or the professionals support each other by examining each other's teaching and explaining the observations they made. Peer observation is regarded as informal observation, which benefits teachers of all ages in improving professional development and human interaction in the school context. Researchers also highlight what teachers can benefit from this type of informal observation as it is "very effective in enhancing the teaching of the instructor and proves to be efficient in the overall development of the educator" (Katal *et al.*, 2022) and its importance "for teacher's development, which helps the observers and the observed teachers to enhance their confidence and apply the newly learned strategies in their own teaching. Teachers believe peer observation reduces their worry, hesitancy, and pressure throughout the teaching process (Katal *et al.*, 2022). Peers can also be at different levels of experience. In many other pieces of research, the importance of peer or informal observation is as the element of "social cognitive theory" where observational learning occurs. Furthermore, findings from studies in peer observation revealed that observing is not merely about copying others' styles. It inspires peers to try new pedagogies in the classroom. It helps them to figure out what they have been trying in class in line with the good teaching quality practices" (Katal *et al.*, 2022) or a form of coaching which ensures the "continuing professional development for experienced faculty is largely unrecognized (Yiend *et al.*, 2014)". For school and curriculum overall, "the goal of peer observation of teaching models is to extend and improve an understanding of personal approaches to curriculum delivery" (Martin and Double, 1998). Overall, peer observation benefits both teachers and schools, and most importantly, it helps to reduce teacher anxiety and pressure they may feel during formal observation.

## Previous studies

Theoretically, there are three observation models that are commonly accepted: evaluative, developmental, and collaborative as pointed out by Yiend *et al.* (2014). These models reflect the nature of class observation: class disciplinary tools, professional development tools and collaboration tools. However, in the practical context of many schools in Vietnam, the significance of classroom observation has yet to be fully exploited to the best, and it is generally still regarded as compulsory duty teachers have to perform under the requirement of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). A study by Tsukui (2022) revealed that Vietnamese school teachers who go to observe other classes usually “perform their observations through their own initiative, but rather, in a sense, they passively receive events-they undergo the object appearing in front of them.” The observation practice is then followed by reflection meetings – conventional professional meetings among schoolteachers (PTM; “*sinh hoạt chuyên môn*” in Vietnamese).” Peer observation in Vietnam, though is conducted within academic year, “most teachers have considered peer observation as an obligation that is practiced perfunctorily rather than enthusiasm in reexamining the teaching practice and promoting peers’ professional development” (Nguyen, 2020). Almutairi (2016) found that classroom observation in Kuwaiti schools is mainly implemented for teacher evaluation and not just for professional development. This explains that “as a general practice, observation is associated with evaluation which is why particularly with teachers in service-it often has negative connotation”. The pressure of being watched can lead to anxiety and performance fluctuations, making it difficult to accurately assess their typical teaching style (William, 1989). This can also result in biased interpretations of the data (Katal *et al.*, 2022), ultimately misrepresenting what occurs in the classroom and potentially harming teachers (Freeman, 1982) and teachers “are anxious during the classroom observation process, in addition to their fear of post-observation conferences, the results of which might lead to termination of their work contracts” (AL-Balushi and Mat Saad, 2021). Likewise, observation, mostly used for assessment purposes, has become a real concern and a cause of failure for many teachers. Teachers may find any part of the observation process scary and become demotivated to perform it. They tend to link being observed to being evaluated or criticized. Thus, they often feel resistant or reluctant to participate in classroom observations (Ha, 2004). The result of classroom visits can sometimes be very negative especially when it is not applied effectively. Eventually, the high-level of anxiety negatively affects teachers’ performance and extends its impact on the learning process in general (AL-Balushi and Mat Saad, 2021).

Also, several concerns relating to biased data and teachers’ performance under observation may not be representative of their usual teaching suggest that we need to empower teachers and tailor observation to their needs. Obviously, the evaluation and assessment from observation data, the observers themselves, and the process’s implementation contribute to the effectiveness of a classroom visit. Similarly, observer effects may occur because teachers and students are aware that their behaviour is being observed. The presence of an observer may change teacher or student behaviours and leave an impact on evaluation afterwards. Observers usually focus on isolated behaviours without concern for the precedent and subsequent behaviour- a risky thing (Halim *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, the observer’s effect, as Malekshashi (2019) compared the difference between classes observed by an outsider and classes that do not have an observer. The observed classes typically outperform the other proving that the observer’s effect, to some extent, influences

class performance and potentially leads to skepticism about the data collected after classroom observation.

Additionally, many studies identified that “classroom observations should be developmental rather than judgmental because they offer opportunities for teachers to improve their awareness and abilities to interact and evaluate their teaching behaviours”. From a formative assessment perspective, classroom observation holds immense potential as a tool for continuous improvement, moving beyond its traditional role as a final evaluation. As Black and William (2009) indicated “the key principle of formative assessment is to use the evidence you gather to decide what needs to be done next”. By shifting the focus from evaluation to providing targeted feedback, setting specific goals for improvement, and fostering teacher reflection, classroom observation can transform into a collaborative learning process. This aligns perfectly with the core principle of formative assessment, where information is used to adjust teaching and learning strategies, ultimately leading to enhanced student outcomes.

As noted, studies suggested that to address these challenges, school leaders and teachers must be involved in improving observation practices. Ideally, professional development programs should address teacher concerns and empower them to reflect on their own practice (Halim *et al.*, 2018). As Tsukui (2022) argues, Vietnamese schools could benefit from “training programs for classroom observation that enable teachers to take reflexive positioning.” This shift would place teachers at the center of their professional development, allowing them to actively participate in the learning and teaching process. Ultimately, effective observation plans should be tailored to the specific needs of both the school and its teachers (Halim *et al.*, 2018).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research context**

This study explores Vietnamese teachers’ perceptions of the existing classroom observation process. While this initial study focuses on a specific school context, the findings can guide similar explorations in other Vietnamese schools. This broader understanding can inform the design of targeted interventions and training programs.

### **Research Questions**

In overall the study aims to answer these 2 main following questions:

(1) *How do Vietnamese teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current classroom observation process in promoting their professional development?*

(2) *What elements of the current classroom observation practices, as identified by Vietnamese teachers, contribute to its efficiency and significance for professional learning?*

The data analyzed in this first stage were categorized into two main parts: perceptions about the classroom observation and their choice of elements of its implementation.

### **Participants and site**

The researcher, seeking a professional growth opportunity for future academic teaching-learning process improvement, identified teachers as the primary participants in this study. To

ensure a representative sample of Vietnamese teachers facing diverse challenges, the research was conducted at a bilingual school in Hanoi, the capital city. Over 100 teachers from this school participated. To further refine the sample and focus on specific educational levels, the researcher employed a stratified random sampling technique. This involved dividing the teaching staff (ranging from primary to high school) into sub-groups based on grade level (e.g., primary, secondary) and then randomly selecting participants from each sub-group. This approach ensured representation from various teaching experiences within the school context.

The teaching staff ranges from primary to high school, 71% of whom have less than 10 years of teaching. Teachers have more chances to expose and exchange teaching experiences with their colleagues in a multicultural environment through cross-cultural approaches. Likewise, teachers might have more open access to international teaching practices than most teachers in other schools in Vietnam. In this context, the active learning, “thinking school” model, and “well-being school” model are encouraged among teaching staff to grow professionally to level up to international standards and meet their students’ needs. Therefore, maintaining teaching quality is the primary concern, and class observation should be implemented practically is one of the vital school plans.

When choosing sampling in a bilingual school context, the researcher aims to examine the existing state as international practices adopted in the school can be an advantage or a positive factor for professional growth compared to other schools. Also, as bilingual school teachers, the teaching staff are familiar with online survey tools with questions in English language and can be more open in sharing their thoughts and experiences.

### **Instrument of the study**

The survey questionnaire was adapted from a well-established study examining teachers’ perceptions of classroom observation and the observation process. To ensure the instrument’s relevance and effectiveness in the Vietnamese context, the researcher carefully reviewed and potentially modified the questions in consultation with PhD-level specialists in the field of education.

Both surveys consisted of ten items with multiple choice answers for the respondents to choose the desired option based on the Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) and marking ranges (1-5). The questions range across different types to thoroughly examine teachers’ perceptions of existing class observations and process.

### **Statistical analysis**

The survey was distributed via Microsoft Teams and completed using Microsoft Forms. The data collected from the surveys were categorized into 2 main parts perceptions about the classroom observations and elements of their implementation in a more practical and active approach to increased awareness of nationally accepted good practices in this field.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The surveys aimed to analyze teachers’ perceptions of the existing observation process. The following tables and data indicate the result of this study:

**Table 1. Teacher's perception of existing classroom observation**

Items	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5
Do you often observe other teachers' classes, or have your classes been observed?	Observed others (69%)	Get observed (31%)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Your observation is often scheduled as	Compulsory plans scheduled by school's/ administrators (63%)	Unexpected observation plan by school administrators (7%)	Be asked to register (mandatorily) voluntarily (26%)	Voluntarily register (14%)	N/A
On average, how many periods per year do you have your classes observed?	None (1%)	2 periods-standard numbers required (39%)	Less than 5 periods (42%)	More than 5 periods (19%)	N/A
When do you often have observation discussions?	Only before the observation (0%)	After the observation (58%)	Before and after the observation (42%)	No discussion or comment (0%)	N/A
Who usually give comments and evaluation for the observation?	The School Administrators (1%)	Head of Department (5%)	Teachers in Department (21%)	All 3 above (73%)	Others (0%)
What is the general tone of language used when commenting?	Positive, constructive (96%)	Positive but not so constructive (2%)	Negative but constructive (3%)	Negative, not constructive (0%)	N/A
What is the main focus for evaluating in-class observation?	Teacher's activities (2%)	Students' activities (14%)	Teacher and students' activities (83%)	Others (1%)	N/A
How do you feel about the comments received after the class observation?	Satisfied (81%)	Normal (19%)	Not satisfied (0%)	N/A	N/A
Do you think the observations are useful for the quality of teaching?	Very useful (50%)	partly useful (50%)	Not useful (0%)	N/A	N/A
Whom do you think you have learned the most from after the class observation?	Mostly from new teachers (1%)	Mostly from experienced teachers (8%)	From all teachers (90%)	Others (2%)	N/A

Findings from Items 1, 2 and 3 indicate that most teachers have their class observation scheduled by school administrators. In contrast, the percentage of teachers who volunteered

to be observed occupies a minor percentage of 14% and the number of periods they have their class observed generally matches or is even less than the minimum required number of the local authorities (supposed to have 2 lessons per term). Most respondents were also observers (69%) compared to being observed ones (31%). This data implies that class observation in the school context is carried out as administrative tasks, which teachers are asked to do. The number of observed lessons is not high, according to OECD (2013), which emphasized the need for annual 3-8 formal and informal teacher visits.

In the finding of Item 4, 58% of respondents had pre-observation and post-observation discussions and 42% for post-observation discussions, while no respondents had discussions before observation.

Responses from Items 5,6,7,8 indicated most of the observation focused on both teacher's and students' activities with 83%, and the comments or feedback received mainly came from all observers involved (73%). The tone of language used as perceived by teachers is mainly constructive and positive. The high rate of satisfaction with comments received as claimed by Tawalbeh (2020): "classroom's instructors are generally satisfied with the supervisors' classroom observation practices" because "feedback provides quality input for the continuous improvement and provides opportunities to share ideas and expertise" (Sheilla, 2020).

It also correlates with what Whitlock and Rumpus (2004) indicated "the observation feedback that is given should be both positive and supportive to help the observed teacher reflect on their teaching". Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers satisfy with constructive and positive feedback means that observers should provide "as objective a view of the teaching session as possible, and review and reflect on that experience with the observed ones in a way that informs future thinking and practices". (Hammersley and Orsmond, 2005). Observers should "try to step back and observe again with an almost "empty mind"- that is empty of his or her prejudgments. They should focus on specific student's activities while holding back the tendency to problem solve how he or she would deal with such behaviours " (Joyce *et al.*, 1983). Similarly, as reflected in Good (1988), "a major goal of classroom observation is preparing beginning teachers, improving their teaching continuously and seeing the various interpersonal interactions. It also proves that it is necessary to avoid misinterpretation. Observers need training to record data objectively and give feedback constructively (Masoumeh, 2012).

The last two items resulted in teachers' perception of the benefits of class observation and their teaching and whom they learn most from classroom observation. Results revealed that no teachers found class observation useless to their teaching, and they can learn from all other teachers with class observation. More respondents said they learn more from experienced teachers than new teachers. This means "observation is an opportunity to observe experienced teachers" and "the teachers learned much about how to teach by observing their qualified peers, and the experiences helped them improve their self-awareness and become a more reflective teacher" (Masoumeh, 2012). Teachers are well aware that "the observers are not evaluators or intruders who come to assess how well a teacher teaches, but peers who come to learn from classroom events or to help make that specific classroom a better place", (Reed and Bergemann, 2001). The data in table one paralleled the finding in (Sheilla, 2020), which revealed that classroom observation encourages

teachers to reflect and develop self-awareness about their practice and provides evidence of actual teacher performance, strengths, and areas of improvement. At the same time, Cohen *et al.* (2000) and Wajnryb (1992) stated that the underlying assumption is that observation is a powerful tool which gives participants opportunities to gather data and gain insights into the classroom.

A teacher, whether in the observer or being observed positions, has positive responses to observation and understands it is “usually part of the supervision process” and, at the same time, is the” basis for professional development”, according to Marshall (2009) and Gordove (2002).

While teachers comprehended the importance of class visits and developing a proper observation plan in the school context, it is also essential to explore their expectations and needs towards the observation process.

The second survey explored teachers’ preferences on how to implement class observation.

**Table 2. Teachers’ preferences on elements of carrying out the observation process**

Items	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5
In your opinion, time of class observation should be scheduled as:	a plan of the school board (21%)	an active plan of teachers (77%)	Others (2%)	N/A	N/A
In your opinion, the primary purpose of classroom observation should be?)	To receive constructive feedback for the areas of weakness (96.8% agreement)	To illustrate/ share good ideas with colleagues (93.7%)	To prepare for teaching contests (68.4%)	To be part of the internal inspection of the school board/subject departments (67.4%)	To access the quality of teaching and learning (73.7%)
When you get observed which items would you like to be able to choose the most?	Time for classroom observation (52.6%)	Lesson content (34.7%)	Purpose of classroom observation (32.6%)	Observers (23.2 %)	N/A
In your opinion, in which way should we implement the classroom observation process	A teacher prepares the lesson and the subject department attend and give comments (from one side) (70.5% rate 3-5)	Teachers make the lesson plan and illustrate the teaching altogether. (both sides) (90.5% rate 3-5)	All teachers in the department make the lesson plan, and one nominated teacher demonstrates it. (in a group) (93.7% rate 3-5)	N/A	N/A
What form of evaluation do you opt for after being observed?	Overall evaluation, general overview (40%)	Following the criteria set beforehand (60%)	N/A	N/A	N/A
In what form do you want to conduct the observed lesson content?	Only teach part of the lesson related to evaluation criteria (45%)	Teach the whole lesson (65%)	N/A	N/A	N/A

How would you like to change the way to give feedback and suggestions?	Remain giving the public direct feedback (6.3%)	Indirectly give feedback via tools (26.3%)	Students give feedback (29.5%)	Both direct and indirect ways (28.4%)	N/A
Who are the observers that you welcome the most in your class?	All teachers in the subject department (55.8%)	Only Head of department (18.9%)	Teachers whom you want to collaborate with (35.8%)	The school board (31.6%)	N/A
In your opinion, the activities in an observed class should be prepared by	The teacher on duty (32%)	All teachers in the department (7%)	In peer or in group (61%)	N/A	N/A
What do you think about the value gained from the classroom observation?	To evaluate and improve the quality of teaching activities (98% rate 3-5)	To serve as evidences for developing the school plans (94.7% rate 3-5)	To enhance teacher's collaboration and cooperation (95.8% rate 3-5 50.5% rate 5)	To provide teachers with the opportunity to share and solve the difficulties (97.8% rate 3-5 51.6 % rate 5)	To provide teachers with the opportunity to spread and exchange good tips (95.8% rate 3-5 56.8% rate 5)

Overall, data from table 2 revealed that informal or peer observation is more favorable for development and collaboration.

In item 1, 77% of respondents chose to actively schedule the observation rather than have a date of observation scheduled by the school administrators.

Finding from items 2 of table 2 showed a positive teacher response when asked about the primary purposes of classroom observations. More than half of 60% of respondents recognized the significance of classroom observation for teachers and schools. There is also a clear difference in which majority of teachers believed that observation should be a professional development tool rather than a disciplinary tool which is relevant to what William (1989) claimed that “classroom observations should be developmental rather than judgmental in the sense that they offer opportunities for teachers to improve their awareness, abilities to interact and evaluate their own teaching behaviour”, thus if “it is with the aim of professional development, this would empower teachers to reflect on their own teaching and identify pedagogical needs and initiate innovation for the benefit of the learners” (Sheilla, 2020). Similarly, in his study Ha (2004) concluded that “classroom observations can be professionally beneficial and enjoyable if they are clearly aimed, comprehensively prepared, and well procedured, with chances for feedback and reflection”. It serves as a guide for them to assess their performance and plan for improvement, thus enhancement of teachers’ preparation and competency is evident (Sheilla, 2020).

Among the choices in terms of time, purpose and focus of the observation and observers, teachers want to be active in schedule with more than 50% respondents. There is some recommendation for developing a departmental policy regarding where the date of class observation should be known in advance (Halim *et al.*, 2018). If teachers can not actively choose the schedule, the observation date should be given prior notice.

Response from Item 4 revealed that teachers preferred peer observation practice to preparing independently. The highest rate goes to 93.7% of respondents who chose observation as a demo lesson performed by a representative after a whole group discussion. This also aligns with what Ruth (2003) (cited by AL-Balushi and Mat Saad, 2021) believed is necessary to nominate a qualified person who can conduct the monitoring process professionally and according to Ha (2004) a teacher can learn from observing their qualified peer and at the same time they can learn more how they really teach by being observed by their peers. Generally, more than 90% chose to have both sides- in group preparation compared to 70.5%, and the figures also implied that teachers are willing to prepare for observation but collaboration when implementing is their favourite form. The result is also relevant to their choice in item 9 of table 2, as most teachers believed that teachers should involve observation in peers or groups. This parallels what (Katal et.al., 2022) emphasized in their study “peer observation enabled peers to promote the sharing of excellent practices while also raising understanding of the effect of their own teaching” apart from that “, peer observation led to cooperative relationships among colleagues. When done correctly, peer observation allows teachers to grow in ways that result in better levels of academics. Peer observation allowed effective professional development, thereby contributing to collaboration that resulted in more effective and improved classroom instruction. Peer review of teaching allows academic staff to focus on and strengthen their teaching methods and foster a positive relationship among colleagues. Peer observation refers to faculties watching and learning about one another’s experiences. It aims to encourage the exchange of best practices and raise awareness of your own teaching’s influence. Similarly, Keig (2000) believed that “colleagues who respect and trust each other can be invaluable in helping improve each other’s teaching. In addition, according to OECD (2013), encourage sharing and collaboration among teachers is one of proven ways to foster teachers’ wellbeing and teacher autonomy because teachers using collaborative practices tend to be more innovative in the classroom with stronger self-efficacy beliefs and higher job satisfaction”. Moreover,” one way of getting formative and supportive emphasis on feedback is to let the observed teachers decide who would observe them and what aspects of their teaching their peers should observe, receive feedback, and follow up”. Additionally, Items 5,6 indicated that teachers preferred to receive the evaluation based on the lesson’s focus. At the same time, they still finished the whole lesson instead of part of the lesson. The rate is well balanced with 40-60% stated that teachers do not bother by the process. These figures illustrated that “observation can be more global or more focused and observation sheet can provide meaningful task and offer an opportunity to collect focused data for reflection on the area of concern (Wajnryb, 1992).

Results from Item 7 table 2 refers to feedback, whether direct or indirect did not matter to them, but some remarkable teachers would like to have more feedback from students, with 29.5 %- the highest response rate. As discussed by Ha (2014), students are the most frequent observers because they compare different teachers’ performance and methods. Feedback from students, especially from adult learners who are trained and encouraged enough, might be surprisingly useful feedback.

In item 8, when asked about which type of observers they may choose, there is minor variation among the choice. However, over 50% opted for having all department teachers participate. A reasonably high percentage (35.8%) of respondents want to collaborate with the peer observer-

their own mentor rather than an authoritative observer. The difference between the aforementioned choice aligns with the fact that multiple views and balance are more important than individual evaluators (Halim *et al.*, 2018). Because an individual class may not be representative, a single class cannot capture a broad range of teaching skills. Also, it is preferable for some teachers to have more than one observer during the class visit. It may be due to their desire to reduce the observer's bias, as Kinder *et al.* (2008) argue that "a single teacher visit is insufficient and does not reflect the level of the performance". This vision is also in line with the suggestion "to avoid bias evaluation, it is required that 2 or 3 observers may be appropriate for observing the same class or similar classes, not individual evaluators, especially those not skilled at observation" and "multiple views and balance is important as teachers-observers bring bias evaluation, tends to favor teachers with styles similar to their own" (Halim *et al.*, 2018).

The last item in table 2, teachers were asked to score from 1-5 the values gained from the class observation. Most teachers agreed on the significance, of which more than 50% rated 5 scores for the values gained from observation as a collaboration task and professional development tool. This figure reflected that observations are most effective when approached as collaboration means in order to benefit all involved. For the one being observed, an "observation can provide helpful feedback that might not be revealed by another assessment method" (Masoumeh, 2012).

The choices of an informal form of observation or peer observation follow the findings of (Katal *et al.*, 2022), as it is possible to conclude that peer observation improves the overall teaching experience. Furthermore, a suggestion from Chrism (2007) is that if the "observed teacher and the observer be trusted and respected by each other", the observation is more effective, and the communication between them is fostered. Overall, these results suggest that a shift towards a more collaborative and informal approach to classroom observation might be beneficial in school context as there is the high number of teachers rating collaboration and professional development as the most valuable aspects of observation. The findings suggest teachers find it most beneficial when observation being conducted collaboratively.

## CONCLUSION

This research indicates that teachers had positive responses to classroom visits and are aware of the importance of classroom observation to their own teaching and the school. Based on what teachers perceived, classroom observations can be a practical tool for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and to develop their teaching quality. Although teachers were aware of the importance of classroom observation, there is a big gap between formal and informal class observation. Most of the teachers showed a high rate of agreement on its contribution as a professional development tool; the majority of them still perform it as a compulsory duty or administrative task, and the number of the period for actual professional development occupied a minor percentage. Thus, the school administrators and leaders should balance the assessment, evaluation purpose and development purposes and extend to more informal or collaborative observation among teachers. Also, most teachers opt for preparing in a group or peer and a lesson performed by a nominated one in the form of a shared task means that teachers prefer to access class observation as a professional development tool to a disciplinary tool. This also suggests that

a form of professional development forum in a department where a nominated teacher can carry out the in-class procedures prepared by the group and others play the role of a self-corrective, a reflective reviewer should be encouraged more in the school context. This also helps to improve both teaching performance and observational analytical skills. Also, a task performed by peers effectively enhances collaboration and reduces negative connotations of classroom observation. Teachers can learn more from observing others and exchanging ideas with each other without being scared of being judged or performing the task as a compulsory duty. The benefit of informal or collaborative observations extends to all teachers: experienced ones have a chance to update their teaching techniques and for new teachers to improve their in-class performance.

There is no single approach for an effective and practical observation process; what teachers responded reveals that teachers should play a more active role in planning the observation process. As teachers understand the reality of teaching and what their learners need, they should have more chances to be active in planning observation practices and to express their needs and perception. Regarding scheduling, content to teach, and whom they want to collaborate with, the area of focus when observing should be based on teachers' opinions and some modifications to suit both the school objectives and teachers' needs are highly recommended.

Also, based on the results of the surveys, more proper and intensive training on observation practices is necessary. Schools should train teachers across departments on how to implement the process of classroom observation appropriately and should have more pre-observation and post-observation discussions for teachers to have more chances to share their ideas and opinions before and after being observed. Teachers should be prepared to discuss with the observer about the lesson aims, the plan to carry all steps in the lesson, what he or she plans to do in class that day and share their thoughts on what went well, and what they need to improve. The discussion before and after is essential for teachers and observers, and the teachers' role will be more active. Discussion before and after observation can offer mutual benefit because observers can learn something from teachers they observe. There is no pre and post-observation discussion; the evaluation process is incomplete. Moreover, the feedback should be constructive and positive to have adequate feedback. Giving them indirect or direct feedback does not matter, but the finding suggests that students should contribute their part in evaluating lessons. Thus, a quick survey after the lesson to all students can be a good reflection tool for both teachers and observers.

Informal and formal observation benefits both teachers and the school. Teachers should be well-trained to be an observer, observee, and, most importantly, a reviewer. Schools should plan a training program and prepare a reviewer. Training or norming reviewers is essential to ensure that all reviewers understand what they should focus on and what information or areas of development they need to review. A fully and effectively implemented classroom observation process depends not only on qualified and well-trained observers but also on active observee who has their voice heard and respected. Both have to be good reviewer-well trained reviewers. The gap between observer and observee is narrowing down in today context. Therefore, results gained not only come from the lesson delivery techniques and areas of improvement but also the well-being of teachers who are observed.

To retain classroom observation as an authoritative tool at school, school leaders and administrators should have systematic records of classroom observation and the combined number of classes observed to avoid misinterpretation and biased evaluation. Results revealed that teachers prefer having more than one observer in classes, no matter who they are. Therefore, to observe and gain data for assessment purposes, at least 2-3 observers is recommended, and more than one class visit is for combined and systematic data. The time can range in different periods, which aims to record teachers' progress to reduce any potential effect that may affect the actual performance of teachers on duty. Similarly, systematic records from peer observation data can provide a good source of evidence for school leaders and administrators to evaluate teachers' performance and collaboration among peers and their progress and reviewing skills.

Although this study was conducted in a particular school context (a bilingual school in Hanoi, Vietnam), based on their positive responses, it can be concluded that planning and carrying out classroom observation in the school context is reasonably practical. This can prove that desirable results can be achieved shortly with some modifications and a more effectively exploited plan the school should implement. Also, it is not overestimated that teachers working in a multicultural environment can have more chances to narrow down the international best practice and school context. Therefore, additional investigation on peer observation or either form of informal class observation as a professional development tool should involve a more significant number of participants and far more focus organizations to acquire a wider diversity of viewpoints or comparison with existing observation practices in other public schools is strongly suggested.

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