

Exploring Female Teachers' Perceptions towards Teacher Observation: Issues and Challenges in the Arab Context

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Abstract

The present study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions towards class observations and their challenges. Teachers' observation was clearly recognized by educational researchers' views such as Sheal (1999) and Lawson (2011), who argue that observations can provide beneficial feedback to teachers, and can generally improve the overall effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. So, the purpose of the study is to identify teachers' point of views about class observations, the challenges that they face and the suggestions they advise to improve. More specifically, this investigation was carried out in an attempt to promote both professional of teacher development. Eighty teachers were selected randomly from all women's campuses of the English Language Institute of an Arab university. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire based on two parts. The first part comprises 5 point Likert-scale items and the second part includes open ended questions. Data analysis was presented in terms of frequency, percentage, and interpretations of the open-ended questions. Findings revealed that teachers agree and strongly agree with the fundamental role of class observation as a way to learning and gradual improvement in teaching. The participants also highlighted the importance of observers' pre and post observations mainly their positive feedback in motivating them to improve the teaching practices. Besides, the majority of teachers viewed that class observation is not the only form of professional development but they are in need of training and workshops.

Keywords: Teachers' observation, professional and teacher development.

1. Introduction:

This paper explores EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher observation and its challenges in an English Language Institute, King Abdul Aziz University. Teacher observation has always been a controversial issue. On one hand, it is perceived as evaluation of teacher performance and on the other hand, it is seen as a factor in the process of teacher development (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). However, though observation is aimed at teacher evaluation, it should be focused at reinforcing teaching and learning (Harris, 1986).

1.2. Arab Context

The English Language Institute is situated in King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In order to abide the CEA (Commission on English Language Accreditation) accreditation standards, teacher performance and the quality of teaching are major priorities to be considered to meet the needs of foundation year students. Thus, teacher observation is an important factor in ensuring that teachers are improving their performance in the classroom. Initially, teacher observation has been undertaken by academic coordinators to ensure faculty members are performing their ultimate best in meeting the students' needs. Eventually, an observation committee is formed (where qualified observers are trained by Oxford University Press trainers) to observe faculty members. The observers are holders of master and doctorate degrees and have had a sufficient experience in teaching.

The observation criteria form that is currently used in the English Language Institute includes criteria based on: planning and preparation, classroom environment, lesson delivery and language proficiency. The score range from 1 to 5 (from unsatisfactory to outstanding). Teacher observation is taken as a form of evaluation which is a part of faculty annual performance rating for every faculty member. The main purpose of teacher observation is to ensure that teachers are progressing and are updated with the latest trends in teaching methodology. Thus teachers make an effort to attend in house training and excel themselves by attending local and international seminars, conferences and also be updated in the EFL field.

The observation procedure takes place with a pre-observation meeting between the observer and the teachers. Next the observation was arranged with two observers coming into the classroom. Next a post observation meeting would be arranged to discuss the overall score for the teacher and a development plan would take place if the teacher scores less than a 3. Those teachers who score 3.5, 4, 4.5 or 5 meet the criteria of competent teachers.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The rationale behind this study is to get a deeper perspective of how teachers think about observation and their comprehension of the process of observation and its importance in relation to teacher development. Being the head of this committee has put me in many challenging situations. As observation is a sensitive matter, the researcher wanted to investigate the teachers' perceptions regarding observation and its complete process in our institute. Diversified issues hinder the effectiveness of teacher observation as a useful tool in teacher development. Such issues are the negative attitudes towards teacher observation. More specifically, teachers are found to be unsatisfied with their given scores. Accordingly, they view teacher's observation as generally evaluative rather than developmental. It is therefore of relevance for this study to investigate these issues.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Observation

In order to run any institution successfully, competent teachers are a core component. In the process of getting accreditation, one of the main core standards of CEA (Commission on English Language Accreditation) body is to have qualified faculty and in relation to our mission statement:

The Mission of the English Language Institute (ELI) is to provide intensive instruction of English as a foreign language, delivered by qualified instructors using an internationally-oriented curriculum, to Foundation Year students in order to enhance their English language skills and facilitate their academic progress.

Thus, teachers have to be continuously trained and seeking professional development to be source of expertise and also major facilitators of knowledge for students.

Teacher observation has taken a more serious stand where recorded detailed documentation takes place which necessitates including pre-observation and post-observation meetings rather than only a walk-in observation.

Literature about teacher observation has acknowledged its fundamental role in enhancing the quality of teaching performance for the welfare of students' success. For any school or higher education institution, teacher quality is of prime significance (Stronge & Tucker, 2003). Teacher observation has been a controversial issue as means of evaluation and professional development (Sheal, 1989; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Thus, any form of teacher evaluation could help in reinforcing teaching innovation and learning for teachers (Harris, 1986). Malderez (2003) points out that observation is commonly used in education as a tool to support development. He highlights four types of observation: observation for development; observation for training; observation for evaluation and observation for research. Classroom observation has been a key method in training both pre-service and in-service teachers and in providing feedback about classroom performance. It is thus an incentive in both Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and teacher assessment (Lawson, 2011).

Freeman (1982) asserts the different approaches to observation such as Supervisory Approach/ the Alternatives Approach, and the Non-directive approach. In the Supervisory Approach, the observer is usually the supervisor or administrator who visits the class and communicates with the teacher post observation. The observer gives an overall feedback of the lesson and teacher's performance. There may be a power relationship between the supervisor and the teacher being observed where the supervisor holds a superior role. If the observer lacks experience she may not abide by the evaluative standards. In the Alternative Approach, where the emphasis is on the observer's role, is to suggest multiple alternatives to what he or she has perceived in the classroom.

Next, the observer manifests challenges in a non evaluative way. To this end, the observer hopes to motivate the teacher to think critically. Thus, the relationship between the observer and the teacher being observed is one of equality which prevents the power relationship as mentioned in the Supervisory Approach. In the Non-Directive Approach, experience of the teacher is the ultimate focus where the teacher reflects upon her progress as an instructor. This may imply recognizing and understanding their own personal growth cited in Carl Roger's (1961) work. In the view of the critics mentioned, teacher observation may be taken into several directions as evaluative, learning and developmental on behalf of the teacher.

Teacher observation may vary from school and university. Observers may be teachers, peers, or administrators. To this point, Sheal (1989) perceives “observations...to be seen as judgmental, and one more aspect of administrator power.” p. 93. Furthermore, she claims, observations are often unsystematic or subjective, because “administrators and teachers generally have not been trained in observation or the use of systematic, observation tools.” Consequently, they tend to use themselves as a standard, and they observe impressionistically because observation is used for evaluation, teachers primarily consider observation as a threat. This may lead to tension in the classroom, and simultaneously between teacher and observer at any stage of the observation process such as the pre-observation and post observation meeting. Finally, conferences focus on the teacher’s behavior rather than developing the teacher’s skills. “Observers’ feedback are often subjective, impressionistic, and evaluative, teachers tend to react in defensive ways” whereas useful feedback is not heard (Sheal, 1989, 93).

Burton (1987) cited in Bailey (2006) argues that “observation as a means of staff development must be kept separate from administrative supervisory requirements” (1987: 164). Bailey (2006) notes a fundamental part of language teacher supervision is observing lessons. Supervisors observe language lessons for various reasons, including seeing how well the curriculum is coordinated, monitoring students’ difficulties. It is necessary to observe teachers and evaluate their performances at times. Supervisors can have access to portfolios, review teacher’s diary that promote teacher development. Hence, the developmental purpose of observation that aims at benefiting teachers as well as improving the quality of evaluation. In this respect, Cosh (1999) encourages the notion of observation as developmental rather than evaluative. She links it with the concept of reflective practice where teachers are given opportunities at continuous stages to reflect upon their teaching by recognizing their weaknesses and improving them.

Wang and Seth (1998) point out that teacher observation has its share of problems pertaining to teacher observation as mentioned as a discouraging experience and feeling of resentment among Chinese teachers. They wanted to transform the idea of classroom observation and to encourage it as a source of improvement of quality teaching. The overall aim of using the approach was to help teachers adopt a developmental attitude towards classroom observation by providing opportunities for self-development. In the self-development approach, teachers were given autonomy to make decisions pertaining to observers, time and discussions feedback. Teachers were put on a positive stance with a learning process where collaborative learning opportunity takes place where teachers and observers learn from each other. The support of administrators and the cooperation of teachers are essentially relevant in supporting teacher observation. Sheal (1999) points out that classroom observation has traditionally been conducted by administrators and senior teachers mainly for the purpose of teacher evaluation. Additionally, he notes that educational researchers argue that observations can provide beneficial feedback to teachers, and can generally improve the overall effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. There is also the Walk-through observations which has been defined as a brief, informal observation where no evaluation takes place but a kind of support to obtain knowledge of teaching practice of the teacher (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004). Harding (2014) emphasizes that teacher observation needs to be a main concern not only for teachers but also for managers, students, and quality control inspectors. In the same vein, he points out that the core focus of observation is not only to enhance teaching but also to ensure effective internal

and external monitoring in terms of standards of accreditation and quality assurance, which in turn, would meet students' needs and improve administrative procedures. Accordingly, observation is recognized as a problem solving aspect in the educational setting as well as in the workplace

2.2 Teacher Development

Wichadee (2011) notes that teacher observation as a one way of promoting professional and teacher development. Professional development usually aims at promoting training and career development while teacher development is more focused on inward growth of an expert where one becomes confident and experienced in one's profession and teaching journey (Underhill, 1986). Williams (1989) claims that classroom observations often cause problems for teachers and trainers. They tend to be judgmental, relying on trainers subjective judgments rather than developmental, developing the teacher's ability to assess his or her own practices. Classroom observations generally form a part of any teacher training program whether initial training or in-service training. She argues that classroom observations always present problems for the teachers and trainers, and generally cause considerable stress to teacher, teachers should be given an opportunity to develop their own decisions, and enhance their ability to self-evaluate their teaching practices. Williams (1989) states that the teacher classroom visits should be developmental rather than judgmental. This classroom observation will involve visits, and lastly answering the self-evaluation questionnaire. The purpose of the visit will be developmental, and focused to the teacher's needs which may enhance a sense of responsibility, future development, positivity, and finally flexibility among teachers.

They further signify that teacher's preferences were not taken into consideration but now they are (Akbari, Samar, and Tajik, 2013). Teacher supervisors in the past were authoritarian and directive. She advocates that teachers must be given voice to experience wishes and concerns. Wang and Seth (1998) note the power relationship between observers and teachers. By giving opportunities for teachers to decide what they would like throughout the observation process will enhance the process of observation. More importantly, Lam (2001) did research by inquiring teachers' preferences and concluded that respecting their perception of practice including teacher development and peer observation in teacher observation practices would result in greater improvements.

Scrivener (2011) advocates the importance of observation as a learning experience for the teacher. He highlights the importance of getting feedback from another person's perspective since we tend to not realize some aspects of our teaching unless someone else observes it. He claims that all kinds of observation can lead to useful learning. He points that observation may be classified into training, developmental and assessment. Training is to be considered as a part of a training program to help trainers identify a teacher's current level of skills and needs. The teacher is being observed and assessed as part of a program or syllabus to achieve a certain set of specified goals. Developmental suggests the teacher herself identifies what areas would be most useful to receive a feedback on. Assessment takes place in a form of criteria where assessment manifests against criteria of quality through internal and external inspection. Furthermore, Learning during classroom observation plays an important role in practice teaching (Richards and Farrell, 2011).

In order for classroom observation to occur successfully, there are few suggestions to be taken into account as Waxman (2013) contends. Firstly, observers need to be trained ones by attending training sessions. Secondly, observation is used in teacher development projects with the aim to improve classroom instruction in order to gain comprehension and improved models for innovating instruction. Thirdly, teachers can improve their classroom instruction given appropriate feedback and suggestions for enhancement, and it would be a guide for teachers where colleagues could reflect about their practices on their own. Finally, self-awareness is developed where teachers can modify their areas of weaknesses. Sheal (1989) further implies that training staff be aware of the observation process: pre and post observations, the importance of observation, procedure, and examples with the use of videos to allow them to be familiar with the observation process, so as not to be threatened by it. Furthermore, he argues that supervisors need to be comfortable with being observed as well. Another positive incentive for teacher observation to take place successfully is peer observation. According to Grosling (2002), peer observation encompasses a shared understanding and mutual willingness aiming to use the observation as a process to learn about teaching. Ali (2012) highlights the benefits of peer observation as a source of an empowering professional development for teachers where knowledge is shared among colleagues. Harding (2014) encourages peer observation as a method of cross-training that widens and strengthens the experience of the teacher. He agrees that teacher observation represents a major factor in the individual's development and he also acknowledges that student's feedback, blind and self observation are fundamental incentives for improvement in teaching. Blind observation implies pretending there is an observer providing feedback but actually the observer is not present, thus encouraging the teacher to observe her or himself to improve her/his teaching practice. Similarly, he recognizes the importance of creating a cultural aspect for the observation where sharing ideas and attitudes takes place among managers, and administrative staff who were being observed by each other.

3. Methodology

3.1. Setting

The present study is carried out in King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU). Within the Arabic context, KAU is highly interested in fulfilling continuing professional development of its teachers in order to design relevant and authentic curriculum and achieve success and professionalism in its teachers as well as students.

3.2. Participants

The participants include 80 female teachers of English Language, but only 50 who responded to the questionnaire. The study is based on female teachers only because in the Saudian context, male and female teachers teach in separate campuses. The participants are not only new teachers but also those who have few experiences in teaching.

3.3. Purpose and justification of the study

The present study investigated the concept of class observation from the observers' perspectives, pointing out to the challenges they face and the suggestions that teachers recommend. Hence, the research questions guiding the study are the following:

- 1. How do EFL teachers perceive teacher observation?*
- 2. What are the challenges that EFL teachers face in teacher observation?*
- 3. What implications do teachers suggest for teacher observation?*

The rationale behind choosing this issue is the importance of teacher observation in improving teaching practices as well as students' performance

3.4. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed at eliciting teachers' perceptions of the class observation and the challenges they face. This research instrument is divided into three main parts according to the purposes of the research questions mentioned in the review of the literature. Therefore, the first part of the questionnaire aims at exploring the teacher's attitudes towards teacher observation. This part is composed of 9 items of a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strong agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The purpose of the second part is to figure out the challenges that teachers face in teacher observation. This part includes 8 items under the same scale of measurement. Then the questionnaire ends with an open-ended question from which one can elicit sufficient information and suggestions from teachers about the ways to improve classroom observation.

3.5. Data Analysis procedure

In the present study, the data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Since the sample is limited, the quantitative phase was done manually. At first, the teachers' perceptions were calculated in percentages then presented graphically. Secondly, delineating the variation among teachers' responses to their perceptions as well as the challenges that they face in class observation constitutes the qualitative analysis. Besides, another part of the qualitative analysis includes analyzing the suggestions that teachers recommend for improving teachers' observation. The results yielded by the questionnaire and data analysis outlined above are reported and discussed in the following section.

4. Results and Discussion

The variation in teachers' responses towards class observation items were studied in considerable detail from a pedagogical and psycholinguistic point of view. In this respect, teachers' perceptions towards class observation were analyzed in relation to its role in education and the challenges that teachers face during such a process.

4.1. Teachers' observation in relation to learning and professional development

In the questionnaire, there were 9 items designed to elicit the teachers' perceptions towards the concept of class observation. Figure 4.1 represents the responses' degree of agreement for the items.

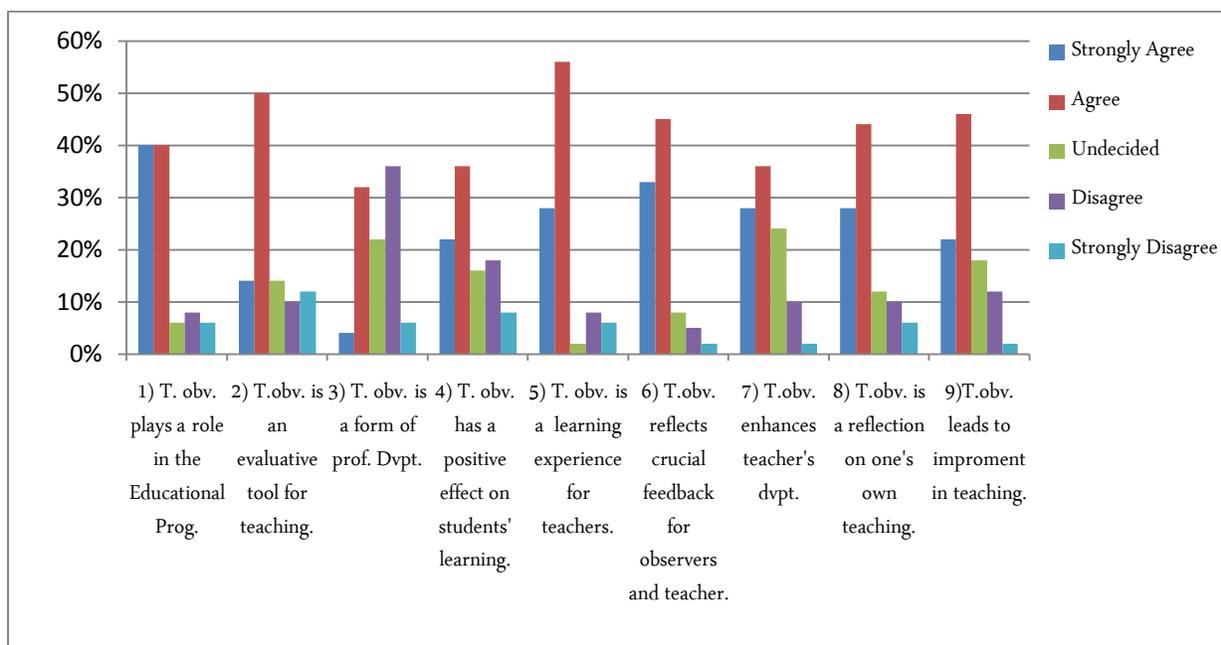


Figure 4.1 Items of teachers' observation (T.obv.) in relation to education and learning

Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of teachers agreed and strongly agreed with statements 1, 2, 4 and 6. About 55% of the teachers emphasized the relationship between teachers' observation and its role in education and learning. The participants reported that teachers' observation provides contrastive feedback to teachers, allows them to improve their teaching practices, which in turn enhances the educational program. For instance, teachers' observation is considered a chance for new teachers to get support from experienced and expertise colleagues. Accordingly, the observer and the one being observed will together process the activity, figure out the most difficulties in the task and suggest solutions to improve the teaching approach and skills for students. Accordingly, teachers' observation strengths the learning efficiency within the teachers being observed as well as students. Hence, Observation is an important part of learning how to teach. Much of what beginner teachers need to be aware of cannot be learned solely in the university class. Therefore classroom observation presents an opportunity to see real-life teachers in real-life teaching situations. In their reflections, many colleagues mention their observations and how these observations influence the way they plan and teach.

Concerning the relationship between teachers' observation and professional development, the present study presented interesting findings related to statements 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9. About 45% of teachers agree with the statement 'Teachers' observation is a reflection on one's own teaching' pointing out that it is an opportunity for self-analysis in teaching. Through reflection, teachers become empowered and gain an awareness of their teaching competence and performance. Consequently, such a reflection on one's own approach of teaching with its strengths and weaknesses leads to gradual improvement to professional teaching. Nevertheless, what is surprising is the subjects' disagreement and indecision about statements 3 and 7. This may be explained by the fact that teachers believed that they are other different forms of professional development in addition to teachers' observation for examples trainings, workshops,

seminars, conferences and webinars. They reported that attending course trainings and workshop played a crucial role in enhancing one's teaching and become a professional in such a field rather than just being observed. Moreover, there is a possibility that the respondents might be affected by the observers' evaluation about the limitations of their teaching performance, which may in turn affect their self-confidence instead of encouraging them for further development.

4.2. Challenges faced in teachers' observation

Turning to the responses to items about teachers' challenges faced in observation, agreement to statements 2, 6 and 8 are the most intriguing of the finding as presented in the following Figure 4.2, below

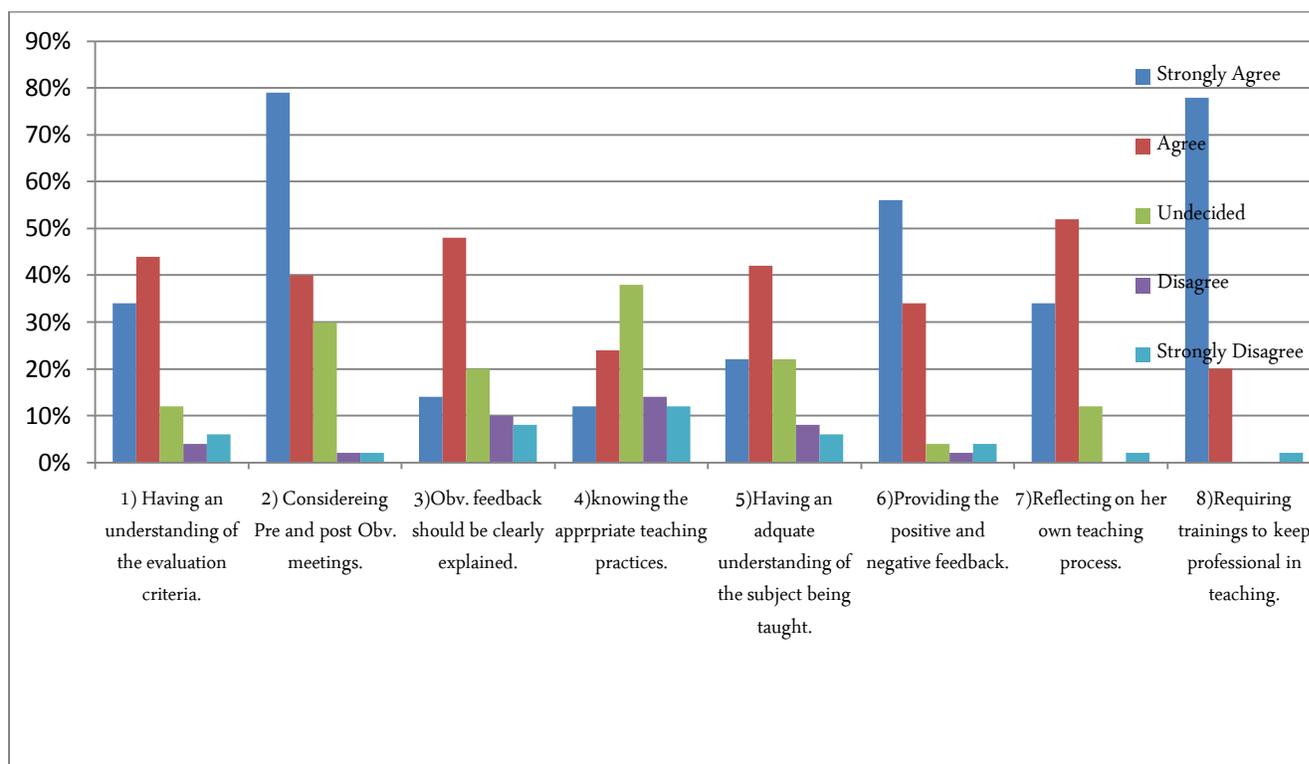


Figure 4.2 Items related to challenges faced in teachers' observation

About 75% of teachers agreed and strongly agreed on the importance of training in enhancing the teaching skills as well as the observers' feedback. This tendency to higher agreement levels can be explained by the fact that teachers view trainings and workshops are crucial in keeping them updated of the appropriate teaching methods and styles. They perceive that attending such meetings is beneficial as presentations and discussions between teachers would provide more clarifications about the teaching process, the investigated skills taking into consideration students' affective and psychological factors. Another biggest challenge that surfaces teachers is the fundamental role of the pre and post observation meetings. New teachers as well as observers agreed that such meetings are useful in evaluating the strengths and

weaknesses of the teaching practice of teachers and so working on solutions and improvement to be professional in teaching.

Another challenge that teachers should take into account in class observation is their awareness of the evaluation criteria. Almost all participants agree and strongly agree with the need to have a clear idea about the different criteria upon which their lesson plan is based. To be aware of objectives and the three main phrases of the lesson is highly important in designing a well-organized course. Such phrases constitute the warm-up activity, the procedure and the production phrases. Taking these basics into consideration presented a challenge to teachers as they need much practice on that with some feedback from colleagues in order to gradually improve in teaching and be creative in constructing motivating lessons to students.

Looking carefully at items 4 and 5, teachers seemed not only to agree but also to be undecided about the appropriate teaching practices and the adequate understanding of the subject being taught. Such variation can be explained by the fact that new teachers in particular face some difficulties when teaching subject-specific discipline as an example. Consequently they need suitable work-based activities or training to understand how to teach the specific discipline content and the appropriate teaching approach to be used according to the students' level.

4.3. Suggestions to improve teachers' observation

As mentioned previously, the majority of teachers reported the importance of observers' feedback in improving teaching. Therefore, from the open-ended question, about 50 % of teachers stress on the role of the observer. They suggest that the observers should have high standards of conduct and ethics such as patience and understanding. Besides, the participants contended that the observers should have an encouraging positive feedback rather than focusing on the mistakes only in an attempt to motivate the teachers to gradually develop and improve her teaching practice.

As another recommendation, approximately 20% of teachers suggested peer observation to be done before the formal evaluation. Through peer observation they will be able to learn from their colleagues especially those who are more trained and experienced before being formally observed. Peer observation and demo lessons would also help the teacher's learning culture. One teacher suggested that demonstration lessons by well-trained teachers may help support the teachers. It is necessary that there is equality between the observer and the observee, and cooperation to deal with the challenges of the classroom. Teacher's observation should be for the purpose of teacher development such as keeping a journal, self-observation, peer observation etc. Such views and ideas which have been previously highlighted in the literature are relevant for both professional and teacher development.

16% of teachers suggested that teacher observation occurs 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. The observation should be immediately followed by training and workshops that deal with the weakness of the teachers. Mentoring sessions should take place where teachers find ways to work on their weaknesses. Teacher and observer exchange roles which makes observation more successful which is a requirement of updated training and workshops.

About 10% of teachers suggested ways to improve the process of observation. One noted that the observation duration should be less than 50 minutes. They also suggested for more regular observations to take place and maximum time should be given to the teachers to prepare before the formal observation. Several observations should take place throughout the year which help the instructor develop in a safe, comfortable environment. Moreover, an emphasis on post observation meeting is necessary and an immediate feedback should be given. One suggested selecting a suitable time of the day for the observation. Teacher observation should be done in an informal set-up and new teachers, in particular, need attention. Other crucial factors should be taken into consideration as essential recommendations are the student's level, choice of time and the technical constraints.

Another recommendation suggested by some teachers concerns the "informal" peer observation. Such a type of informal observation between colleagues and via a voluntary participation of an expert allows transferring tools of instructional practices and ideas for novice teachers. They believed that such process would enable them to strengthen their self-confidence in teaching performance. It also increases the sense of collaboration and enhances trust through allowing colleagues to observe and comment upon each other teaching. Similarly, the informants recommended the integration of microteaching sessions that help trainee teachers to develop their teaching practices by teaching a small fraction of a lesson to their colleagues in presence of an experienced teacher or mentor and that should be included as part of the training.

Furthermore, the participants pointed out to the importance of a developmental progress tracking program for teachers. Such a program aims at measuring or observing self-improvement over time. This will be reinforced by follow-up observations to see how previous feedback had been incorporated. A form of follow-up includes the use of video to both observe one's own teaching and record the teaching of exemplary teachers so that one can compare, understand the procedures and improve her teaching methods.

In addition, teachers believed that institutional encouragement is highly essential in motivating teachers to develop professionally. They suggested the promotion of rewards for teaching excellence. Rewards offer opportunities and challenges for teachers to compete, to be creative and professional in their teaching. To illustrate, rewards increase teachers' involvement in various activities to which they typically give considerable time and care.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the findings

The present study focused on investigating teachers' perceptions towards class observation. First, teachers' observation was explored in relation to learning and professional development. Second, the study investigated the challenges that the teachers face in observation and the suggestions they recommend.

Upon closer examination of the data, majority of teachers realize the importance of teacher observation and perceive it is an evaluative tool in teaching. Almost half of the teachers perceive observation to be a fundamental concept on improving teaching. It is considered as a learning experience to teachers through which they benefited from the efficient feedback and learn a lot about the updated practices of teaching. In this respect, approximately all teachers perceive that

pre and post-observation meetings as relevant and that the observation feedback are sufficiently and clearly explained to the teacher.

Data have also revealed a relation between teachers' observation and professional development. Most teachers think that teacher observation enhances teacher development and also allows one to improve one's ability in teaching as well as reflecting on the teaching process. In a word, teachers' observation represents a key aspect for ensuring improvement in teaching. Such observation allows for positive feedback which in turn can provide reassurance, allay anxiety and increase the self-confidence of the one being observed. Also, the feedback of the pre and post observations enables the observer and the one being observed to self-evaluate their teaching skills and this leads to gradual improvement in teaching. Yet, some teachers viewed that teachers' observation is not the only form of professionalism. Rather, there are other various forms of professional development such as attending trainings and workshops, and even work-based learning activities when teaching discipline-specific students.

Furthermore, the study has also explored the challenges in observation and the suggestions to improve it. Concerning the challenges, majority of teachers argued that they should attend the pre and post observation meetings. New teachers as well as observers agreed that such meetings are useful in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching practice. Another biggest challenge that they faced is related to the course content and the appropriate teaching approach. Therefore, they believed that they need suitable work-based activities or trainings to understand how to teach the specific discipline content and the appropriate teaching approach to be used according to the students' level.

As regards teachers' suggestions to improve class observation, most teachers agree and strongly agree on the fact that observers should have an encouraging positive feedback rather than focusing on the mistakes only in an attempt to motivate them to gradually develop and improve their teaching practices. Also, they suggested that demonstration lessons by well-trained teachers in trainings and workshops courses would effectively help to pedagogically support teachers. They also recommended organizing peer observation meetings with colleagues with a voluntary help from an expert. That in turn would increase the sense of collaboration and enhance trust through allowing colleagues to observe and comment upon each other teaching. Teachers also suggested that the institutional financial recognition of good teaching let them strive to do a better job through trainings, attending conferences and seminars. Thus, rewarding forms as merit-based pay, scholarships and promotions would motivate teachers to work better for professionalism.

5.2. Limitations and contributions

In terms of research design, the data collected via a questionnaire yielded only a partial picture of the teachers' perceptions towards class observation. The use of varied instruments such class observations, role plays and interviews would have provided a more comprehensive and clear image about classroom observation process, teachers' perceptions and challenges.

A second area of concern that limits the strength of these findings relates to the representativeness of the sample. Clearly, the study was based on a fairly small sample presented female teachers only; consequently, it is difficult to generalize the findings. Another limitation concerns the limited accessibility to teachers which is due to the teaching duties and also for some of them to voice their views may still be a difficult experience.

In spite of these limitations, the present study contributed to exploring teachers' perceptions towards class observation, the challenges they face and the suggestions that they recommend. Thus, this small scale research is a step forward to propose positive changes for the welfare of teacher development and also to contribute additional knowledge pertaining teacher observation in the Arab context. Future research studies about teachers' observation taking into consideration other educational and affective variables such as teachers' educational level, teachers' specialty; teachers' personality traits would provide interesting findings. In the same way, further studies about teachers' perceptions in other different eastern and western contexts will probably offer new insights into the relationship between class observations and teaching practices.

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