



Teachers' Views on the Conduct of Class Observation: The Philippine DepEd Setting

Michelle V. Torres

Department of Education, Philippines, michelle.torres@deped.gov.ph

Adora P. Zerrudo

University of Southeastern Philippines, Philippines, adora.zerrudo@usep.edu.ph

Velma S. Labad

University of Southeastern Philippines, Philippines, velma.labad@usep.edu.ph

Bonifacio G. Gabales, Jr.

University of Southeastern Philippines, Philippines, bonifacio.gabales@usep.edu.ph

The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) reiterated the need to conduct class observations to help ensure the delivery of quality basic education to all learners. It developed the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) Manual for Teachers and School Heads, aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The manual provides school heads and other raters with a detailed reference to help understand the tools and the different phases of assessment within the various cycles of RPMS, ensuring that mechanisms are in place to support teacher performance (DepEd, 2018). It is on this premise that this study is conducted. Primarily, it aimed to ascertain the elementary teachers' views on the conduct of the class observations. Likewise, it also identified the factors necessary for the smooth conduct of the class observations. This study utilized the case study research design. It involved eighteen (18) elementary teacher participants and three (3) school principals, utilizing a purposive sampling design. The interview guide was used to gather the data, which was analyzed using the Collaizzi's method. The study found that the elementary teachers' views are characterized as systemic and observer expertise. The factors necessary for the smooth conduct of the class observations are: (1) observe honesty, confidentiality, and collegiality; (2) provide actionable feedback; and (3) support productive collaboration among teachers. Future researchers may duplicate this study on a national scale to validate the study's findings.

Keywords: class observation, instructional leadership, formative assessment, student learning, professional development, needs assessment

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Class observation, a supervision tool, aims to improve student learning but focuses on the teacher and the learning environment (Ogusaju, 2006). The three (3) distinct parts of supervision are curricular, administrative, and instructional (Okumbe, 1998). Instructional supervision can develop teachers professionally (Ari & Sipal, 2009). Its main objective is to support teachers in their professional development by encouraging them to reflect on their practices, learn more about what they do and why, and learn more about what works in schools (Kurka & Berhanu, 2019). The supervision source, the principal, and the teacher are all involved in the collaborative process (Zepeda, 2007).

Thus, it is equally important to understand the teachers' views in this academic exercise. Teachers' characteristics, such as their current teaching practices, understandings, and worldviews, could explain the differential views, as they have been shown to influence how teachers make sense of and respond to class observation methods as a form of formative assessment (Hill, 2001; Coburn, 2004). For instance, Rashid's (2001) research about teachers' views on supervisory practices in Riyadh schools revealed that class observation enhances teachers' performance and conducting class observation through the clinical supervision process improves teachers' and students' standing. However, Toch and Rothman (2008) state that teacher observation systems throughout public education are superficial and capricious and often need to address the quality of instruction, much less measure students' learning.

Research also suggests that class observation makes teachers feel stressed, uneasy, and anxious (Aubusson et al., 2007; Borich, 2008). The entire practice is viewed as monitoring and controlling (Metcalf, 1999). Li (2009) reported that teachers experience anxiety when observed because they notice observers exerting top-down authority and viewing class activities subjectively.

Despite these findings, the Philippine DepEd reiterated the need to continue conducting all ongoing class observations to help ensure the delivery of quality primary education to all learners. Conversely, the members of the Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) demanded that DepEd must stop the conduct of all ongoing class observations and demanded further "better working conditions" for teachers (Hernando-Malipot, 2018 September 25, Manila Bulletin); this suggests that class observation is not a "better working condition."

Correspondingly, Zaide's (2017) study concludes that formal classroom observations are delicate and can cause anxiety and instability in teaching. Nevertheless, the author argues that it will be advantageous for all parties if approached carefully and thoroughly, with a positive belief. The author suggests frequent guidance and assistance to novice observers to comprehend the different facets of classroom observation that are typically not immediately apparent. A senior observer in the same unit could do this with comparable experience. Moreover, Goodwin and Hubbell (2013) recommend a complete understanding of the observation process, which encompasses the observation team's shared objective of obtaining a precise observation record and

employing a well-defined knowledge of every component that constitutes the classroom observation procedure. Antonetti and Garver (2015) add that an observer must thoroughly understand and research the observation criteria during the observation process.

On September 22, 2018, the DepEd announced that it had developed the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) Manual for Teachers and School Heads. It is aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This manual provides school heads and other raters with a detailed reference to help understand the tools and the different phases of assessment within the various RPMS cycles, ensuring that mechanisms are in place to support teacher performance (DepEd, 2018).

This recent development motivated the researchers to investigate the teachers' views regarding class observation as incorporated in the RPMS. As participants, teachers can describe, from their perspective, how class observations are conducted, a perspective that is sometimes different from the observers' perspectives (Stecher et al., 2012; Donaldson et al., 2014). The need to consider the teachers' perspectives in this educational exercise arises from the growing body of research showing the significance of an effective teacher in enhancing student learning (Marzano & Toth, 2013; Ritter & Barnett, 2016). Additionally, class observation is seen as a "powerful lever of teacher and school improvement" (Toch & Rothman, 2008, p. 1). Teacher development is vital to comprehensive improvement in teacher effectiveness, and the success of teacher observation systems ultimately depends on those who implement them (Papay, 2012; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016b). Understanding the teachers' views on how they can become effective is crucial in adequately implementing the formative assessment, where class observation is universally practiced.

Research Problem

This study aimed to find answers to the following questions- (1) How do DepEd elementary teachers view class observation? (2) What factors do teacher participants consider necessary for practical class observation?

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is primarily viewed in the light of instructional leadership, defined as leadership focused on the "core business of teaching and learning" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 664). An instructional leader sets objectives, oversees the curriculum, and creates a positive learning environment (Hallinger et al., 1996). Principals should practice practical classroom observation and feedback (Blase & Blasé, 1999; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Research findings revealed that principals' leadership practices have a positive indirect effect on classroom instruction and student achievement via teachers' instructional practices (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Louis et al., 2010; Özdemir, 2019; Robinson et al., 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Equally, the study of Ismail et al. (2018) ascertained the relationship between teachers' functional competency and the instructional leadership of school leaders. The results showed that teachers' functional competency and the instructional leadership of school leaders were significantly correlated. The study suggests that school leaders should implement instructional

leadership to increase teachers' functional competency. In their 2016 study, Mehdinezhad and Mansouri explore the connection between teachers' self-efficacy and the leadership behaviors of school principals. The findings revealed that the principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' sense of self-efficacy are significantly correlated. The results also demonstrated the ability to forecast shifts in teachers' sense of self-efficacy based on two aspects of principals' leadership behaviors: idealized influence and intellectual stimulation.

Scholars and policymakers understand that principals occupy a crucial position in influencing teachers because they are the ones who oversee them most closely (Oliva et al., 2009). They can enhance student learning outcomes and influence class instruction (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Louis et al., 2010; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). They are the primary evaluators for teacher monitoring and evaluation. They observe classes and provide teachers with constructive comments about their instruction (Bellibaş, 2015; Lochmiller, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2018). Teachers anticipate that these school leaders are knowledgeable about the subject matter and instructional practices (Yeşil & Kş, 2015).

In light of these narratives, this study ascertained how the principal participants performed their role as instructional leaders in a region in the Philippine DepEd.

Likewise, Hallinger et al.'s (2014) theory of action underlying teacher evaluation and school improvement, including the components of feedback and support, is likewise regarded in this study. According to Hill and Grossman (2013), individualized feedback works best when teachers are given straightforward, doable suggestions to use immediately in their work with students. This direct support and feedback aid in enhancing a teacher's instructional strategies. Hallinger et al. (2013) found the following through their research:

“the four domains of feedback and support include providing actionable feedback to teachers, creating professional communities in which teachers share goals, work, and responsibility for student outcomes, offering tangible support for the work of teachers, and forging systems in which teachers have the opportunity for professional learning” (p. 22).

Carreiro (2017) articulates that discussions and interactions occur frequently between teachers and their principals due to feedback and assistance. The discussions allow the principals to see their teachers differently, frequently providing them with knowledge and insight they otherwise would not have. Using the information from these conferences, principals can provide teachers with feedback and support.

In the Philippine DepEd, these conferences are usually held during the Learning Action Cell (LAC), a professional community (Hallinger et al., 2013). De Guzman et al. (2023) claimed that teachers can collaborate and decide collectively on the strategies and interventions necessary to promote students' academic performance through LAC. It emphasized that LAC provides a chance to enhance the teachers' teaching skills. It highlights the value of teachers participating in LAC events to strengthen pedagogies and teaching methods. Teachers collaborate to do research and share best practices. They gather to exchange knowledge and ideas for professional advancement; the knowledge gained aids in improving pupils' academic results. It is exemplified by a

teacher volunteer doing demonstration teaching during LAC. The principal and the teachers in attendance take turns helping the teacher volunteer see areas for improvement.

Finally, this study is also seen in the light of DepEd Order #02, s., 2015, entitled “Guidelines on the Establishment and Implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) in the Department of Education;” more specifically, on the lens of the Performance, Monitoring, and Coaching. This particular section provides that the performance monitoring and coaching commences after the rater and the ratee commit to the KRAs (Key Result Area(s), Objectives, and Performance Indicators and sign the OPCR (Office Performance Commitment and Review Form) and IPCRF (Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form). It is done throughout the year. The two (2) main components of this phase are performance monitoring and coaching and feedback. Performance monitoring provides vital inputs and an objective basis for rating. It facilitates feedback and provides evidence of performance. The rater and the ratee must agree to use the Performance Monitoring and Commitment Form (PMCF) to track and log noteworthy occurrences to be held accountable for performance. This helps promote the professional development of the teachers. Academic supervision and classroom observation strategies enhance teachers’ classroom performances, improving students’ academic performance.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used the case study research design to empirically investigate a phenomenon in its actual setting. A case study thoroughly investigates a bounded system based on significant data gathering. It focuses on an in-depth analysis of a particular person, organization, or event to investigate the reasons behind underlying ideas (Creswell, 2012). In this situation, the teachers’ experience during classroom observation. Hence, this paper describes, explores, and analyzes the views of a person, group, or event. It followed the idea that case studies analyze persons, groups, events, decisions, periods, policies, institutions, or other holistically studied by one or more methods.

Participants of the Study

The intent of qualitative research is an exhaustive investigation of the phenomenon (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). In the present study, the DepEd elementary teachers and the school principals are considered knowledgeable of the phenomenon under study. The principals are the best source of information on how they function as instructional leaders, honing the teachers’ teaching skills. Conversely, elementary teachers are equally competent to share their experiences concerning the conduct of class observation, as they experienced it firsthand. The study involved eighteen (18) teacher participants. The participants’ names and schools were generated from the DepEd. Their names were coded for confidentiality purposes. Selected school heads were also invited for key-informant interviews for validation and triangulation purposes. The inclusion criteria for the teacher participants were: (1) public elementary teachers, (2) teaching for at least five (5) years, and (3) has been class observed by a school head while the principal participants were selected on these criteria: (1) they supervised the

teacher participants, (2) they conducted classroom observations, and (3) they used the COT in the conduct of the classroom observations. A reasonably broad estimate of 18 teacher participants and three (3) principal participants were assessed, taking part for 45 minutes per interview segment to at least two (2) interview segments and an hour for the FGD for at least two (2) FGD sessions. Whether these estimates were meaningful, they satisfied the technical committee and proved reasonably accurate (Haines, 2017).

Sampling Design

The research participants were identified using a purposive sampling design. It is a purposeful selection of an informant based on their characteristics. It is a non-random technique; therefore, no underlying hypotheses or a predetermined number of informants are required. However, we decide what information is necessary and then search for sources willing and able to supply it based on their knowledge or experience. This study determined that the DepEd elementary teachers and their principals are the best participants. According to Bernard (2002), the key informant technique, which asks one or a small number of people to serve as cultural transcribers, is an excellent example of purposeful sampling. They are knowledgeable, attentive, and reflective people of the community of interest who are able and eager to contribute their knowledge of the culture. In the case of the present investigation, the DepEd elementary teachers and their principals have the knowledge and experience on the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, they voluntarily consented to share their experiences during class observation.

Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was the interview/focus group discussion (FGD) guide, which explored teachers' views on classroom observation in the DepEd's elementary context. The interview protocol was crafted with inputs from the teacher participants from the identified population. The interview protocol was semi-structured and took approximately 45 minutes. The researcher conducted the interviews face to face, and with the expressed consent of the teacher participants, the proceedings were recorded and transcribed.

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) assert that using the qualitative semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions allowed the flow of conversations to be unpredictable; the participants' answers determined the questions to be asked. In this study, the natural setting was the classroom, where teachers casually engaged and interacted. The FGD and interview protocol were used to gather the views of the teacher participants on the conduct of classroom observation. Likewise, it was also used to collect data on the factors necessary for the smooth conduct of the class observation.

Data Analysis

This study used Colaizzi's (1978) process for phenomenological data analysis. The following procedures were followed: (1) each transcript was read and reread to get a general understanding of the entire content; (2) from each transcript, significant statements relating to the teacher participants' opinions about classroom observation and the enabling and supporting mechanisms for its implementation were extracted; the significant statements were noted on a separate sheet with their page and line numbers;

(3) meanings were derived from these statements; (4) the derived meanings were organized into categories, clusters of themes, and themes; (5) the study's findings were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study; (6) the phenomenon's basic structure was described, and finally (7) validation of the findings were sought from the study's participants.

Ethical Considerations

The research topic is sensitive, and the method is somewhat invasive; thus, the researcher justified the participants' relevance and appropriateness (Dalton & McVilly, 2004). An informed consent form was secured from the teacher and the school principal participants. Informed consent is a voluntary choice to participate based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of the proposed research and its implications (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2007). The participants were informed of the information collected through the KII and FGD. Likewise, they were advised that they had the right to suspend the proceedings if they felt the questions could cause them mental anguish and physical exhaustion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' views on classroom observation

The first objective of this study was to ascertain the elementary teachers' views on class observation in the Philippine DepEd schools. The teacher participants' views were analyzed based on these two (2) challenges: systemic and observer expertise. It is decided considering that several authors also presented findings along these challenges in the conduct of class observations (Mercer, 2006; Aubusson et al., 2007; The New Teacher Project, 2007; Toch & Rothman, 2008; Borich, 2008). Moreover, documented challenges about class observation and the participants' views also emerged.

Systemic

Kraft and Gilmour's (2016a) study found that most observers are school administrators and need more time to effectively manage the class observation process. This claim is echoed in this study:

"It is not done regularly."

"The observation process is not implemented correctly; it is not done regularly."

These views were also observed by Hussen (2015); the study found that most principals needed to conduct classroom observation more frequently. Malunda et al.'s (2016) study also revealed that class observation needs to be adequately conducted in public secondary schools in Uganda. Moreover, Sultan (2017) reported that a teacher viewed the supervision process as needing to be equated, citing further that the school heads relied only on what they saw, neglecting to discuss the issues confronting them with teachers. Likewise, Tonbul and Baysülen (2017) found that only a small percentage of school administrators are prepared to evaluate teaching methods. Principals only occasionally monitor teachers' classroom practices (Kosar & Buran, 2019; Yeşil & Kş, 2015), and few teachers receive constructive criticism (Ford et al., 2017).

Similarly, Minnear-Peplinski's (2009) dissertation on principals' and teachers' perceptions of supervision revealed that teachers experienced undemocratic supervision in their schools. The teacher participants likewise viewed that:

"It is not a friendly evaluation approach; it imposed standards set by the observer."

"The objectives are not clear."

These views suggest that there was no leveling of expectations before the class observation, precisely, not a clinical approach. These views were reiterated in the study by Sailesh et al. (2011); the study recommended that the process of instructional supervision should be continuous and that teachers should be involved in the process of instructional supervision from the pre-observation conference through the observation to the post-observation conference.

Kraft and Gilmour's (2016a) study also revealed that supervisors do not often inform the teachers before observing classes. Similarly, Abebe (2014) found that although supervisors carried out classroom observations, they would not arrange such visits with the teachers concerned. This finding is also a view of one of the teacher participants of this present study:

"It should not be an ambushed observation."

Ramano's (2014) study revealed that in consensus, the respondent teachers portrayed that the class observer should be honest, maintain confidentiality, and utilize the process to promote instructional improvement. This study's teacher participants voice the same sentiments:

"Observers do not observe confidentiality of information. It is humiliating."

"They should be professional and ethical in doing it."

No confidentiality of information was observed."

Prado *et al.* (2018) suggest that teachers' perceptions of the fairness of assessment systems are linked to their comprehension that the systems are intended to help them advance their professional careers. Teachers' perspectives may be improved by creating evaluation methods with this objective in mind and expressing this to them clearly and consistently.

One other systemic challenge is described by Curtis and Wiener (2012). The authors assert that it is challenging for school administrators to match teachers needing formal professional development to appropriate professional learning opportunities. Likewise, Hill (2009) and Wei et al. (2010) express uncertainty about whether school administrators can use class observations to inform the professional development teachers receive. Furthermore, Wang and Day (2002) contend that there is only a tenuous connection between teacher observation and the endorsement of teacher learning and professional growth. It is only worthwhile if observation tasks are significant, narrowly targeted, and systematic. The teacher participants' views are inclusive:

"We feel that it is done because it is a requirement set by the supervisor and not according to the needs of the teachers."

"It could not help teachers. It only burdens the teachers. It should not be for everyone."

These views suggest that the teacher participants did not see meaning when their principal conducted class observation. These suggest further that class observation could be more focused and systemic for the teacher participants. This particular observation finds consonance in the study of Çelik et al. (2013). The teachers in the study did not consider the class observations by school administrators as effective practices for their professional development.

It is also apparent in the study of Wang and Day (2002). Their study documented teachers' perceptions of their experiences with class observations and identified several issues: being observed was a highly stressful experience; teachers were perplexed about the purpose of observation; they forced themselves to show their best performances unnaturally; and they occasionally felt threatened or embarrassed. The teacher participants share these perceptions:

"It is a way of criticizing and discriminating teachers."

"The expected result is usually not achieved as expected."

"Class observation is not to criticize teachers."

It should be stressed that Memduhoglu (2012) clearly describes the purpose of classroom observation by stating:

"What lies in the heart of classroom observation is guiding teachers and developing teaching process rather than error seeking and mere evaluation (p. 152)."

The views expressed by the teacher participants are tantamount to gaining nothing from the conduct of the class observations. The teachers expressed the same views in the study by Merç (2015): *a little useful to not useful at all.*

However, Beach and Reinhartz (2000) assert that-

"supervisors and other educational leaders are responsible for facilitating professional development, building teams of teachers or cohorts, and empowering teachers to make decisions regarding their instructional performance (p. 128)."

Observer Expertise

Stumbo and McWalters (2010 cited in Hunter, 2018) believe that the quality of evaluators is a hindrance. The authors add that the lack of evaluator training threatens the reliability and objectivity of any results. The Reform Support Network (2015) also argues that many observers still struggle to accurately assess teacher performance and give teachers high-quality feedback and tools to help them improve their instruction. Kraft and Gilmour (2016a) likewise opine that the observer needs to gain more expertise in facilitating post-observation conferences and the teacher's content area. These pronouncements are evident in the present study. The study's participants commented that observers do not know what they do during the observation process. The following pronouncements of the teacher participants are reproduced hereunder:

"They should be professional and ethical in doing class observation. Observers need proper training."

"There are observers who do not know their role."

"Observers do not observe confidentiality of information."

Holland and Adams (2002 cited in Hunter, 2018) contend that teachers' negative views about class observations are usually caused by wrong supervision and a lack of training. Furthermore, the Reform Support Network (2015) asserts that observer training that is infrequent or needs to include opportunities to practice feedback falls short of what observers need to develop their observation skills. Observers and evaluators should receive ongoing training to implement observation systems effectively, and training to interpret results and make professional development recommendations should be included within this training (Goe et al., 2012; Goe, 2013; Hill & Herlihy, 2011).

Nakitare's (2000) study revealed that some supervisors harassed and threatened the teachers during class observations. It is a manifestation that these supervisors need training to develop their observation skills. These supervisors are exemplified in the comments of the teacher participants:

"It is humiliating."

"The negative comments are not helpful to the teachers."

"Classroom observation is only to look for mistakes teachers will commit."

"Most of the time, it is not helpful as it only criticizes the teacher's weaknesses."

"It is an additional burden for teachers. Teachers act artificially, and they only prepare if there are observations. They are not happy, especially with negative feedback."

"It is a way of humiliating teachers in front of the class."

"It could pin down teachers who are not doing well."

"It is done to catch teachers who are unprepared; only good for teachers who were given positive feedback."

These views of the teacher participants are clear manifestations that class observation is not clear to them. These views echoed Rahmany et al.'s (2014) observation that the relationship between observers and observed can be tense; the observers are evaluative, while the observed tend to be defensive. Class observations under such conditions might only help a little in the observed's professional growth and development.

Likewise, Toch and Rothman (2008) also assert that class observation systems are superficial and capricious and often need to address the quality of instruction. In a study by The New Teacher Project (2009 cited in Reid, 2016), class observation practices were heavily criticized. The report found that most teachers said their most recent observation did not identify any development area. It also failed to provide targeted support to the subset of teachers with developmental areas identified. Less than half of teachers with development areas identified said they received helpful support to improve those areas. Worse yet, 47 percent of teachers reported having not participated in a single informal conversation with their administrator in the year preceding the study about improving aspects of their instructional performance. These findings affirm the views of the teacher participants that class observation did not help them improve their craft; instead, it is dreadful, an added burden to them.

Richards and Farrell (2005) underscore the need for transparent procedures for both the observer and the observed:

“Because observation involves an intrusion into a colleague’s classroom, procedures for carrying out observations must be carefully negotiated between the participating parties” (p. 94).

Nakitare’s (2000) study revealed that many teachers supported the view that teachers should be frequently supervised. Some supervisors were friendly and kind in their approach to teachers, while others still harassed and threatened the teachers. Wairimu’s (2016) study revealed that most teachers agreed that class observation by the head teachers helps teachers improve their teaching and pupils’ learning. It, however, contradicts the findings of Sibanda et al. (2011), which revealed that in some instances, heads held no post-observation discussion with teachers. They produced a report which they asked teachers to sign.

MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Kenya) report (2010) on quality assurance and standards articulates that judgment on the quality of education can be provided through class observation of the teachers. To this pronouncement, Prado et al. (2018) claim that a higher percentage of teachers found evaluation systems helpful when observations and feedback occurred more than once per year. In light of this, Prado et al. (2018) advise practitioners and policymakers looking to enhance teachers’ impressions of assessment systems to think about giving them numerous opportunities for class observation and feedback.

Despite the challenges in implementing class observation, DepEd stood firm on its pronouncement to continue class observation using COT-RPMS. The primary aim of class observation in DepEd’s context is to “apply a uniform measure to assess teacher performance, identify needs, and provide support for professional development” (DepEd Order #42, s. 2017).

Factors Necessary for Effective Conduct of Classroom Observation

This section discusses the study’s second objective- factors necessary for the effective conduct of classroom observation. Based on the views of the teacher participants on class observation, three (3) factors are identified as necessary for the practical conduct of classroom observation: (1) observe honesty, confidentiality, and collegiality; (2) provide actionable feedback; and (3) support productive collaboration among teachers.

Honesty, confidentiality, and collegiality

Teachers need positive motivation from their principals to intensify their professional development and be recognized (Tesfaw & Hofman, 2012). For this experience to occur, trust and respect between the teachers and principals must be exhibited. Reyes and Hoyle (1992) claimed that instructional supervision is adequate, provided frequent interactions and smooth relationships with supervisors exist. The teacher participants reiterated these factors; they narrated:

“Constructive criticisms and an accommodating principal help in a teacher’s class observation experience.”

“Observer’s attitude should be positive.”

According to research (Kutsyuruba, 2003; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Zepeda, 2007), the teacher-principal relationship, the availability of principal choices based on

teachers' needs, as well as mutual trust, respect, and collaboration among supervisees and supervisors are necessary for maintaining the conduct of class observation. The teacher participants did not observe these; they claimed:

"Remind the observers that whenever there are comments during the class observation, they shall be considered confidential, they should stay between the observer and the teacher, and they should not be the subject of gossip to other teachers and observers."

"You will be ashamed when you cross paths with the observer, especially when you hear that you are the subject of gossip among the school administrators; the teacher is left with nothing, not even self-confidence."

These narrations should be examined closely to determine whether principals are faithful to their calling as instructional leaders. Beginning teachers require frequent instructional supervision that fulfills their professional needs, fosters trust and teamwork, and offers support, advice, and assistance (Kutsyuruba, 2003). These findings are also reiterated in the narration of the teacher participants:

"The observers will not just point out what is to be done but to help the teachers become good teachers."

"Observer should be friendly; classroom observation should be scheduled, not ambushed; suggestions and comments from the observer should be constructive, not destructive."

"Unscheduled observation should not be done."

"I would like a positive atmosphere, a light mode, and a happy disposition during class observation."

"The result of the observation was good because I prepared all the strategies and lessons. Yes, I was informed, and it was helpful to me because some of their comments/suggestions could be in my class."

Sullivan (1997) stated that instructional supervision and professional development are interlinked and can and should overlap as needs and local preferences dictate. It suggests that the class observation should be interlinked with the professional development peculiar to each of the teacher participants; here, the teacher participants narrated:

"Classroom observation is necessary for professional growth; we get to know our teaching proficiency level, and the comments and suggestions our superiors can provide will help us grow professionally."

"It is designed to help teachers in the field, to help them for the better."

"The purpose of class observation is to help teachers improve their teaching skills."

"Class observation is a good tool to develop the teaching skills of a teacher, especially nowadays that there are a lot of changes in our education system like the 21st-century teaching and learning process."

Principals should be collaborative, friendly with teachers, and free from prejudice, fault-finding, and control. They should devote their time to academic matters, and teachers should be given enough time to implement instructional supervision (Tesfaw & Hofman, 2012). However, the study's teacher participants narrated:

“Sometimes class observation focuses more on criticisms than help.”

“There are more criticisms than views that could help us become good teachers.”

“...observers should observe ethics in observing classes, especially in avoiding intimidating the teacher who presents the lesson in class.”

According to Zepeda (2007), the essential task of a supervisor is working with teachers “in ways that promote lifelong learning skills: inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and a dedication to professional growth and development” (p. 56).

Provide Actionable Feedback

Holt et al. (2011) argue that post-observation feedback can help teachers become good teachers. Class observation aims to raise the quality of instruction by defining what constitutes successful instruction and assisting teachers in meeting those standards through excellent feedback and support (Reform Support Network, 2015). It is echoed in the narrations of the teacher participants:

“To gather feedback for continuous improvement.”

“It helps teachers improve their teaching practices through the feedback mechanism. Nevertheless, it is dependent on who is the observer.”

“To help teachers improve their teaching practices through experts’ feedback.”

“A way of getting feedback from their supervisors/heads about their teaching performance.”

“A means of getting positive energy with positive feedback.”

“The best thing about classroom observation is that there is feedback on what to do with the lesson to improve it.”

“... in a way of giving positive feedback to the teachers.”

“Yes, we benefited from the conduct of classroom observations; this exercise created a culture of continued improvement; challenges, ideas, especially instructional techniques are shared during feedbacking.”

Hill and Grossman (2013) and Kraft and Gilmour (2015) opine that observers need help to provide high-quality feedback to their teachers. Jiang *et al.* (2015) and Stecher *et al.* (2012) claim that teachers are mixed about whether they find the feedback they receive helpful in improving their teaching. Papay (2012), on the other hand, claims that principals observe classes for a short time and check whether they are satisfactory or unsatisfactory on an essential checklist without helpful feedback. In the case of the present study, some teachers claim they received feedback that they thought was helpful. However, others claim only to receive feedback with proper content, precluding further reflection or action. The following were the contentions of the teacher participants:

“Class observation is helpful, but the success of the process depends on the expertise of the one conducting the observation.”

“Some observers do not know their role and how to do it properly.”

“Observers do not know their role and do not observe confidentiality of information. It is humiliating.”

"Its success is dependent on the person conducting the observation."

Target Professional Needs

Principals need to ensure that teachers receive professional development aligned with the areas for growth anchored on the results of the class observations conducted (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). In this case, the observation rubric itself may serve as professional development, educating teachers about what constitutes high-quality practice so they can enact it in their classes (Thomson, 2014). Even with concerns about the effectiveness of professional development for improving instruction (Wei et al., 2010), it remains to be seen whether principals can use class observations to inform the professional development teachers receive. In the present study, the teacher participants understood the purpose of class observations; they admitted that:

"Class observations are conducted to improve each teacher's performance."

"The aim or purpose of class observation is to develop the skills and knowledge of teaching. In other words, the teachers create/explore new strategies to present their lesson."

"Class observation aims to assess the teachers in their teaching based on the different subject matters and topics alongside giving positive comments, suggestions, and constructive criticism that will enable the teacher to grow professionally."

"I am not that expert in teaching, but due to class observations, I improved a lot, and I do my best when I can read a positive comment from my observer."

"We will always learn something from every post-conference that we will have. Moreover, since experts observe us, we will learn other methods suitable or appropriate for the subject matter we teach."

"One of the tools to help evaluate the teachers' teaching skills."

"Class observation is an opportunity to grow while showcasing the best way we can deliver our lesson."

"Support productive collaboration among teachers."

Class observations promote collaboration, defined as working toward instructional goals with colleagues. Explicit teaching standards can help teachers establish and reflect on common instructional expectations (Danielson, 2012; White-Smith, 2012). These standards rely on several assumptions about the nature of interactions among teachers. For example, collaboration must focus on substantial improvements in instruction. The evaluation system must also avoid negatively influencing collaboration by introducing competition or decreasing morale (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Johnson, 2015). Teachers sometimes describe their evaluations as collaborative when there are back-and-forth conversations with administrators after observations (Donaldson, 2012; O'Pry & Schumacher, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study's primary objective was to ascertain the elementary teachers' views on class observation and the factors necessary for practical class observation. Findings revealed that the elementary teachers' views on class observations are characterized as systemic

and observer expertise. These results suggest that the Philippine DepEd may consider revisiting its classroom observation practices, specifically regarding the frequency of its implementation, ascertaining that it is done regularly. Furthermore, DepEd may also consider re-assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of those leaders entrusted to conduct classroom observation. It should be emphasized that the pivotal issue of classroom observation is to hone teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge.

In response to the second objective of the study, it identified three (3) factors that should be present for the practical conduct of class observations: (1) observe honesty, confidentiality, and collegiality; (2) provide actionable feedback; (3) support productive collaboration among teachers. These findings could enrich the literature; they could be added to Zaide's (2017), Goodwin and Hubbell's (2013), and Antonetti and Garver's (2015) lists of how to make classrooms advantageous for all parties.

However, these findings are limited within a region of the Philippine DepEd setting. They could not represent the teachers' views in other regions of the Philippine DepEd as much as the department. It recommended that this study be replicated in other regions or even nationally to find ways to design a better system for conducting class observations.

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