

Groundbreaking teacher observation efficacy and effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Constant teacher observation is considered to be the best tool to invest in teacher performance for growth. It creates rooms for assessment, feedback, and setting the next steps for improvement. Teachers get an opportunity to learn how they are running their classes in the eyes of other experts, co-teachers, managers, and even students. When done perfectly, the desired teacher's continual development is achieved. Using a desktop literature review, this paper identifies the common issues in teacher observation, why there is a need for blueprint shift from announced observation to unannounced observation and draws conclusions on the future of teacher observation to ensure quality, effectiveness, and reliability in observation.

KEYWORDS: teaching, observation, teacher performance

I. INTRODUCTION

The power of teacher observation in promoting quality education is undebatable. It helps to ensure constant feedback for teaching practices, create a better sense of what the instructor does well or needs to improve, raise teacher standards and competence, and profoundly reach the set goals. Unquestionably, it gives room for innovation, efficiency, and effectiveness of teaching practice, and student performance. Student evaluation and teacher practices are the main sources of observation. If used well, they all contribute to having an education that rocks. Students are the ones who spend day-to-day with the instructor knowing how they are supported, the feedback they receive, communication between them and the instructor, the conducive and inclusive environment they study in, and all different factors that help them to reach the learning outcomes. Instructor practices are the engine of the best competencies we would love to see in a teacher, from student engagement, knowledge of the subject matter, diversity and inclusion, supporting systems, to student performance. Without teacher observation on teacher practices, he/she could not know what to stop,

continue, or innovate. He would not be able to break the routines for improvement and constantly grow.

Controversy, the observation practices in the education sector have been questionably wondering if it achieves the expected results. The first concern is relying on students' perspectives to decide if the teacher is performing well or not. The validity of students' evaluation is questionable as students are said to rate better the teachers who treat them well regardless of how he/she teaches. The student will likely rate better the teacher who jokes every day with him/her, does not mark absent/late, does not set classroom norms, etc. because he/she does not bother regardless of the teaching methodologies, expertise, or competence. This might put at risk great teachers who are doing their best to become champion teachers and the fact that the rate he/she gets is considered for promotion at his/her work. By the same token, direct teacher observation has been questioned by the fact it might put the teacher under overpressure and he/she ends up not being him/herself, unclear or destructive feedback from observers, or treating observation as negotiation because you know that it will be based on for the promotion or end of the year performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Evidence-based observation is an important driver for assessing the effectiveness and quality of teaching practices for improvement. It is also crucial that teachers deliver high-quality, relevant instruction and feedback to students using their pedagogical knowledge to help students/learners develop the content knowledge and achieve learning outcomes. The current approaches used by many learning institutions are questioned of not serving the purpose which leads to high-level spending in teacher observation that does not lead to continual improvement of the teacher. The ideal target of teacher evaluation is to maximize and improve the quality of instructions and reach intended outcomes through high-quality feedback and support (Reform Support Network, 2016). Throughout the world, there has been a worry about how teacher observation is done through announced observations. Announced observation is defined as the observation

done when the teacher knows that he/she will be observed.

One of the blames that announced observation has is that the instructor might inform the students to act accordingly to get good ratings. It is easy when the teacher has a good relationship with students to tell them that they are having a visitor and they need to behave accordingly and demonstrate a high level of engagement, answering, etc. and this could not serve the intended purpose. Another agony of it is to maximize his best to have the best class for that day which he/she might not be doing daily and we need consistency to ensure that always the class is at its best. The snag with announced observations is that the practice can easily slip into an inauthentic display of pedagogical practice that is more like a performance than a window into a teacher's classroom (Lawrence, 2013).

Another debate observation face is using students' feedback for teacher performance rating. This system is flawed because they are biased and not authentic for high-quality teaching practices. It seems easy and intuitive to ask the students how they are supported, engaged in class, taught the content for mastery, advised, etc. but this is mostly biased. When the instructor is teaching students an easy content where it is easy for all of them to grasp the content, when the instructor does not follow norms and policies of the class, when the instructor does not give many works to students, etc. it will be likely that the rating will be good regardless of the real teacher teaching practices. In addition to that, their expertise in providing quality feedback is supported by evidence and understanding the competencies assessed clearly and broadly. A good example is having a student evaluate the instructor on creating assessments connected to the real workplace. The student will only base on his/her feelings just because they do not have a deep understanding of what it means to create assessments connected to the learning objectives, class activities, and workplace using backward design.

Hence, this paper focuses on why schools should use announced observations for continual high-quality teacher development through observations. Unannounced observations create room for frequent feedback, authenticity, and frequent discussion between the observer and the teacher (Lawrence, 2013).

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper used a desktop literature review and observation. The search was conducted to identify the problems existing on teacher observation and challenges to gather qualitative data which was

combined with observations from teacher observation practices. Of the total of 25 articles found, 5 were found to be answering the questions we had. They were retried from the online databases. For the selection of keywords, teacher, performance, and observation terms were used as preferential concepts. The review was limited to scientific-educational journals.

Qualitative research was also conducted through observations of teacher evaluations where I evaluated the ratings from students teacher ratings vis-a-vis manager/dean/co-teachers ratings. The benchmark included theoretical and empirical findings/research with qualitative and quantitative approaches connected to teacher observations and CiteFast was used as an online free open-source reference management software to manage bibliographic data and related research materials.

IV. RESULTS

When an observer holds an overall positive impression of a teacher, there is a tendency to rate that teacher favorably whether or not there is evidence that the teacher is displaying the desired behavior (Medley et al., 1984, p. xx). Paese and Hodge (1990) researched the impact of peer evaluation in teacher observation for improvement compared to management but left a gap of how could it be scaled to announced observations for effectiveness and this is one of the dubiousness of teacher evaluation.

One of the basic problems that deplore most teacher evaluation systems for continual support and growth is the lack of valid evaluation metrics and systems. Additionally, the mentality that administrators are the only ones to evaluate the glows and growth of the teacher is not true (Kyriakides, 2005). Another neglected influence that leads to teacher evaluation malpractice is not recognizing the power difference and teaching between the observer and teacher where the teacher might be under pressure and nervous when being observed, or the rater depict an unusual behavior of collecting the teacher in front of the class which could affect teacher behaviors and leads to not reaching the expected goals of evaluations (Wendy & Cathy, 2002).

V. DISCUSSION

Several challenges lead to failing to meaningfully assess teacher performance through unannounced observations. First, observers are not able to rate teachers on some specific competencies due to a lack of fully understanding the rubric. For instance, you find that some managers go to observe teachers on the subject matter and you find that it is

even hard for them to know what the expert could have as a skillset and this could lead to unfair observations. Take an example of a school administrator with expertise in management going to observe physics and has to rate him/her on the subject matter. Due to that he/she also does not have that expertise, it will be hard to get accurate feedback.

Second, running observations based on personal gut feelings and experiences rather than best teaching pedagogies. For example, an observer might not like engaging with students using ice-breakers/energizers/warm-ups and when he/she is rating the teacher, he will tell you that it is not good to use them when you are starting the class which might not be true and might lead to stopping some of the best practices the teacher had.

Third, lack of clear and specific feedback with ongoing discussions around improvement. Observation is not a one-step process where you do it and it's over. Its intended purpose is to continually improve the teacher's best practices, motivate innovation, change or improve the strategies. In case there is no specificity in what the teacher could do to improve, follow up on the improvement made, discussions on the areas of struggle, the observation will not be effective at all and the set goals will not be achieved.

Fourth, absence of teacher-driven observations. In some schools, they do not consider teacher-driven observations where they can assign some peer evaluation to help to learn from each other or when you find them doing it, they do not considering teacher learning from managers or school leaders which could foster their teaching experiences and help managers get feedback from subordinates window about how they also teach.

Last but not least, lack of professional development sessions on how to do walk-through announced observations which is cumbersome to the practice. All the people involved in the observation should be trained about how to do unannounced observation, the expectations, rubric details, how to give feedback, the timeline, and ratings to make sure that all the people are on the same page. Whenever this is not done, it obtrudes quality teacher observation effectiveness and efficiency.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The good news is that there are different strategies that could be used as a recommendation to enhance the experience continually and get accurate and specific information, results that could serve as a basis for decision making including preparing professional development, teacher promotions, support plans, etc. When applying the strategies

below, schools should keep in mind that what worked there, might not work here, consider school culture, class content, and make adjustments as needed but keeping the same goal.

Set Clear, standardized rubrics for teacher evaluation at the school. School administration should first of all set clear rubrics considering a limited number to help observers focus on a shorter list of rubrics during the observation time. They should be self-explanatory detailing what each level means and serving the intended outcomes. Schools should keep in mind that they need to always start with rubric norming whenever they are revising or creating new ones to build the understanding of the rubric before the implementation.

Create a room for training about the teacher observation: As teacher evaluation serves as a basis for promotion to academic rank, opportunities, and yearly performance review, schools should make sure that they continually train the observers and teachers about the structures and processes of observation. This will help teachers evaluate vis-a-vis the rubric and fully understand the expectations. This will always help to have observations that are objective-oriented and specific.

Keep the observation fact-based and have a focus: When you are the observer, consider using facts of what you have seen in the class rather than prior experiences you have and use facts to support your feedback. For example, instead of saying you explained the content well, say you gave the support to students fully by explaining the challenging questions a,b,c and showing the relevance of skills learned at the workplace. Keep in mind that you cannot observe all the rubrics you evaluate at once. It is highly recommended that you choose only 2 maximum to focus on in one round of observation. As a recommendation, spend 20 min at most when doing walk-through observations and take some notes to refer to them after.

Avoid emotions when doing the observations: The observers should keep in mind that the intended purpose of observations is not to punish and they should differentiate how they know the teacher with what they observe in class. This will help to avoid biases that could arise. People should also keep in mind that observation will not be a negotiation as the intended purpose is to promote the continual growth of the teacher.

Ensure ongoing and frequent unannounced observations: Observation should be done only

when it is the period of yearly evaluations. The manager should frequently do observations (at least once a month with a focus on a few rubrics) to accurately support the growth of the teacher and get a glimpse of what happens in class promptly. If the school uses weekly/monthly check-ins with the supervisors, this should be an opportunity to discuss the progress made, challenges, or support needed.

Keep the feedback specific and constructive: Observers should be trained on how to provide quality specific and constructive feedback to make sure that it will be relevant and specific. It should be showing what the teacher did well and what he/she needs to improve on and why or what it can help. It should have some recommendations and call for asking for support whenever needed. To keep feedback relevant to the time, the observer should consider providing feedback to the observer in 48 hours. The rater can use informal discussion after class to share feedback, check-in, or send it via email.

Peer evaluation should be at glance: Schools should create an environment of peer evaluation where teachers can observe each other to learn from one another and this can help to share the expertise. It could be easier when a teacher is evaluating another one because he also has the same experience. Teachers should also be given opportunities to observe supervisors who are in teaching positions to learn from their best practices and also build confidence for new struggling teachers.

Leave room for feedback for practice improvement: In a specified timeframe, schools should always gather feedback on the observation practice to gather insights from different people and continually improve the process. It shouldn't be as Romans laws where no one had to judge them regardless of facts he/she had. People should provide constant and clear feedback around it.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, unannounced structured observation should be a new tool for ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of teacher performance evaluation to help save time and investments schools make. It should be a measurement foundation for encouraging innovation and constant learning of teachers. Therefore, it is worth investing in announced observations as the observers will get a

clear picture of what happens in class and the teacher will hold the same expectations of running the class to the maximum point meeting all the criteria for success anticipating that there could be a visit anytime for observation.

Undoubtedly, there should be a space for continual improvement of the process in schools and revisit them always with a focus on gaining insights from all stakeholders and serve the purpose of helping the teacher to improve. It is also important to document the feedback for reference at the end of the year when doing yearly evaluations and see the progress made on recommendations provided over the year. Unannounced observation will provide accurate data leading to effective decision making.

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