

# Teacher's Classroom Observation: A Study of Attitudes and Best Practices

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Classroom observation, perceived as a best practice by different accreditation agencies, has begun to gain momentum in the Saudi higher education sector. This paper investigates the attitudes of English language faculty members in Saudi Arabia toward classroom observation. A survey was distributed to English language faculty members working with the preparatory year in one of the Saudi universities. The study adopted a quantitative approach and collected data through 33 Likert-scaled questions divided into two sections: one on teachers' perceptions for classroom observation and the other on their experience with regard to classroom observation. The first part examined Teachers' views about classroom observation as best practice; and the second part investigated their actual experience from classroom observation. Results suggest that English language faculties have positive views about class observation in general, but it was consistently stated that Classroom observation processes need to be planned carefully at all the stages in order to gain the utmost benefit for the stakeholders. The Faculty must be assured that Classroom observation will be used for improvement rather than evaluation purposes.

**Key words:** *classroom observation, preparatory year program, Saudi university, English language.*

## Introduction

The higher education sector in Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous change in recent years. In addition to the establishment of numerous private higher education institutions, the number of public universities has increased from 8 to 30 during the last decade. This leap has raised many questions about the quality of education being imparted to students. However, universities have adopted several policies that aim at ensuring the quality of education. National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) was established to raise the quality of the Saudi higher education sector and help Saudi universities achieve

their mission. The Commission acts as the authority responsible for academic accreditation and quality assurance in both public and private universities and programs. Consequent to its establishment, all universities in the Saudi higher education sector realized the importance of academic accreditation and started making efforts for national (NCAAA) or international (from different academic accreditation agencies) accreditation.

In order to comply and conform to the standards and criteria of NCAAA or international accreditation agencies, universities are motivated to devise and adopt best practices. One of the practices most popular in Preparatory Year programs and also recommended by most accreditation agencies is classroom observation or peer observation. Some evidence exists regarding classroom observation as a monitoring practice in parts of the Saudi higher education sector, particularly in the English language departments. However, this practice is still considered new and in the experimental stage and therefore needs to be investigated with care and caution as will be discussed later in this paper. This research aims at exploring faculty members' perceptions and experience concerning the practice of classroom observation in the English language department of a preparatory year program at a Saudi university. One of the reasons for choosing this setting was that classroom observation in preparatory year programs has been used for quite some time but has not been formally examined for the impact that it has made on achieving quality education. It is hoped that this investigation will help decision makers and educators in the preparatory year sector to explore the possibility of implementing the findings of this study into practice.

## Literature review

Although classroom observation has been in practice for several years at various levels in Saudi universities, it is still a relatively new study of practice in emerging research (L. Keig, 2000; Shah & Harthi, 2014; Thomas, Chie, Abraham, Jalarajan Raj, & Beh, 2014) It is difficult to locate relevant literature on classroom observation particularly in the preparatory year sector (Thomas et al., 2014; Olowa & Olowa, 2017). A few studies have however affirmed that faculty members are qualified and equipped with the required skills to perform classroom observation in a formative setting (Centra, 1993; Cohen & McKeachie, 1980; L. Keig, 2000). A few studies have also found evidence of it gaining a momentum and being recognized as a teaching strategy to enhance the quality of teaching (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Harris & Cullen, 2008). It is often called peer observation; however, the term 'peer' here is used in its broad meaning as a peer is not always necessarily a colleague, but can be a supervisor or an expert in the field (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Bell, 2001). This kind of use of 'peer' in classroom observation hints at another attribute that can be seen as a practice during the course of this study.

Gosling (2002) observes three models of peer observation: evaluation (observation by senior staff), developmental (observation by educational developer), and peer review (teachers



observing teachers). The aim of classroom observation also depends on the context in which this observation takes place. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2011) identified three main contexts of classroom observation: for professional development, for rewards, and for promotion. Additionally, in the pre-service TESOL training context, class observation is used as a learning tool for potential teachers; while in the public sector it has become synonymous to teacher-evaluation and teacher-supervision (Sahakian & Stockton, 1996; Shah & Harthi, 2014). Gosling (2002) argues that if peer observation is used for reasons related to pay or promotion, the opportunity for learning will be reduced; while a few other researchers regard professional development as the most effective goal of classroom observation (Montgomery, 2012; Shah & Harthi, 2014). Class observation can be summative or formative and Kinchin, (2005) suggests that the formative type should be used in the higher education sector.

At the application level, two approaches have been identified in classroom observation: top-down approach, where such practices are planned and undertaken by such experts who are far from the real world of the classroom; and a bottom-up approach, where classroom observation is carried out by colleagues for the purpose of collaboration (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011; Shah & Harthi, 2014). A few researchers have even suggested that in the Middle Eastern setting, classroom observations are carried out by mainly supervisors who are overloaded with other responsibilities and cannot devote enough time to prepare ideally for their classroom observation visits and follow them up too (Murdoch, 2000). Such practices often lead to teacher anxiety and lack of confidence in determining the validity of classroom observation (Murdoch, 2000). In another study in the same geographical context, it was found that teachers considered class observation an unnecessary pressure, citing such reasons as: lack of training and qualification to perform the observation; lack of trust between the observer and the observed teacher and concern over the subjective evaluation of the observer (Shah & Harthi, 2014). Researchers have also emphasized the need for top management support for classroom observation program to be successful (L. Keig, 2000).

Keig (2000) identifies a few characteristics about classroom observation programs: first, a good classroom observation program targets good and skilled teachers who want to become better by improving their teaching skills rather than targeting less effective teachers and making use of classroom observation only for remedial purposes; second, all faculty members are encouraged to participate in classroom observation programs, but it remains voluntary, a kind of formative peer review; third, some classroom observation programs plan in advance the methods of assessment and what element to cover; fourth, feedback to classroom observation programs is comprehensive and often it means sincere praise and constructive criticism; last, but not least, classroom observation is at some places formative in nature keeping it apart from personnel process and decision making. Keig (2000) also reiterated in his study on the attitudes of faculty members at liberal arts colleges in USA and found that a majority of respondents indicated that they would participate if the classroom observations were conducted by

colleagues for the purpose of instructional improvement. In a similar study, (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010) the staff recommended the process of classroom observation should remain in practice but it should be voluntary. They also recommended the use of an external expert for the purpose with ongoing follow-up.

It has been widely argued that peer review processes result in teachers having an increased ability to reflect on their own teaching and its effectiveness (Anderson, Barksdale, & Hite, 2005; Kurtts & Levin, 2000; Mallette, Maheady, & Harper, 1999; McAllister & Neubert, 1995; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Wynn & Kromrey, 1999). Preservice teachers tend to rate the peer coaching experience positively (Anderson et al., 2005; Hasbrouck, 1997; Kurtts & Levin, 2000; Rauch & Whittaker, 1999; Wynn & Kromrey, 1999) and express the belief that it contributes to their development as teachers. Moreover, researchers have found that staff believe that student learning would improve if colleagues worked collaboratively to improve teaching (Donnelly, 2007; L. Keig, 2000). In this context, (Gibbs, 1995) has highlighted the need for observer training or briefing because observation of teaching is particularly subjective and fraught with difficulties and thus its efficacy requires a clear framework.

On the other hand, some problems have been identified with class observation, such as competitiveness and difficulty of the peer in giving feedback at the preservice stage (Kurtts & Levin, 2000; McAllister & Neubert, 1995). Traditional observation causes issues for both the observer and the one who is being observed as it tends to be judgmental and based on the observer's subjective judgment (Shah & Harthi, 2014). It causes stress, nervousness, and anxiety, therefore teachers in many countries dislike this practice (Aubusson, Steele, Dinham, & Brady, 2007; Borich, 2015). Some researchers argue that rather than being perceived as a tool for professional development, class observation is often considered as a form of surveillance and control (Metcalf, 1999). Teachers feel uneasy being observed because they see the observer using top-down authority and judging classroom affairs subjectively (Li, 2009). Moreover, some researchers such as Cosh (2002) and Donnelly (2007) argue that there is no real evidence that people develop and improve through the judgments or comments of others.

Several concerns have also been raised about the use of peer observation for teaching performance management. One of the main concerns among faculty members regarding classroom observation is how to qualify who can be an observer as well as what is assessed in peer review and how (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Thomas et al., 2014). Some researchers have raised the issue of confidentiality and its importance in peer observation (Gosling, 2002). This means that all the information should be kept between the observer and the observed. They also raised the issue of mutual learning from each other (Gosling, 2002). This needs to be taken into consideration in that observation is not a neutral process and it depends on many factors, such as the observer, the observed and the method of observation (Gosling, 2002).

From the aforesaid literature, it seems that there are some factors that would improve classroom observation if they were taken into consideration. One of these factors is that the relevant parties should be provided with clear instructions on the administration method. This includes what will be covered during observation; what standards should be used in order to assess teaching; and a clear timetable for the whole process. In addition, the relevant parties should be involved in the planning process (L. Keig, 2000). Another factor for effective classroom observation is that it should be based on establishing collegial trust and respect and in a context providing guidelines and resources (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010). Moreover, the participation should be voluntary and collaborative, and should provide feedback regarding teaching practices (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010). In order to make the process of observation smooth and useful, a four stage cyclical model for peer review was recommended by Weeks and Scott (1992): pre-observation meeting, observation, post-observation feedback, and reflection (in Atkinson & Bolt, 2010) while Clark and Redmond (1982) proposed a similar cycle but added a teacher follow-up component (Donnelly, 2007).

### ***Purpose of this study***

One of the main goals behind classroom observation is to observe the best classroom teaching practices and at the same time to identify areas of development for the teacher observed. This should, by common-sense, be welcomed by teachers, as it helps them to better understand their strengths and represents an element of continuous improvement. The feedback and guidance helps them improve areas of weaknesses. However, this does not often happen as teachers do not like to be observed. This could be due to inappropriate observer practices or the possible negative impact of observations linked with the teacher's job status or promotion.

This research aims to tackle the issue of classroom observation in an EFL setting through an exploration of both teacher perceptions and experiences. In order to achieve this objective, a thorough investigation of the academic literature related to classroom observation was conducted in order to gather a theoretical background about the topic. The study also investigated teacher attitudes towards classroom observation. The actual class-observation practices currently followed by practitioners in the field were examined through the experience of the observee. The results of these investigations are presented in the remaining sections of this paper and discussed in relation to the literature review. This process will enable this study to be applied in a wider context and create a holistic picture.

### ***Research design***

The purposive sampling method was used with the staff in an English language department of a preparatory year program (PYP) in a Saudi university. The program has 60 faculty members teaching English language skills courses. It caters to approximately 800 students each year,

who study English language skills courses as well as science courses such as mathematics, chemistry, and physics. There are also courses for computing and study skills. The duration of the PYP is one year before they specialization in the chosen field of study. These teachers are observed twice a year by their superiors and senior colleagues. Initially, the purpose of these observations was a kind of performance evaluation, but over the years it has changed into a means for professional improvement.

This research adopted a quantitative approach and collected data through an online survey. The survey questionnaire was created with reference to the literature review in general and to Keig's (2000) questionnaire in particular. It consisted of 33 Likert-scaled questions divided into two sections. The main (first) section focused on the perceptions of teachers regarding classroom observation. This section included 19 items exploring faculty perception related issues, such as who should conduct the observation and what kind of report it should generate. The second section investigated teacher experiences with regard to classroom observation. It consisted of 14 items exploring issues related to the method of performing classroom observation. The estimated time to answer 33 questions was between 10 and 15 minutes. After the design of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to review the questionnaire before administration to the research sample. The findings of the pilot study recommended small adjustments in the questionnaire. The online version of the questionnaire was used instead of a paper-based version for ease of use and to ensure anonymity. The link of the questionnaire was emailed to the respondents of the study sample.

## Results

The survey was divided into two parts: perception of the participants and experience of classroom observation. Each part of the survey was further divided into two sub-sections in order to facilitate analysis. The first subsection dealt with the process of observation, and the second was concerned with results of the observation. The following are the findings of both parts of the survey:

### *a. Perception*

#### *i. Observation Process*

There were questions specifically assigned to explore the first construct of the survey, that is, the classroom observation process. The findings are summarized in Table 1 and provide a clear glimpse of the participants' observation process. For instance, when asked whether the observation would infringe on their academic freedom, the participants seem to differ on this issue. A slightly larger group (39.9 %) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement hinting that this issue did not constitute an important factor in the participants' view. Similarly, when asked whether they agreed that the teacher enjoyed the process of being observed in the

classroom, the largest group disagreed (45.3%, M = 3.3). However, when asked if the teacher enjoyed it as an observer, the largest group seemed to agree with this statement (47.1%, M= 2.7). Moreover, respondents of this study seemed to slightly agree with the idea that the PYP department should continue using classroom observation (34.4%, M= 2.8). However, the consultation of the involved parties in observation seemed to be an important issue for the participants as the majority of them (54.4%, M= 2.5) agreed that they would be more likely to participate in the process if the involved parties were consulted for its planning. Similarly, a high majority of participants agreed that there should be enough preparation for the process before executing it (70.8%, M= 2.1) and also that there should be a follow up after the process, but with not so large a majority (60.0%, M=2.4). Moreover, a very large majority agreed that the observer should be trained on methods to conduct the observation (87.2, M=1.6). The next statement whether there should be structured guidelines outlining the observation process, a high level of agreement among participants (81.7%, M=1.8) was observed. When asked if participating in the observation was stressful to them, a slight majority of respondents agreed with this statement (45.4%, M= 2.7).

**Table 1:** Perception on the Process of Peer Observation

Statement	Strongly Agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Mean
Classroom observation would infringe on my academic freedom.	16.3%	21.8%	21.8%	30.9%	9.0%	2.9
A teacher would enjoy the process of classroom observation as being observed.	3.6%	20.0%	30.9%	29.0%	16.3%	3.3
A teacher would enjoy the process of classroom observation as being an observer.	9.0%	38.1%	30.9%	10.9%	10.9%	2.7
The department should continue using classroom observation.	18.1%	16.3%	34.5%	23.6%	7.2%	2.8
I would be more likely to participate in classroom observation if parties involved were consulted in the planning of the process.	16.3%	38.1%	29.0%	10.9%	5.4%	2.5
There should be enough preparation for classroom observation before the observation.	23.6%	47.2%	20.0%	9.0%	0.0%	2.1
There should be enough preparation for classroom observation after the observation.	20.0%	40.0%	23.6%	12.7%	3.6%	2.4

Classroom observer should be trained on how to conduct observation.	50.9%	36.3%	9.0%	1.8%	1.8%	1.6
There should be structured guidelines outlining the process.	43.6%	38.1%	10.9%	3.6%	3.6%	1.8
Participating in classroom observation is stressful for me.	10.9%	34.5%	25.4%	27.2%	1.8%	2.7

## *ii. Observation Results*

The results section of the observation process was the second construct of this study which mainly dealt with the end-product of classroom observation. Table 2 presents the results of this section. Generally speaking, the participants demonstrated a positive perception about the end product of classroom observation. More than half of the respondents believed that the classroom observation would improve the quality of the instruction (54.4%, M=2.5). At the same time, more than a third of the participants thought that the observation program would improve the scholastic climate of the college and the university (43.5%, M=2.8). Almost the same percentage also believed that the classroom observation should be used both as an evaluation tool and as an improvement tool at the same time (43.6%, M=2.8, M=2.7 respectively). Moreover, more than a third of the respondents agreed that the classroom reports were valid (43.6%, M=2.8) while more than half of the respondents agreed that classroom observation reports were valuable / useful (56.2%, M=2.5). Although the above results reflected a positive perception about classroom observation among the participants of this study; nevertheless, there was some negative perception as well. For example, a majority of participants, thought that the classroom observation would probably not accurately measure their teaching performance (61.7%, M=2.2). Similarly, more than half of them believed that the observation results were a subjective rather than objective assessment of their performance (56.3%, M=2.5) thus expressing their fear of a bias.

**Table 2:** Perceptions on the Results of Peer Observation

Statements	Strongly Agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Mean
Classroom observation would probably not measure accurately my teaching performance.	23.6%	38.1%	25.4%	10.9%	1.8%	2.2
Classroom observation results in a subjective, rather than objective, assessment of my performance.	5.4%	50.9%	27.2%	16.3%	0.0%	2.5
Classroom observation program would improve the quality of instruction.	18.1%	36.3%	25.4%	16.3%	3.6%	2.5
Classroom observation program would improve the collegial climate of the college/university.	9.0%	34.5%	27.2%	20.0%	9.0%	2.8
Classroom observation is always used as an evaluation tool.	10.9%	32.7%	25.4%	25.4%	5.4%	2.8
Classroom observation is always used as an improvement tool.	12.7%	30.9%	30.9%	20.0%	5.4%	2.7
Classroom observation reports are valid.	1.8%	41.8%	38.1%	10.9%	7.2%	2.8
Classroom observation reports are valuable/useful.	7.2%	49.0%	29.0%	9.0%	5.4%	2.5

In addition to these questions, participants were also asked about the person who they believed to be the best to conduct classroom observation. More than half of the participants suggested a peer or a colleague (52.7%), a third thought it should be a senior member of staff (32.7%), while a few suggested an outside expert should be the best person to conduct it (10.9%), and only 3.6% suggested it to be a manager or a supervisor.

***b. Experience***

***i. Observation Process***

The main objective to examine the theme of experience was to evaluate the participants' view about classroom observation from their own experience. The real purpose was to compare their viewpoint gained through experience with their own perception about classroom observation, as reported above, thus drawing conclusions and suggestions for improvement.

The results of the participants' experience about the observation process are presented in Table 3. Participants seemed to differ on how they felt about their experience of classroom observation, as almost a third of them indicated that they enjoyed the process of classroom observation, while slightly more than a third indicated that they did not enjoy it (33.3%, 36.9%, M=3.0). When asked if there was sufficient planning and preparation before the classroom observation, more than a third of the respondents agreed that there was (38.8%, M=2.7). Almost a similar result was recorded when they were asked if there was enough follow up after the classroom observation (37.0%, M= 2.8). More than a third of them (35.1%, M=2.8) reported that the observer was trained on the methods to conduct the classroom observation. Moreover, when the respondents were asked if there were structured guidelines available for the observation process, almost half of them strongly agreed or agreed that there were (46.2%, M=2.7). A similar proportion (46.2%, M=2.7) believed that the observed classes were representative of their teaching.

**Table 3:** Experience of the Process of Peer Observation

Statements	Strongly Agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Mean
I enjoyed the process of classroom observation as being observed	3.7%	29.6%	29.6%	31.4%	5.5%	3.0
There was enough preparation for classroom observation before the observation.	12.9%	25.9%	40.7%	18.5%	1.8%	2.7
There was enough preparation for classroom observation after the observation.	3.7%	33.3%	37.0%	22.2%	3.7%	2.8
The observer was trained on how to conduct observation.	11.1%	24.0%	37.0%	27.7%	0.0%	2.8
There were structured guidelines outlining the process.	11.1%	35.1%	25.9%	25.9%	1.8%	2.7
The observed classes were representative of my teaching.	5.5%	40.7%	35.1%	11.1%	7.4%	2.7

## *ii. Observation Results*

Although participants seemed to reflect a positive idea about results of the observation, they did not believe it was an accurate measure of their teaching. Table 4 shows a summary of the results of their experience concerning the results of the observation. In this part, almost two thirds of the respondents believed that the observation did not accurately measure their teaching

performance (64.7%, M=2.2) Moreover, more than half of the participants felt that the observation resulted in a subjective rather than objective assessment of their performance (57.3%, M= 2.4). Nevertheless, almost half of the respondents agreed that the observation improved the quality of instruction (49.9%, M= 2.5), but only around a third of them agreed that the observation improved student learning (36.9%, M= 2.9). Just over a third of the respondents indicated that the observation process improved the collegial climate of the college/university (35.1%, M= 2.8). When asked if the observation was used as an evaluation tool or improvement tool, almost two thirds of the participants indicated that it was used as an evaluation tool (64.7%, M=2.4), while just less than half of them indicated that it was used as an improvement tool (46.2%, M=2.6).

**Table 4:** Experience of the Results of Peer Observation

Statements	Strongly Agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Mean
It did not measure accurately my teaching performance.	24.0%	40.7%	20.3%	14.8%	0.0%	2.2
It resulted in a subjective, rather than objective, assessment of my performance.	18.5%	38.8%	27.7%	11.1%	3.7%	2.4
It improved the quality of instruction.	9.2%	40.7%	35.1%	11.1%	3.7%	2.5
It improved student learning.	9.2%	27.7%	31.4%	25.9%	5.5%	2.9
It improved the collegial climate of the college/university.	14.8%	20.3%	35.1%	22.2%	7.4%	2.8
It was used as an evaluation tool	9.2%	55.5%	18.5%	11.1%	5.5%	2.4
It was used as an improvement tool.	11.1%	35.1%	31.4%	20.3%	1.8%	2.6

## Discussion

One of the main findings of this study was that participants held different opinions about whether or not the classroom observation would infringe on their academic freedom. The number of those who agreed with this idea was roughly the same as the number who disagreed. Historically, previous research also noted this dichotomy, considering it as one of the barriers to examining the practice of classroom observation (Blackwell, 1996; L. W. Keig & Waggoner, 1995; Martin, Smith, & Double, 1999). The reasons for such variation in faculty's opinions relate to several factors, among which the most prominent one relates to the person who conducts the classroom observation. Keig (2000) noted that faculty members apparently believed that their academic freedom was not under threat if the classroom observation was conducted collaboratively by one of their own colleagues. Secondly, the tenure on the job also determined the number of respondents who enjoyed the classroom observation process. This

study further revealed that a majority of total respondents believed that they did not enjoy the classroom observation; while of those who had been through the experience, only about one-third reported enjoying it. Blackmore found that the newer staff seemed to enjoy the observation process, while the majority just endured it (Blackmore, 2005)

When asked whether or not the PYP department should continue using classroom observation, the participants held divided opinions. A third agreed with the idea of continuing it and just a little less than a third disagreed with it. This difference in opinion might be related to whether the practice should be compulsory or optional. In another study, a majority was found to be in favor of the department continuing the classroom observation provided it was voluntary and not compulsory (Amrein-Beardsley & Popp, 2012). Another important issue on which participants seemed to have strong opinions was the consultation of all parties involved in the process of classroom observation. More than half of the participants believed that there should be consultation with all parties involved before conducting the observation. This seemed to echo the findings in literature sourced for the literature review (Bernstein, Jonson, & Smith, 2000; Braskamp & Ory, 1994; L. Keig, 2000; Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007; Travis, 1995).

In another study with a similar context, Shah and Al Harthi reported that teachers felt they were passive participants in the whole process of classroom observation (Shah & Harthi, 2014). Although a majority of participants in this study believed that both pre-observation preparations and post-observation follow-ups are important, which is consistent with other studies such as Kohut, Burnap and Yon (2007), which proved empirically that there was not enough preparation or follow-up for classroom observation.

A similar issue was reflected in the issue related to the training of the classroom observer. While a vast majority indicated that the observer should be trained, only 35.1% felt the observer had been trained. Shah and Al Harthi (2014) reported similar results, where participants expressed their concern about the observer being untrained in classroom observation. Other studies revealed that while observees felt the observers were adequately trained, the observers themselves were less confident about their training (Kohut, Burnap and Yon, 2007). This might indicate the need for more training (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hogston, 1995; Manning, 1986). A vast majority of participants in this study believed that there should be structured guidelines outlining the whole process of classroom observation. Kohut, Burnap and Yon (2007) indicated the benefit of guidelines as it increases the value of observation. However, in the participants' actual experience, less than half of them felt that there was any need for structured guidelines.

It is interesting that less than half of the participants thought that the observed classes were representative of their teaching. This could be due to the lack of participation in the planning process. This issue does not seem to be widespread in previous studies as only a few studies

reported that the observed classes were in fact representative of their teaching (Kohut et al., 2007). This is further emphasized by the finding that more than half of the participants in this current study believed that class observation would not accurately measure their teaching. A larger number of participants have also reported that in their experiences of observation, the observed classes were not representative of their teaching. This could be due to the fact that they believed that observation was used as an evaluation tool. This thought seemed to be further confirmed by their experience where almost two thirds of the participants reported that classroom observation was used as an evaluation tool. Nevertheless, more than a third of them agreed that the classroom observation was used as an improvement tool.

Regarding the validity of reports of the observation process, less than half of the participants believed that reports were valid, while more than half believed they were useful. This hints at the participants' worry about observation being used as an evaluation tool; hence, they question the validity of it, but they can still see the benefit of it. This explains the difference in their opinions in comparison with what is found in literature where the participants felt the reports were valid and useful (Kohut et al., 2007).

## **Conclusion**

Classroom observation is a very important tool in teacher professional development. However, it is a very delicate tool that must be dealt with carefully in order to obtain the most benefit from it. This research reiterates what previous literature has concluded about factors that might help in making classroom observation a useful tool. Among these factors are: firstly, the employment of classroom observation for improvement purposes only and not as an evaluation tool; secondly, participation should be voluntary though the department can encourage its staff to participate without putting any force upon them; third, there should be prior consultation between different parties regarding the details of the classroom observation process; fourth, enough training should be mandated for the observers to conduct the observation process; fifth, there should be clear guidelines outlining the whole process of classroom observation; last, but not least, sufficient preparation and follow up time should be put in place before, during and after the observation process in order to maximise its potential. All these factors, if taken into consideration when implementing the classroom observation, help in making the whole process genuinely useful, and enjoyable.

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