

Focus On Learning: Learning-Centered Classroom Observation

Lin Zhu^{1,a,*}, Hongmei Feng^{1,b}

¹Chongqing Longshui Lake Yucai Middle School, Chongqing, 402368, China

^axiaomaijc@163.com, ^byuzhonghao@foxmail.com

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: Classroom observation activity is not only a significant professional activity for teachers, but also a critical teaching and research activity. Unfortunately, the traditional classroom observation cannot fully promote the professional development of teachers, or accelerate the pace of progress in teaching and research. For the purpose of improving teacher professional development, regular classroom observation activities, as a way of school-based research, should focus on learning in a large number of classroom observation content. In addition, taking students' "learning" as the center and teachers' "learning" as the center should be clearly defined as two principles: the object of research and evaluation is students and their learning; teachers should be regarded as learners and exchange their experiences with the attitude of learning from each other when evaluating classes.

Keywords: Classroom Observation; Learning-Centered; Teacher Professional Development; School-based Research

1. Introduction

On November 25, 2019, the *Opinions of The Ministry of Education on Strengthening and Improving the Teaching and Research Work of Basic Education in The New Era* issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education points out: "Teaching and research work is an important support to ensure the quality of basic education. For a long time, teaching and research has played a substantial role in promoting curriculum reform, guiding teaching practice, promoting teachers' development, serving educational decision-making, etc. "Classroom observation activity is an important teaching and research work, and its innovation and development drives the practical development and implementation of teaching and research work. Teaching and research work always serves the growth of students and the development of education, while the growth of students and the development of education are always inseparable from teachers' professional development, classroom observation activity is a key link of teachers' professional development. Accordingly, the traditional classroom observation activities deserve careful investigation and study, and adjust and change them with innovative thinking and vision.

2. Traditional classroom observation that is not conducive to teacher's professional development

In different educational roles and diverse application scenarios, classroom observation exerts various practical values. Interestingly, classroom observation mainly involves the following three types of scenarios.

First, teaching administrators carry out identification, evaluation and assessment of teachers' quality and classroom effect in teaching management and activities, which includes the assessment of teachers' ability and the investigation of classroom teaching effect. It also includes the "interview" in the recruitment of teachers, the evaluation in the teaching competition, etc. This kind of classroom observation often does not use the way of quantitative scoring, even if it involves scoring, it often provides a "qualitative" evaluation from the senses before it is specific to the score. Second, the education and teaching experts carry out research and analysis on the tools used in the classroom. They observe the classroom by means of cooperation and scale. For example, the observation of the classroom by the LICC paradigm is divided into "4 elements, 20 visual angles and 68 observation points". This kind of classroom observation is characterized by meticulous, comprehensive and scientific. Third, schools, teaching and research groups and individual teachers take classroom observation as a way of school-based research in order to improve teaching quality and promote teachers' professional development. The behavior subjects

of these three kinds of scenes are different, which are teaching managers, education and teaching experts and teachers.

Different classroom observation methods should be applied in different application scenarios. For example, the LICC paradigm requires more professional research literacy and requires classroom observation people to enter the research state. The main purpose is to carry out professional measurement and research in the classroom. This research paradigm should be mainly used as a means of classroom observation for education and teaching researchers. For ordinary front-line teachers, the most common experience and the most far-reaching impact on teachers' personal professional growth is classroom observation as a teaching routine. This kind of classroom observation is also known as "colleagues watching classes with each other". "colleagues watching classes with each other" is a basic form of school-based training. Classroom observation helps to cultivate teachers' ability to actually solve classroom teaching problems, encourages teachers to improve their own experience, integrates the "uncertainty" knowledge in education and teaching, and effectively solves the transfer problem from theory to practice, as well as contributes to improving teachers' teaching level and improving teaching behavior. " [1] In this paper, classroom observation research of this application scenario is focused, and classroom observation is used as a school-based research method to improve teacher professional development.

As a school-based research, classroom observation activity is one of the important forms of teaching and research work in the school. Almost all schools have classroom observation activities at different levels every semester, and have unique classroom observation traditions and habits. But as far as I know, these classroom observation activities almost cover one or more of the following phenomena.

First, many teachers are unwilling to take "open classes" and become the object of classroom observation, nor are they willing to take the initiative to knock on colleagues' classroom doors and come into the classroom to listen to lectures. However, the school basically has the teaching requirements of "open courses" every semester, as well as the number of lecture sessions. In general, teachers are required to attend between 10 and 20 sessions per semester, especially new teachers are encouraged to listen to more lectures, "even if it is worth hearing only one learning point." Teachers generally do not take the initiative to ask for an "open class", and there may even be a question of deciding "whether to arrange the open class at the beginning or the end of the semester, and the latter is the next semester" by drawing lots, etc. As for the spontaneous classroom observation, where teachers learn from each other, some teachers' classes are also closed to colleagues.

Second, prior to classroom observation, there was a lack of communication between the instructor and the classroom observation teacher. Usually, the classroom observation teacher is not clear about the teaching focus of the class, student status, and teaching design ideas before class. After class, it is almost impossible to achieve two-way communication between the instructor and the classroom observation teacher, because after class, the way that classroom observation teachers speak one by one is adopted, and there is generally no focused topic for the content of the speech.

Third, the instructors pay attention to the performance and display in the teaching design and class, and pay attention to the creation of the so-called "Highlights". "highlight" mainly refers to the exquisite teaching art and teaching skills of the instructors, as well as students' wonderful speeches and performances. Instructors need to show the "highlights", and also design the students' wonderful speeches, performances and other behaviors as the "highlights" of the display. Even, if the students do not show actively, the class is not lively and "exciting", they will be criticized by the instructors after class. If there is no so-called "bright spot" in a class, both the instructor and the classroom observation teacher will feel sorry and say that the class cannot be called "a good lesson".

Fourth, when evaluating classes, there are often similar evaluation languages such as "If it were me, I would...". The discussion in these comments often implies that it is better to do better in accordance with the practice of the reviewers. The perspective and standards of class evaluation are also more personal, and a kind of classroom teaching behavior appreciated by one reviewer may become a place worthy of criticism from another reviewer. Each person has his own angle, method and focus of class evaluation, lack of unified evaluation standards and norms, and class evaluation has entered the deadlock of "there is much to be said on both sides". What's more, classroom observation has become a delicate office "political struggle" among all grade groups and lesson preparation groups, where colleagues organize their own views and express their views on "this class" with closeness.

These examples are numerous, teachers are not willing to open their own classroom, in turn, teachers can not make full use of classroom observation to improve their professional development and other situations. This is a systematic and unavoidable problem, not just blamed on an individual. To make matters worse, the administrators and teachers of education and teaching often have not experienced the

learning and training on classroom observation, resulting in the lack of a complete set of classroom observation procedures, standards and norms to rely on. However, classroom observation is considered to be very important when teachers are faced with the challenges of education, there is an urgent need to build cooperative colleagues, and there is a need to promote teachers' professional development. Japanese educator Sato said: "Teaching is a highly intelligent and complex work that most people can't imagine, and practical wisdom based on a large number of case studies must be formed in every teacher." [2] This explains why we face up to the value of classroom observation activities.

3. A new classroom observation: learning-centered classroom observation

The purpose of learning-centered classroom observation is to guide teaching and the professional development of teachers, instead of judging a teacher or a class. Its function lies to guide, standardize and stimulate instructors' future teaching and professional progress. We oppose taking classroom observation as a measurement behavior in daily teaching work, grading and ranking instructor, because such a view of classroom observation will exert a negative impact on the instructors. Even if the winner is affirmed and praised, it is disadvantageous to the construction of cooperative colleague relationship and to the future educational work.

The learning-centered classroom observation reflects two connotations. One is centered on students' "learning", and the other is centered on teachers' "learning". All educational and teaching behaviors should start with students' "learning", including classroom observation activities. Once educators' education and teaching behavior does not start with students' "learning", these education and teaching behaviors will become "a tree without roots and a source of water", because the ultimate goal of promoting teachers' professional development is also to promote students' "learning". In other words, only by taking the students' "learning" as the criterion and the starting point, can we provide a solid foundation for teachers' "teaching", and then classroom observation can truly exert its true value, and the teacher's professional development can be promoted, so as to improve the teachers' "teaching" and promote the students' "learning" again.

The evaluation content of classroom observation is diverse, and it shows the characteristics of multi-level, cross, etc. Professor Cui Yunhuo "deduces four elements of the classroom from practice: students' learning, teachers' instruction, curriculum nature and classroom culture". Then, "for the need of observation and following the logic of the theory, each element is decomposed into five perspectives, and then each perspective is decomposed into 3-5 alternative observation points, thus forming '4 elements 20 visual angles 68 observation points'". [3] These observation points are the evaluation content of classroom observation. Jiang Yu'an points out that the content of course evaluation is multi-perspective. "For example, we can evaluate the teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching process, teaching principles, teaching methods, teachers' quality and so on from the perspective of pedagogy; evaluate the cultivation and stimulation of motivation, the learning of knowledge, the formation of skills, the formation of moral character and personality from the perspective of educational psychology; or evaluate the implementation of the curriculum from the perspective of "curriculum standards", such as the nature and status of the curriculum, the basic concepts of the curriculum, curriculum objectives, implementation recommendations, etc." [4] In my opinion, as a school-based research, conventional classroom observation should make a trade-off based on the correlation with it and students' "learning". Students' "learning"-centered classroom observation should focus on education and teaching itself, focusing on learning, and truly realize the principle of "treat of a matter as a case for study".

At the same time, promoting teachers' professional development is teachers' "learning". Since classroom observation activity is also an activity of "learning", the role of instructor is both "teachers" and "learners". On the other hand, classroom observation teachers should also come out of the traditional role of "evaluator" and change into the dual identity of "cooperative colleague" and "learner". Since both instructor and classroom observation teachers show the identity of "learners", "learner", classroom observation activities should also conform to learning psychology and learning rules.

According to the choice theory, only when the learner feels respected and needed can he meet his need for a sense of belonging and self-esteem. And it is in this way that he feels that learning is meaningful, and he is willing to learn, and he has the possibility of fully improving. If the instructor takes the initiative to "open" his class, allows his class to be the object of the classroom observation, and feels respected and needed in classroom observation activities, then his professional development will most likely be promoted. In the study of "how famous teachers grow up", the researchers pointed out: "Open class is a process in which teachers examine, study and promote their daily teaching as an object. Through

the preparation, implementation and after-class communication and summary of an open class, teachers may gain more than the daily classes of the previous semester." [5] Compared with ordinary teachers, famous teachers tend to take more "open classes" on different display platforms, and this kind of "open class" is mainly a positive affirmation and display, which in turn promotes their growth. This implies that being respected and needed are important stimulating factors for teachers' professional development and growth.

In addition, instructors and classroom observation teachers are both "learners", and they are both members of the "cooperative learning body". Teaching work is highly intelligent, complex and professional, and requires cooperation among colleagues. Just as no doctor is willing to complete a complicated operation alone, teachers should not "fight on their own." More directly, teachers should build a cooperative relationship of positive interdependence, mutual promotion, mutual encouragement and support. The construction of this kind of cooperative relationship is inseparable from the teaching administrators' choice of evaluation methods when evaluating teachers, and the evaluation should adopt the way of "absolute evaluation" rather than "relative evaluation". Teachers should not compare each other, nor "use my ordinary to highlight your excellence", but set fixed objective goals and evaluate them through the achievement of objective goals. While setting personal goals, goals for cooperation should also be set. A teaching and research group or a lesson preparation group should be considered as a whole to "share weal and woe". The psychological positioning of both the instructor and the listener as a "learner" constructs a learning community, which is conducive to the construction of a cooperative community among colleagues.

To sum up, taking students' "learning" as the center and teachers' "learning" as the center should be clearly defined as two classroom observation principles: one is that the object of research and evaluation is students and their learning. The other is to treat teachers as learners, respect individual teachers and their work, and exchange experiences with the attitude of learning from each other. Probably, "in this class, I learned that..." can be used as the beginning of a lesson review.

4. Conclusions:How to develop learning-centered classroom observation

First, the instructor and classroom observation teacher should fully communicate before class and cooperate fully, and the latter should act as the "third eye" of the former. The instructor should communicate with his colleagues about the student situation, teaching objectives, teaching content, classroom design ideas, classroom preset key and difficult points. In turn, classroom observation teachers should also consult about relevant circumstances. If the classroom observation teacher is not clear about the specific teaching situation, the teaching content, the objectives, the design intention behind the "teaching method" and "teaching method" of the instructor, it is almost difficult for them to make an appropriate evaluation, resulting in negative emotions such as misunderstanding and lack of understanding among colleagues. Facing different students and different teaching situations, different coaches have different "teaching methods". Even in the face of the same students and the same teaching situation, there are no fewer than a hundred correct "teaching methods". When observing the classroom, classroom observation teachers should not evaluate the instructors by their own "teaching methods", but should act as the "third eye" of the instructors to observe the students' learning conditions which are difficult for the instructors to notice.

Second, pay attention to the students' "learning" and regard it as the main content of the class. Described in terms of development theory, what is the students' "actual level of development" (solving problems independently) before class? Have you created a "nearest development zone" in the learning process? What is the "nearest development area" created in the process of learning? That is, have the students achieved the learning goal of this class? How many people have reached it? What is the learning effect of the students? Classroom observation teachers can observe and record the students' activities, cooperation, speeches, eyes (questions, loss, knowledge, etc.), evaluation and other aspects in class. During the course evaluation, the reviewers can describe the students' learning behavior and publish the observations and statistics.

Third, examine the teaching objectives and contents of this course from the perspective of students' "learning". The teaching goal is the learning goal from the students' perspective, and the teaching content is the learning content from the students' perspective. Are the learning objectives and contents of the course consistent with the curriculum standards? Is it in line with the learning situation of the students? Does the processing of teaching materials match the use of teaching materials with learning objectives? What teaching content is generated in the classroom? Is it in line with the characteristics of the discipline

and conducive to the formation of the core literacy of the discipline? What is the capacity of this class? Does it meet the learning needs of students at different levels? These reviews are mainly based on the curriculum standards of various disciplines and the situation of students.

Fourth, in the after-class meeting, the instructor should talk about the teaching situation of this class and the reflection after class. In fact, the instructor has the most intuitive experience of the classroom, which can stimulate thinking the most. These feelings and thoughts are very valuable, so it is necessary to make these contents organized and clear in the summary and reflection after class. This is one of the keys to classroom observation's promotion of teacher professional development. Teachers' professional growth is affected by external and internal factors, while internal factors play a decisive role. The school takes the teaching and research group as the unit, forms a pure business group, and helps its major to grow continuously by listening to each other in the form of self-evaluation, mutual evaluation, student evaluation, writing post-teaching feelings, teaching journals, etc. " [6] Instructors' self-reflection after class will break barriers to the exchange of feelings among colleagues and maintain a more open mind.

Fifth, classroom observation teachers should learn from each other by exchanging what they have learned from the peer observation. Maybe they can start their speeches with "I learned in this class...". The reviewers pay attention to details, which can greatly stimulate the enthusiasm of the instructors to teach "open courses". The discussion of the reviewers, "if it were me, I would.....", "suggestions" and other ways of evaluation of the teacher as a teacher professional development often vary from person to person or have little effect. Because from the perspective of instructors as learners, learning often takes place on the basis of "willing to learn", and being respected and needed is the psychological guarantee of learners' "willingness to learn". Please note that there is no need to worry about the failure to point out the problems of the instructors, so that the instructors cannot be improved. If the instructor is in a state of psychological protection when listening to the evaluation, he will focus on refuting the criticism and opinions of the other party (this rebuttal is more of a state of mind than a verbal behavior), thus unable to learn or improve. The description of the students' "learning" situation, frankly and sincerely state their feelings, these evaluation contents will not confuse these instructors, but will strengthen their advantages in the teaching process and reflect on their own shortcomings. Once the instructor begins to reflect, there is a way out for the professional development of teachers.

References

- [1] Shao Guanghua, Dong Tao. *Observation Of Lessons and Teachers' Professional Growth*[J]. *Primary And Secondary School Teacher Training*, 2004(3): 6-8.
- [2] Sato Studies. *Challenges Of Schools: Creating A Learning Community* [M]. Translated By Zhong Qiquan. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2010.73.
- [3] Cui Yunfei. *On The LICC Paradigm of Classroom Observation: A Professional Classroom Observation* [J]. *Educational Research*, 2012(5):79-83.
- [4] Jiang Yu'an. *Three Basic Questions of Class Evaluation: Content, Standards and Ideas*[J]. *Curriculum ·Textbook ·Teaching Method*, 2007(3):25-28.
- [5] Guo Hua. *How Did Famous Teachers Grow Up—Talking from The Research of Five Famous Teachers*[J]. *Chinese Journal of Education*, 2008(8):31-34.
- [6] Hong Xueqiong. *Teaching Reflection-The Cornerstone of Teacher Professional Growth*[J]. *Primary And Secondary School Teacher Training*, 2006(5):40-42.