

## **Short Research Article**

### **The Walk-in Observation: The perception of teachers on its impact on classroom instruction and pedagogy**

#### **Abstract**

The primary objective of the study is to determine the perception of teachers on the impact of walk-in classroom observation practiced by principals and vice principals as a part of instructional leadership roles. The walk-in classroom observation system was implemented in 2022 by the Ministry of Education and Skill Development (MoESD), Bhutan. This research utilized a mixed-methods approach, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative studies. The quantitative study was conducted using self-developed 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaires for walk-in classroom leadership practice and impact on instruction and pedagogy. The qualitative study was conducted using a semi-structured interview. The study used 90 teacher participants purposively selected from 10 schools under Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag, Bhutan responds to the questionnaires and 10 teachers selected randomly for interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation while deductive coding and thematic analysis were used to analyze interview data. The findings of the study revealed that teachers generally had a positive perception of the impact of walk-in classroom observation on instruction and pedagogy (i.e., Agree) ( $M=3.47$ ;  $SD=1.1$ ), as indicated by their agreement with the survey statements. The results of the interviews further supported these findings, indicating that walk-in classroom observation had a positive effect on lesson planning, delivery, and professional development for teachers.

**Keywords:** *Walk-in observation, Instructional leaders, Teaching and Learning, Instruction, and Pedagogy.*

## 1. Introduction

Educational researchers have used the term “walkthrough” in their literature, but this study employed the term “walk-in” as used by the Ministry of Education and Skill Development, Bhutan. Both terms refer to a brief, structured, informal, and non-evaluative classroom observation by the school leaders followed by effective feedback on what was observed. The leader walks into the classroom at any point during lesson delivery time with the objective to observe and help the teacher deliver an efficient and quality lesson. The leader also monitors and provides effective feedback for the fast improvement of the teacher.

The study conducted by the Ministry of Education and Skill Development in 2021 found that some principals teach more than 20 periods a week, while most of the principals either do not teach at all or teach a lesser number of periods. The study implicated that principals hardly observe lessons and engage in Instructional Leadership, which is one of the primary mandates. (Ministry of Education and Skill Development, 2022). To fulfill their mandates, school leaders (principals and vice principals) are entrusted with the enormous task of ensuring teacher effectiveness in teaching-learning processes in schools. The task requires school leaders to become instructional leaders and move their academia forward keeping the administrative work abreast.

Unannounced classroom walk-in observations and effective feedback are ways that instructional leaders can ensure the quality of instruction and pedagogy.

As per the circular from the Ministry of Education and Skill Development, the principals and vice principals are required to observe one - two teachers every week and send the report to the focal persons assigned by the Department of Curriculum and Professional Development (DCPD) and Education Monitoring Divisions (EMD) (Department of Curriculum & Professional Development, 2022).

While the principals and vice principals have been in this culture of instructional leadership practice for four months since its enforcement in September 2022, teachers are skeptical about the impact of this practice on instruction and pedagogy. Therefore, this study intended to determine teachers’ perceptions of the impact of walk-in observation on classroom instruction and pedagogy. To achieve this purpose, the study focused on the general research question:

What are the perceptions of teachers on the impact of walk-in observation on classroom instruction and pedagogy?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Instructional leadership**

Teaching and learning are the fundamental goals of schools. As such, the primary goal of this study is to determine the impact of walk-in observation practiced by principals as a part of instructional leadership roles. To this end, it is intended to understand the perceptions of teachers on the instructional leadership role which is directly connected to the teacher's professional growth and the learning outcome of the students.

Therefore, the literature explored the concept, roles, and competencies required by principals for the fulfillment of instructional leadership. In the context of an educational setting, the 21<sup>st</sup>-century school leader is considered an instructional leader. Leaders or principals must fulfill the instructional leadership role where it is leadership that supports the development of teaching and learning.

According to OECD (2016), instructional leadership is the set of strategies principals apply to enhance teaching and learning. It is a good indicator of how well teachers cooperate and have reflective conversations about their practices. Baldanza's Model of 21st Century Instructional Leadership offered four theories of action, one of which focuses on the continuous development of teaching expertise through regular visits to classrooms and giving useful feedback to teachers and students (Baldanza, 2018).

Instructional leaders are seen as those who develop and support rigorous curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Further, instructional leadership is considered as an instruction in the teaching-learning process and to ensure teachers have done their job concentrating on pedagogy, focusing on student learning, and providing a practical form of the school vision (Dewi, 2010).

This study defines instructional leadership as a crucial component of efficient school management that has a deliberate focus and measurable effects on raising the caliber of instruction and learning in line with the mandate and visions of the Ministry of Education and Skill Development.

### **2.2 The Role of instructional leaders**

Besides the administrative role, the main roles of principals in the school as instructional leaders are planning, evaluating, coordinating, and enhancing teaching and learning (ICU, 2019). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership claims that instructional leaders determine the mission of the school, oversee the curriculum, encourage high standards, and give rewards to both teachers and students (Jensen et al., 2015). One attribute of principals as instructional leaders is working closely with teachers to assess their performance and support

their professional development through coaching and mentoring. To become an instructional leader, one must invest time in pedagogical problem-solving, take steps to enhance instructors' instruction, and hold teachers responsible for developing their instructional abilities. Leaders must have a thorough understanding of pedagogy and engage in practice themselves in this effort to enhance learning within the school community. (ECU, 2019).

To guarantee student achievement, the principal, who serves as the instructional leader, must make sure that the curriculum, the instruction, and the assessment all meet the necessary standards (Mafuwane, 2011). Phillips (2009) claimed that principals, as educational leaders, should be working with teachers to achieve this goal. He further argues that instructional leaders must be aware of what is happening in the classroom because it gives them the chance to understand and become aware of successes and failures.

Halim et al. (2018) asserted that classroom observation is crucial for increasing the visibility of teaching and learning. To improve their classroom management and teaching strategies, it offers teachers constructive feedback. To ensure this, teachers should pay close attention to how students and teachers interact in the classroom because it affects the learning opportunities students receive.

Additionally, observing students in the classroom inspires colleagues to work together to enhance teaching methods and student learning. Teachers can get the information they need about their classroom practices from the feedback they receive from observations, which can aid them in their ongoing professional growth. Moreover, Oliver and Reschly (2007) asserted that during the observation process, the principals and teachers work together continuously to establish a positive professional connection that fosters a teacher's professional development and growth.

### **2.3 Instructional leadership competencies**

The characteristics of successful and competent instructional leaders have been the subject of extensive research. These leaders are distinctive and each has one's strengths and weaknesses. Barkman (2015) stated that effective school leaders prioritize instruction and people. They conduct themselves professionally every day and regularly reflect on their actions. They cultivate a secure and inclusive atmosphere in their schools and hold themselves and others accountable for student learning.

According to DeWitt (2020) and Grissom et al. (2021), communication skills, understanding of curriculum and pedagogy, and the ability to handle complex situations are some of the crucial associated qualities that school leaders bring to the task of instructional leadership. When leading others, effective communication abilities involve the capacity to establish trust and clarity. It comprises having discussions that encourage curiosity about new things and strengthen interpersonal trust (Goleman 2016; Robinson 2015). To supervise and evaluate instruction, effective

leadership communication is essential (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991). Further, instructional leaders who are effective communicators make a difference in student achievement by focusing on student learning and inspiring the staff to do the same. Most of a principal's time should be spent in the classroom conversing with students and teachers and ensuring that instruction and learning are consistent with standards (Cross & Rice, 2000).

Another crucial attribute of instructional leaders is content knowledge in pedagogy and curriculum. To understand the success of teaching in the classroom, content knowledge in pedagogy and curriculum is extremely vital for managing the instructional program, and the effectiveness of collaborative learning and decision-making (Robinson, 2010; Stein & Nelson, 2003). School success is correlated with teachers' predisposition to turn to and trust instructional leaders who exhibit expert subject-matter expertise (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Marzano et al., 2005). Trust is an integral component of the relationship between the instructional leader and his or her teachers. An open, trusting relationship between the principal and faculty enhances motivation for all to work together in achieving the common goal (Cross & Rice, 2000).

Additionally, according to Stein and Nelson (2003), as cited in Ebrahim (2020), instructional leadership can be summed up under five predetermined categories: a) understanding students' individual learning needs; b) organizing social and interactive environments; c) encouraging learning expertise and appropriate tasks; d) encouraging students to improve themselves and imposing sanctions, and e) offering adequate resource support for learning. Without the capacity to receive help and the chance to reflect on their practice, any one of these categories would be difficult for a principal to engage with at the school level. This research entails the principals as instructional leaders to possess and be equipped with a wider range of attributes that help to channel the curriculum, instructions, pedagogy, and student learning holistically.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This research employed mixed methods as a methodological approach. The quantitative study adopted 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaires for walk-in classroom leadership practice and impact on instruction and pedagogy. The questionnaires consisted of self-developed 20 items as presented in Table 3 and Table 4 in the results section. The qualitative study adopted semi-structured interviews with selected teacher participants.

#### **3.2 Population**

The population sample of this study consisted of 90 teachers who responded to the online survey

questionnaires prepared in Google Forms. The population was selected purposively from three higher secondary schools, 1 middle secondary school, and six primary schools under Trashi Yangtse District. In total, 10 schools were purposively selected. The sample for qualitative semi-structured interviews was 10 teachers selected randomly from the three school levels as summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Number of participants from different schools*

Sl.No.	School Level	Number of participants
1	Higher Secondary Schools	50
2	Middle Secondary Schools	20
3	Primary Schools	30
<b>Total (N)</b>		<b>90</b>

### 3.3 Data collection

For quantitative data collection, the online questionnaires were administered via Google Forms in individual participants' emails, and responses were received on the same platform. For qualitative data collection, the selected participants were asked to share their views about the instructional and pedagogical impacts brought to them as a result of walk-in classroom observations. For ethical considerations, the concern letter from the District Education Office and participants' consent were sought prior to the commencement of data collection.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The quantitative data collected were computed and processed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23.0. Descriptive statistics like frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze the participants' responses to get a holistic view of teacher participants' perceptions about walk-in classroom observation. For data interpretation, the score range of the 5-point Likert scale summarized in Table 2 was adopted.

The qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted using deductive coding and thematic analysis procedures. The quantitative and qualitative data were then triangulated to add more validity to the findings.

**Table 2.** *Guidelines of data interpretation in perception questionnaires.*

Value	Range	Interpretation
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

2	1.81-2.60	Disagree
3	2.61-3.40	Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)
4	3.41-4.20	Agree
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree

#### 4 Results

In this section, the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data were presented and interpreted. The quantitative results from teachers' perception of walk-in classroom observation and the impact of walk-in classroom observation are presented followed by the interview responses.

##### 4.1 The level of teachers' perceptions of walk-in classroom observation as an instructional leadership practice

The responses of teacher participants were presented in Table 3. Based on the findings presented in Table 3, the overall perception of teachers about the walk-in classroom observation as an instructional leadership practice was positive (i.e., Agree) with an average mean score,  $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=1.17$ .

Among 10 statements under this theme, the item "I understand the purpose of walk-in observation has the highest level of perception with an average mean score of 4.27 and  $SD=0.90$ . It was followed by "Instructional leaders often conduct walk-in observations unannounced" which has a mean score of 4.08. The items "Walk-in observation is required for the teaching and learning system" and "Walk-in observation ensures consistent monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher" with mean scores of 3.65 and 3.67 respectively. The item, "Instructional leaders provide consistent feedback for improvement" has the lowest mean score of 3.31.

**Table 3.** Responses of teachers on walk-in classroom observation as an instructional leadership practice in Trashiyangtse District. ( $N=90$ )

	Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation(SD)	Level of perception
1	The frequency of walk-in observation is sufficient to support teachers	3.37	1.37	Neutral
2	The principal and Vice principal have a clear understanding of instructional leadership practices	3.38	1.39	Neutral

3	I understand the purpose of walk-in observation	4.27	0.90	Strongly Agree
4	Walk-in observation is required for the teaching and learning system	3.65	1.37	Agree
5	Walk-in observation ensures consistent monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher	3.67	1.28	Agree
6	Instructional leaders provide consistent feedback for improvement	3.31	1.29	Neutral
7	Walk-in observations are objective, developmental, and supportive	3.71	1.17	Agree
8	Walk-in observations are conducted with professionalism and integrity	3.82	1.01	Agree
9	Instructional leaders often conduct walk-in observations unannounced	4.08	1.01	Agree
10	Instructional leaders submit at least two observation reports weekly to the ministry	4.06	0.95	Agree
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.73</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Note: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree; 1.81- 2.60=Disagree; 2.61-3.40= Neutral; 3.41-4.20= Agree; 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree.

#### **4.2 The level of teachers' perceptions on the impact of walk-in classroom observations on instruction and pedagogy**

The findings presented in Table 4 showed that on average, teachers have positive (Agree) perceptions of the impact of walk-in observation on classroom instruction and pedagogy with an average mean score of 3.47.

There were 10 statements in this theme and out of 10 statements, “Walk-in observation keeps all teachers prepared for daily lessons” has the highest level of perception (i.e., Strongly Agree) with a mean score of 4.22, followed by item “Walk-in observation improves the planning, preparation, and delivery of lessons” with a mean score of 3.85 (i.e. Agree). The item, “Walk-in observation has affected the managerial roles of the principal and vice principal” has the lowest perception (i.e., Neutral) with a mean score of 2.90.

**Table 4.** Responses of teachers on the impact of walk-in observations on instruction and pedagogy

(N=90)

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of perception
1 Walk-in observation keeps all teachers prepared for daily lessons	4.22	.836	Strongly Agree
2 Walk-in observation improves the planning, preparation, and delivery of lessons	3.85	1.040	Agree
3 Walk-in observation motivates teachers to grow professionally	3.48	1.307	Agree
4 The walk-in observation increases the level of my anxiety and affects lesson delivery	3.33	1.175	Neutral
5 walk-in observation is beneficial to me as a teacher	3.12	1.269	Neutral
6 Walk-in observations build professional relationships between teachers and instructional leaders	3.45	1.206	Agree
7 Walk-in observation improves the learning outcome of the learners	3.15	1.093	Neutral
8 Walk-in observation allows teachers and instructional leaders to identify areas of professional growth and need	3.57	1.032	Agree
9 Walk-in classroom observation solidifies the principal and vice principal's role as instructional leaders.	3.65	1.035	Agree
10 Walk-in observation has affected the managerial roles of the principal and viceprincipal	2.90	1.108	Neutral
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>1.110</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Note: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree; 1.81- 2.60=Disagree; 2.61-3.40= Neutral; 3.41-4.20= Agree; 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree.

### 4.3 Thematic Analysis of interview data

10 randomly selected teachers were asked to share their opinions about the walk-in classroom observations, how this system impacted their classroom instruction and pedagogy, and what instructional leaders need to have to conduct effective classroom observation for teachers.

Then, interview transcripts were processed through coding procedures and interpreted in

narrative texts. Interviewees were assigned code names as T1, T2, T3...T10 to maintain their anonymity.

The majority of respondents have responded that walk-in classroom observations by their principal and vice principal brought them positive impacts in terms of planning and delivery of lessons. They shared that feedback received during observations helps them grow professionally and improve their daily lesson delivery (T1, T3, T6, T7, T9, T10). For instance, to put the quotation from my teacher participants;

The walk-in session has ensured that teachers are kept on their toes, especially with daily lesson plans. It has also helped in improving general teaching strategies through pre- and post-conferences (T9). As a teacher, it makes us remain well-prepared and enhance professional growth through feedback sessions. Classroom observation is an important part of teaching. Allow teachers to receive meaningful and direct feedback (T3).

However, a few teachers pointed out that walk-in classroom observations also negatively affect their confidence, anxiety, and disturbances in the flow of lesson delivery when someone visits their classrooms (T2, T4, T5, T8). As T4 elaborated; *“It became artificial teaching and we can't teach the way we want. Of course, it helps us in teaching quality but too much-visiting hampers children's learning as children's attention is diverted because offrequent visits”*.

When asked to share their views, what do you feel the instructional leaders need to conduct effective classroom observation? All the teacher interviewees shared that instructional leaders need to show the highest professionalism and subject knowledge and technical aspects of classroom observation. They also pointed out that instructional leaders need to focus on students' understanding rather than focusing only on certain criteria and they should make sure the school has enough materials and resources for learning and teaching purposes so that the requirement by the rubric aligns with the facility.

For example, T 5 described;

*For effective classroom observation as a part of the walk-in session, instructional leaders need to have sound and practicing teaching strategies/pedagogies. Moreover, having rich and relevant subject/content knowledge would always be a plus point. The instructional leaders must also possess the highest level of professionalism and integrity.*

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

From the findings, the overall perception of teachers about the walk-in classroom observation as an instructional leadership practice was positive (i.e., Agree) with an average mean score of  $M=3.73$ ,

SD=1.17. The result indicated that teachers agree that the walk-in classroom observation is an instructional leadership practice. Teachers rated “Agree” to the items “Walk-in observation is required for the teaching and learning system” and “Walk-in observation ensures consistent monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher” with mean scores of 3.65 and 3.67 respectively. This indicated that teachers “Agree” that walk-in classroom observation as an instructional leadership practice ensures teachers’ improvement with consistent monitoring and feedback. This finding corroborates Baldanza's Model of 21st Century Instructional Leadership, which focuses on the continuous development of teaching expertise through regular classroom visits and giving useful feedback to teachers and students (Baldanza, 2018). Similarly, Halim et al. (2018) asserted that classroom observation is crucial for increasing the visibility of teaching and learning. Therefore, the finding of this research can be concluded that walk-in classroom observations offer effective means for instructional leaders and teachers to continuously improve the teaching and learning process in the school.

Secondly, the findings from the teachers’ perception of the impact of walk-in classroom observation on instruction and pedagogy showed that teachers have a positive perception (i.e., Agree) with an overall average mean score of 3.47 and SD=1.1. From 10 items, teachers have a very positive perception (i.e., Strongly Agree) for “Walk-in observation keeps all teachers prepared for daily lessons” with a mean score of 4.22, followed by item “Walk-in observation improves the planning, preparation, and delivery of lessons” with a mean score of 3.85 (i.e., Agree). The item, “Walk-in observation has affected the managerial roles of the principal and vice principal” has the lowest perception (i.e., Neutral) with a mean score of 2.90.

In addition, the above research findings were supported by the interview of teachers. It was found that walk-in observations have positively impacted in planning and delivery of lessons. The feedback received during observations, helps them grow professionally and improve their lesson delivery (T1, T3, T6, T7, T9, T10). Consequently, it was also found that instructional leaders need to show the highest professionalism and subject knowledge, and technical aspects of classroom observation as instructional leaders. The current research findings support the idea of Dewi (2010) who stated that instructional leadership is considered as an instruction in the teaching-learning process and to ensure teachers have done their job concentrating on pedagogy, focusing on student learning, and providing a practical form of the school vision. Moreover, Oliver and Reschly (2007) asserted that during the observation process, the principals and teachers work together continuously to establish a positive professional connection that fosters a teacher's professional development and growth.

Therefore, from the analysis of questionnaires and interviews, the finding can be concluded that teachers have an overall positive perception that walk-in classroom observation helps to

improve the planning and delivery of lessons, professional growth, and build a professional relationship between teachers and instructional leaders with an average mean score of 3.47 and SD= 1.1.

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