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Classroom Observation in a Time of Reform: A Phenomenological Study of Public Elementary School Teachers' Experiences in the Schools Division of Pampanga, Philippines

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Abstract. Classroom observation has always been one of the key elements in teacher evaluation; however, the experiences of teachers while undertaking it remain unexplored. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of public elementary teachers in the Schools Division of Pampanga on classroom observation practices conducted during ongoing curriculum reform from 2022 to 2026. Based on Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (1978), the study involved twenty-four selected teachers who were recruited using purposive sampling, took part in semi-structured interviews. In addition, analysis was undertaken of national and division-level DepEd documents relevant to classroom observation and curriculum reform, such as the RPMS-PPST guidelines, the MATATAG Curriculum implementation policy, and other memoranda. Interview data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method, combining both inductive and deductive reasoning. The analysis was identified through participants' statements, focusing on four main areas with themes within each area. Moreover, interview findings were validated to provide additional documentary data on teachers' perspectives. Four main themes, each with sub-themes, emerged: teachers' perceptions of classroom observation; its implementation in schools; how it aligns with curriculum reform goals; and its impact on teachers' professional and personal well-being. Generally, teachers viewed observation as both evaluative and developmental, conducted through the RPMS-PPST framework and using the classroom observation tool (COT). Although the criteria aligned with reform objectives such as 21st-century skills and learner-centered instruction, educators reported that feedback was supportive, yet induced stress and anxiety when perceived as judgmental. Poststudy emphasizes the need for ongoing observer training, valuable pre- and post- observation conversations, emotional support guidelines, and a

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cultural change that views classroom observation as an opportunity for professional development, not just for compliance.

Keywords: classroom observation; classroom observation tool; curriculum reform; lived experiences; Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

1. Introduction

Curriculum reforms, or changes in the curriculum, not only change what teachers teach to students, but also impact the teachers' professional environment. As new curriculum reforms present updated expectations for instructional practices, classroom observations continue to serve as an essential process for understanding how these standards are applied in a classroom setting. In the Philippine public education system, the framework used for observation was developed by the Department of Education and is aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers; this guides how teachers' performance is evaluated throughout periods of systemic change.

Nevertheless, policies alone do not determine how reforms are being implemented in schools. The practices of the schools in observation are influenced by the culture of the institutions, leadership practices, and teacher professionalism. In the division of Pampanga, where the implementation of the curriculum reforms is already happening, classroom observation becomes important as the teachers' strategies, pedagogies, or overall teaching performance are being evaluated. By conducting this study, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders will better understand how the evaluation system works throughout the reform and how teachers apply the changing standards in their daily practices.

The study aims to examine how the guidelines for classroom observation and their implementation align with the goals of curriculum reform and how they impact teachers' lived experiences in public elementary schools within the Schools Division of Pampanga. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How is classroom observation being perceived by public elementary teachers?
2. How are classroom observation practices being implemented in public elementary schools?
3. How do classroom observation practices align with the objectives and requirements of the ongoing curriculum reform?
4. How do classroom observations influence the professional and personal well-being of teachers?

2. Literature Review

This study explores how curriculum reform and classroom observation meet in the public elementary schools in Pampanga. According to Unissa and Alhasan (2024), classroom observation is widely recognized as a tool for encouraging professional development and enhancing teaching practices, particularly when feedback is already being applied. Previous research emphasizes how observation practices are planned and experienced can meaningfully shape teachers' insights of their professional growth and efficacy (Caranyagan & Loquere, 2025).

However, while there may be an existing policy framework about classroom observation, there are still gaps and limited understanding as to how classroom observation functions in schools and what the teacher feels during the ongoing reform. By evaluating the alignment between the goals of reformation and the classroom observation guidelines, the study seeks to explore whether evaluation systems promote student-centered and innovative teaching or inadvertently reinforce compliance-oriented behavior. Examining implementation fidelity also emphasizes the gaps between policy design and school-level implementation, offering deeper understanding of how classroom observation processes affect daily practice (Unissa & Alhasan, 2024).

First and foremost, this study focuses on teachers' lived experiences, showing how observation systems help teachers in their professional growth, decision-making, motivation, and well-being. These perceptions can help policymakers and school leaders improve observation frameworks to be more coherent, fair, and supportive to teachers. Also, classroom observations strengthen the monitoring mechanism across school systems. The structured policy frameworks also help the standardized teaching practices and encourage ongoing improvement in different areas. However, circumstantial challenges at the school level affect policy interpretation and implementation, specifically during periods of disruption. The study finds that while there is an existing macro-level policy coherence, micro-level enactment varies considerably.

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) is a national framework that classifies teacher quality in terms of professional domains, competencies and indicators whereas its incorporation with the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) serves as an instrument for assessing performance dependent on context where teachers can continually track their development needs in instruction to improve school learning outcomes (Bacus et al., 2024). As a result, classroom observation is framed not simply as an evaluation tool for performance, but also a method for professional development wherein teachers are mentored and coached in the course of sustaining their continuing practice (Department of Education [DepEd], 2018).

Furthermore, regional studies highlight the function of professional learning communities in enhancing instructional coherence and learner outcomes. Although classroom observation guidelines are distributed through Learning Action Cells and policy orientations, differences in teachers' perceptions continue, highlighting the need for sustained mentoring and context-specific professional development. Implementation of fidelity remains a persistent concern. The processes in classroom observation function through the use of a classroom observational tool (COT) and the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), which are both connected to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) competencies. Although this was designed and used to standardize teacher evaluation, research indicates differences on how these frameworks are being implemented across schools. As such, the different styles in leadership and culture in institutions affect whether classroom observations are oriented toward developmental feedback or compliance-focused

assessment (Torres et al., 2024). Similarly, broader liability literature has mentioned that evaluation systems may lose reliability and fairness when rater calibration is not consistent and White and Ronfeldt (2024) emphasized that poor estimates of rater quality can weaken the effectiveness of large-scale monitoring systems. Moreover, administrative decisions, large class sizes, inadequate supervisory capacity, and uneven observer training may complicate the consistent implementation of evaluation practices (DepEd, 2019).

Beyond implementation quality, the literature emphasizes the importance of classroom observation criteria and curriculum reform goals alignment. Teacher competencies, when they are aligned with competency-based frameworks and reflective practice, can be enhanced using standardized tools (Tarusha & Bushi, 2024). For example, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) contains indicators such as teaching support and classroom organization that support learner-centered teaching (Kohake, 2024). However, research highlights that the reformation of the curriculum requires a coherent system (Fullan, 2020).

There are some cases where observation systems concentrate more on compliance than on higher-order or inquiry-based teaching (Kane et al., 2011), such as how the framework for teaching may be used as a checklist rather than a tool for meaningful feedback. Teachers' experiences can be affected by classroom observations but if there are clear standards and effective feedback, this will support reflection and the professional growth of teachers (Tarusha & Bushi, 2024). Reños and Pontillas (2024) also noted its role in ongoing professional development. However, teachers may also encounter stress and anxiety because of inconsistent evaluation practices, although support from school leaders can help to lessen these effects. In contrast, clear and constructive feedback may result in more positive views of evaluation systems (Bajec, 2026; O'Leary, 2023; Thida & Yang, 2026).

The period covered by this study (2022–2026) coincided with one of the most significant educational reforms in Philippine basic education, the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum (DepEd, 2024a). Introduced by the Department of Education as a response to persistent learning gaps and curriculum congestion, the MATATAG Curriculum seeks to strengthen foundational skills, simplify curriculum content, and improve the overall quality of basic education (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Although curriculum review and development activities had begun before its implementation, the curriculum was launched in August 2023, with the Department of Education conducting a pilot implementation prior to the phased rollout, which officially commenced during School Year 2024–2025, beginning with Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 4, and Grade 7 before expanding to succeeding grades in subsequent school years (DepEd, 2024a; Hernando-Malipot, 2024).

Consequently, teachers who participated in this study experienced different phases of curriculum reform. Teachers' experiences from 2022 to 2023 largely reflected the pre-implementation period under the existing K to 12 curriculums, while experiences reported during 2024 to 2026 increasingly reflected the

transition and implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Recognizing these phases is essential because teachers' perceptions of classroom observation were shaped not only by observation practices themselves but also by the changing curricular expectations that accompanied educational reform.

Similarly, classroom observation policies evolved during the same period. Before the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, classroom observations were closely associated with the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, where classroom observations served as one source of evidence for teacher performance evaluation (Cabato, 2024; DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015; DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017). However, during School Year 2024–2025, all RPMS-related activities at the school level, including rated classroom observation and portfolio assessment, were suspended until further notice, although non-rated classroom observations that were developmental and formative in nature were still allowed to proceed so as to support teachers' instructional growth (DepEd, 2024b). This policy shift reflected a movement away from emphasizing performance ratings toward strengthening instructional coaching and professional support. As a result, teachers participating in this study encountered classroom observation under different policy environments depending on the period in which their experiences occurred. Understanding these evolving policy contexts is therefore necessary to accurately interpret teachers' lived experiences throughout curriculum reform (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Fullan, 2020).

Overall, the literature shows that classroom observation in Philippine public elementary schools is affected by many related factors, including alignment, consistent implementation, support on the reforms, and teachers' experiences. While national frameworks like the PPST guide the institution, inconsistencies in evaluation rating affect how well these are applied. When observation practices are not aligned with the goals of reform, it shows that the focus is more on compliance only and it will ignore the meaningful improvement in teaching. Ultimately, very good alignment, proper training of observers when it comes to evaluation, supportive school culture, and professional development are needed to make sure that classroom observation enhances teaching quality and supports curriculum reform.

3. Methodology

The researchers utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers concerning classroom observation amid curriculum reform in the Schools Division of Pampanga. Phenomenological research was used because it focuses on understanding the importance of participants' experiences and perceptions, and it allows the researchers to investigate how teachers give meaning and respond to classroom observation practices within the context of systemic change (Moustakas, 1994). The approach focuses on the cognitive, emotional, and professional aspects of being observed, examining how observation influences teaching decisions, professional growth, motivation, and well-being. This design enabled a deep understanding of how classroom observation functions in

practice, emphasizing both alignment with reform goals and areas where gaps or inconsistencies influence teachers' lived experiences and professional development.

3.1 Research Locale and Participants

Purposive sampling was used and participants showed willingness to be included in the study. Twenty-four elementary teachers from six schools under four districts who were handling learners from grades 1 to 6 in the province of Pampanga participated in the study. Participants were chosen using the following selection criteria: (1) current public elementary school teachers employed in the division; (2) had undertaken at least one formal classroom observation with instruments (e.g., classroom observation tool, Results-Based Performance Management System, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES) during the reform period 2022–2026; (3) had at least two years of teaching experience to guarantee they were well-versed in instructional methods and classroom management strategies. Participants were asked to give informed consent voluntarily and were also required to be available for either online and face-to-face interviews, thereby making sure that they were ethically engaged in the process and genuinely reflecting on their lived experience.

Table 1: Profile of study participants (N = 24)

Participant	District	Years of teaching experience	Grade level	Number of formal classroom observations experienced
P1	Bacolor South District	21	6	20
P2	Bacolor South District	21	3	9
P3	Bacolor South District	25	6	10
P4	Bacolor South District	10	3	24
P5	Bacolor South District	2	1	6
P6	Bacolor South District	8	4	4
P7	Bacolor North District	17	6	15
P8	Bacolor North District	8	6	27
P9	Bacolor North District	18	1	20
P10	Bacolor North District	29	3	10
P11	Bacolor North District	16	6	4
P12	Bacolor North District	8	1	26
P13	Floridablanca East District	20	6	10
P14	Floridablanca East District	7	3	15
P15	Floridablanca East District	19	3	10
P16	Floridablanca East District	12	4-6	17
P17	Floridablanca East District	36	4	25
P18	Floridablanca East District	16	6	20

P19	Mexico South District	7	1	14
P20	Mexico South District	17	2	34
P21	Mexico South District	11	6	18
P22	Mexico South District	21	6	26
P23	Mexico South District	8	6	24
P24	Mexico South District	9	5-6	35

3.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were used to gather data and to explore the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers implementing classroom observation during curriculum reform in the Schools Division of Pampanga. Interviews were conducted in the second quarter of the current year, specifically in April and May. Semi-structured interviews allowed teachers to articulate their perceptions, interpretations, and emotional responses to the observation practices imposed on them, including their understanding of formal guidelines, fidelity of implementation, and professional impacts. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online, depending on participants' availability, and were audio-recorded to support accurate transcription and capture authentic narratives.

In addition to the interviews, document analysis further strengthened cross-verification of participants' accounts and examined discrepancies between policy (the DepEd observation guidelines, school-level protocols) and practice. These complementary approaches provided a broad perspective on classroom observation that encompassed both evaluative and developmental functions within an education-reform context. Data saturation was achieved when participants' responses became repetitive, indicating that sufficient and comprehensive data had been collected to adequately address the research questions.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Social constructivism was utilized as the main theoretical framework to understand how public elementary school teachers interpret and derive meaning from classroom observations during curriculum reform. Instead of seeing observation solely as a performance evaluation, the theory views it as a socially mediated process where teachers develop professional knowledge through interactions with school leaders, master teachers, and institutional policies. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) highlights how guidance, mentoring, and helpful feedback from more knowledgeable individuals support teachers' professional growth, helping them improve instructional skills and adjust to the evolving demands of the MATATAG Curriculum.

As a result, teachers' experiences of classroom observation are seen not just as personal responses but as meanings co-created through professional relationships, collaboration, and the wider educational environment. This perspective, combining phenomenology with social constructivism, captures teachers' lived experiences and illustrates how those experiences are shaped, understood, and transformed via social interaction during curriculum reform.

3.4 Data Analysis

The purpose of the descriptive analysis was to understand teachers' lived experiences as they encountered classroom observation at the time of curriculum reform in the Schools Division of Pampanga. The analysis corresponds to the phenomenological research design in seeking to understand what participants experienced, and how they interpreted and made meaning of their experiences with classroom observation as part of education reform. The interview data were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step descriptive phenomenological method to systematically examine the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers regarding classroom observation during curriculum reform. The analysis began with repeated reading of the verbatim transcripts to achieve familiarity with the data while maintaining a phenomenological stance through bracketing.

Significant statements relevant to the phenomenon were then identified and extracted, after which formulated meanings were derived by interpreting the underlying meanings of participants' accounts while remaining faithful to their intended perspectives. Similar meanings were grouped into theme clusters, which were further synthesized into overarching themes that described the shared experiences of the participants. These themes were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon and subsequently distilled into its fundamental structure. To ensure methodological rigor and transparency, an audit trail documenting the progression from significant statements to formulated meanings, theme clusters, and final themes was maintained throughout the analysis, thereby enhancing the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Rigor

This phenomenological study follows the guidance of Lincoln and Guba (1985) by focusing on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in assuring a trustworthy and methodologically rigorous research design. Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews to capture teachers' contextual and nuanced experiences with classroom observation during curriculum reform enhanced the study's credibility through prolonged engagement, as the researchers interacted with participants throughout the three-month data collection period. This included coordinating interview schedules, conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting approximately 60–90 minutes, and undertaking follow-up communications to clarify participants' responses and ensure an accurate understanding of their lived experiences within the context of classroom observation during curriculum reform (Creswell, 2013).

In addition, e member checking guided by Colaizzi's method (1978) ensured that the emergent themes accurately mirrored what participants intended. Through a thick description of the Schools Division of Pampanga, reform timeline (2022–2026), and participating profiles, transferability was reasonably addressed to allow readers to judge applicability within their respective contexts. Dependability was achieved through an audit trail of sampling, interview protocols, transcription, coding and thematic development based on the research questions. Reflexive journaling and use of verbatim participants' quotes

grounded interpretations in lived experiences which supports confirmability. To ensure the study remains transparent, systematic and ethically sound this research was conducted with formal clearance through informed consent, with confidentiality protocols in place (pseudonyms used) and participants had an absolute right to withdraw at any time.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study on public elementary school teachers' experiences of classroom observation amid curriculum and policy reform in the Schools Division of Pampanga was conducted in strict adherence to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as articulated in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) and operationalized through the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2017). Prior to data collection, the research protocol was submitted for review and clearance to the appropriate research ethics review board, and formal permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent, consistent with (Research Management Guidelines), which governs the conduct of research within the Department of Education.

Participation was strictly voluntary and based on informed consent, with participants free to withdraw at any point without penalty, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), which also guided the collection, storage, and disposal of participants' personal and sensitive information (Republic of the Philippines, 2012). Because classroom observation is linked to teacher performance evaluation under DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015 (RPMS Guidelines) and DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 (PPST Adoption), particular care was taken to assure participants that their responses would not influence their professional evaluation, thereby minimizing risks of coercion arising from the researcher-participant power dynamic. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their schools were preserved throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting, consistent with the ethical standards for qualitative and phenomenological research as described by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell and Poth (2018).

4. Results and Findings

The results are based on qualitative studies of public elementary school teachers' narratives about their experiences observing classroom practices in the context of curriculum reform. Adopting Colaizzi's method, four emergent themes have been generated: (1) classroom observations as perceived by teachers; (2) the implementation of classroom observations in public elementary schools; (3) coherence of classroom observation practices with the intended goals and nature of curriculum reforms; and (4) the influence of classroom observations on teachers' professional and personal well-being. The themes outline the ways teachers experienced, perceived, and responded to classroom observation practices in light of continuing change.

4.1 Theme 1: Classroom Observations as Perceived by Teachers

Teachers generally conceptualized classroom observation as an evaluative practice that can serve to make the process of professional learning more transparent, supportive, and developmentally focused. They saw it as a means of measuring effectiveness and feedback leading to improvement. This finding is in line with O'Leary et al. (2023) in how teachers made sense of classroom observation as a mechanism for holding them accountable while also serving to inform their professional learning. These views convey teachers' acknowledgment that observation is an essential part of effective teaching and continuous growth.

4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Classroom observation as an instrument for professional development

Teachers viewed classroom observation as a means of development focused on enhancing teaching competence and reflective practices along with instructional effectiveness. They saw observations as a chance to obtain feedback and help recognize changes. This observation aligns with those of Bhagwandhin et al. (2025), who also discovered that the presence of explicit reflective dialogue and professional conversations during classroom observations strengthens evidence indicating teacher learning as a result from instructional practice, leading to continuous improvement of teachers' competence.

"Observation is for the development of teachers." (P11)

"A uniform measure to assess teacher performance, identify needs, and provide support for professional development." (P2)

"In our school, classroom observation is a structured process designed to support teacher development and improve student learning outcomes." (P23)

4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Classroom observation improves teaching practices

Teachers viewed classroom observation as a mechanism to advance teaching practices by facilitating instructional strategies, refinement, and strengthening of classroom management and lesson delivery. They learned from observing and feedback about their instructional strengths, weaknesses, or potential changes that could lead them to improve practice. This result supports the results of Zhang et al. (2024) in demonstrating that observation-based feedback enables meaningful gains in the quality of teaching and greater instructional efficacy through reflective practice and evidence-informed pedagogical decision-making.

"Classroom observations serve several important purposes. First, they help teachers receive constructive feedback on their teaching practices, allowing them to identify strengths and areas for improvement...." (P22)

"Used to assess teachers and improve teaching practices." (P24)

"...identifying strengths and areas for improvement and to ensure that teaching practices effectively meet the diverse needs of our learners." (P9)

4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Classroom observation as perceived by the participants could foster professional growth and students' learning outcomes

Classroom observation was viewed by teachers that it could foster professional growth and improve student learning outcomes. They felt that constructive feedback and reflective dialogue developed their professionalism which, in turn, positively impacted their effectiveness as classroom practitioners by improving the quality of teaching strategies they were able to use with student learning. This result is consistent with White and Maher (2024), who found that rubric-based classroom observations supported ongoing teacher learning to improve instruction, enhance the quality of teaching, and impact student learning positively.

"In my opinion, the purpose of classroom observations is to help teachers improve their teaching strategies, ensure quality learning for students, and provide constructive feedback for professional growth." (P21)

"To support teacher growth and to improve pupil learning outcomes." (P20)

"To support professional growth, especially beginning teachers, improve teaching quality through mentoring and ensure learners get the best learning experience." (P19)

4.2 Theme 2: Implementation of Classroom Observations in Public Elementary Schools

Classroom observations are typically a regular part of instructional supervision in public elementary schools; these are used to track the quality of teaching and support teachers' professional development. Classroom observations were described as a routine practice woven into the fabric of school life, although there was still variability in their consistency and quality of feedback between schools. The differences impacted how teachers experienced and perceived the observation process. These results corroborate the findings of Liwag and Lo (2025) who argued that effective implementation is contingent on systematic observation practice, instructional coaching efforts to support teachers' professional growth, and school leadership committed to helping transform teaching performance.

4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Structured implementation of classroom observations

Classroom observations implemented in public elementary schools follow a systematic process grounded in national frameworks. At least twice per school year, observations are consistently undertaken following the mandate of the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) and are anchored in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This system defines the domains and indicators against which teaching performance is measured (DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015). Using the standardized classroom observation tool (COT) the classrooms are ensured in focusing on lesson delivery, learning and classroom management, which reinforce observation as a mechanism for both professional accountability and instructional improvement.

"They conducted classroom observations twice during the school year." (P1)

"Classroom observations in our school are conducted following a structured process aligned with PPST and RPMS guidelines..." (P10)

"They use a standard tool to observe my lesson, focusing on how I deliver, how learners participate, and how I manage the class." (P18)

4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Systematic implementation of classroom observation practices

Characterized by the application of standardized guidelines across all teachers and classrooms, it shows practices of systematic implementation of classroom observations. Using clear criteria in encompassing lesson planning, teaching delivery, and classroom management will ensure every teacher is being evaluated against the same professional expectations, promoting objectivity in the assessment process (DepEd Order No. 4, s. 2022). Rubric-based adaptation in using observation tools establishes clear standards for teaching practice by making evaluation criteria transparent and ensuring that all evaluators apply the same established indicators (White & Maher, 2024). Standardizing classroom observation procedures, including training protocols, observation parameters, and scoring guidelines, is essential for promoting reliable and valid teacher evaluations (Herrano, 2025). These practices strengthen the credibility and integrity of the evaluation process while enhancing teachers' confidence in the observation system and fostering a culture of professional accountability and continuous instructional improvement in public elementary schools.

"...the guidelines are generally applied consistently, as they provide clear criteria for lesson planning, teaching delivery, and classroom management..." (P5)

"Classroom Observation Guidelines are applied consistently by using standardized tools, clear indicators, and uniform criteria that is why all teachers are evaluated based on the same expectations." (P8)

"Yes, the classroom observation guidelines are generally applied consistently across classrooms and teachers in our school." (P10)

4.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Classroom observation and feedback practices

Classroom observations and feedback practices remain an ongoing challenge to the implementation of classroom observation within public elementary schools. Standardized tools like the COT under the RPMS-PPST framework standardize observation as an evaluation basis as observers may differ in conceptualizing what it means to be a good teacher, and how they prioritize different instruction and skill sets when giving feedback. Some observers stress the importance of seeing student engagement, others look for instructional materials or lesson planning – leading to differences in how teachers' performance is measured and supported.

This finding supports Herrano (2025), who found that the lack of consistency in evaluation criteria eroded teachers' confidence and adversely impacted instructional performance, highlighting the need for transparent, fair and consistent observation practices. Likewise, Torres et al. (2024) noted that the abilities and professional judgment of observers wield a key influence on how

well classroom observations work. Their research also found honesty, confidentiality and delivering constructive actionable feedback to be additional critical components of an effective observation process. When taken together these findings paint a picture of how as policy frameworks set out standardized guidelines for implementing classroom observation, normative variations in the definition and scope may undermine its consistency and developmental intent. Fostering observer calibration, consensus indicators for what will be observed in classroom observation and constructive feedback delivery therefore contribute to more equitable and reliable as well as useful public elementary school practices.

"Some administrators focus more on student engagement and interaction, while others pay closer attention to lesson planning or the use of instructional materials." (P5)

"Some administrators focus more on instructional materials, while others prioritize classroom management and learner interaction during their feedback." (P9)

"I've seen some differences. Some focus more on how we teach, while others pay more attention to class management and participation of pupils." (P12)

4.3 Theme 3: Coherence of Classroom Observation Practices with the Intended Goals and Nature of Curriculum Reforms

Curriculum reform necessitates changing the way instruction, assessment and teaching strategies are performed in order to meet learning goals. Classroom observation has emerged as a cornerstone instrument to track whether curriculum reform is reflected in classroom practice by teachers. By observing systematically, school leaders are able to evaluate the quality of instruction and offer feedback for improvement while also supporting teachers with thoughtfully designed curriculum changes (Charalambous & Praetorius, 2020).

4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Structured framework of classroom observation practices for curriculum reform

The practices of classroom observation are carried out through a framework for aligning instructional supervision with curriculum reform goals and standards. Participants felt that observation protocols set clear expectations for teaching, were helpful in laying out the requirements of curricula and fostering consistency in practice. Classroom observations provided an avenue for preparation through structured input and professional guidance to enhance curriculum implementation quality. These findings are consistent with Kraft and Christian (2022), who emphasized that high-quality instructional supervision and meaningful feedback are critical to teachers' professional learning, although their effectiveness depends on administrators' capacity to provide timely, specific, and actionable feedback.

"The observation indicators change depending on the curriculum, as far as I have observed, so therefore, I can say that the indicators in classroom observation reflect the objectives of the new curriculum." (P3)

"The observation criteria are aligned with the new curriculum's goals because they focus on ensuring lessons are learner-centered, developmentally appropriate, and skills-based." (P5)

"The observation criteria reflect the objectives of the new curriculum by focusing on key outcomes such as learner-centered instruction, critical thinking, and the development of 21st-century skills." (P8)

Participants indicated that observation indicators are adjusted according to curriculum changes and emphasize learner-centered instruction, developmentally appropriate teaching, critical thinking, and the development of 21st-century skills. This suggests that classroom observation serves as an effective mechanism for ensuring that teaching practices support the goals and expectations of the new curriculum. These findings are supported by Charalambous and Praetorius (2020), who emphasized that classroom observation systems should evolve to assess instructional practices that promote higher-order thinking, student engagement, and deeper learning.

Likewise, Barrot (2023) pointed out that successful curriculum reform in the Philippines should be able to align curricular goals and intended learning outcomes with instructional practices as well as assessment methods while prioritizing learner-centeredness alongside the 21st century skills. Additionally, Abrigo et al. (2025) found that the first-year implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum improved instructional practices by providing teachers with greater flexibility in lesson delivery, promoting contextualized instruction, and strengthening teacher collaboration. The study also emphasized that sustained professional support, continuous capacity-building, and adequate instructional resources are essential for the successful implementation of curriculum reform.

Moreover, Lindorff et al. (2020) noted that classroom observation frameworks generally emphasize either generic dimensions of teaching or content-specific instructional practices. They argued that hybrid observation frameworks, which integrate both generic and content-specific indicators, provide a more comprehensive approach to evaluating instructional quality across diverse teaching contexts. The findings overall show that classroom observation can serve as a translation device for curriculum reforms into practice in classrooms. It serves not just as a measure of teacher performance but is designed to support instruction improvement and ensure that learning goals are met.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Fostering innovative and learner-centered teaching practices

Classroom observation offers teachers the opportunity to implement reflective teaching practices that are innovative and learner-centered approaches aligned with curriculum reform objectives and continuous improvement. They learn to create more intentional and meaningful learning experiences that engage all types of learners through constructive feedback and professional dialogue. Liwag and Lo (2025) concurred with this finding, stating that the practice of classroom observation enables teachers to refine their instructional decision-making processes while adapting learner-centered pedagogies in line with contemporary curriculum reform initiatives. Similarly, Torres et al. (2024) indicated that

meaningful observation and feedback are more likely to prompt teachers to adjust their teaching practices, try new strategies or tools with students, and increase student engagement in a way that will lead to gains in both teaching effectiveness as well as learning outcomes.

"I feel that the observation system encourages innovative and learner-centered teaching. The criteria focus on how teachers engage students actively, use varied teaching strategies, and apply critical thinking and problem-solving activities in the classroom..." (P1)

"...By emphasizing student participation, problem-solving, and interactive strategies, the system encourages teachers to try new methods and focus on learners' needs rather than just delivering content." (P5)

"Yes, because it evaluates how teachers actively engage learners, adapt strategies to diverse needs, and promote critical thinking rather than relying on traditional lecture methods..." (P8)

4.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: A tool for curriculum alignment and instructional effectiveness

Classroom observation is a good way to ensure the curriculum aligns and instructional effectiveness increases. Using systematic observation and feedback, teachers can learn about the extent to which their teaching practices align with curriculum standards and reform goals. The cycle facilitates reflection, refinement of teaching practice and adjusting to learner needs. Therefore, classroom observation anchors the continuity of curriculum objectives while fostering optimal teacher effectiveness and enhanced student learning experiences. This result supports findings by Martinez et al. (2016) that classroom observation is one of the foundational practices for teacher development and instructional improvement, supplying formative feedback that assists in working to align what occurs in classrooms with higher educational aims.

"Observation supports curriculum reform goals by helping teachers improve their teaching practices that are timely and more aligned with the changes in the curriculum." (P3)

"It supports curriculum reform goals for example, during an observation, a teacher was praised for implementing project-based learning, which encouraged collaboration and critical thinking, directly aligning with the new curriculum's focus on learner-centered approaches..." (P8)

"Observers provide positive feedback for using differentiated instruction, ICT, collaborative learning and student active participation." (P15)

4.4 Theme 4: Influence of Classroom Observations on the Professional and Personal Well-being of Teachers

Classroom observations tend to play a big part in the career of the teachers, impacting on their personal well-being and professional growth. It may burden them, but it may also improve their skills in teaching. According to Tarusha and Bushi (2024), the use of standardized classroom observation tools is not implemented to add burden to teachers, but to assist them in the teaching and learning process. This will also empower or help teachers to identify pedagogical

needs and strategies that will benefit the students. Teachers understand also that the purpose of classroom observation is for instructional improvement. It serves them as a guide to assess their performance and to make changes for their improvements. Classroom observations also help to develop a supportive and growth-oriented environment for teachers, which may help them to improve their professional and personal well-being.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Promotion of reflective teaching practice

Classroom observation is a part of a teacher's life in school; it may be a part of routine supervision or being monitored by school leaders. Teacher observation is a step in the process of identifying what changes teachers may want to make. Classroom observation is an important process that a school principal can utilize to assess the performance of teachers and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It will also help teachers to find ways to improve the teaching and learning processes. Direct responses enable teachers to know and reflect on their teaching methods and strategies. Feedback from teaching experts or from leaders enhances teachers' instructional practices such as pedagogy or strategies that may improve student achievements (Tarusha & Bushi, 2024).

"Classroom observations have significantly influenced my teaching practices by helping me reflect on my instructional strategies and identify areas for improvement..." (P1)

"Classroom observations have positively influenced my teaching practices by helping me become more reflective and intentional in my lesson delivery...." (P10)

"Classroom observations have helped me improve my teaching by making me more reflective and aware of my strengths and areas for improvement...." (P16)

"Classroom observations have helped me reflect on my teaching and to be more interactive and pupil centered." (P20)

4.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Constructive and meaningful feedback as a catalyst for instructional improvement

Constructive and meaningful feedback plays an important role in improving teachers' instructional practices and professional development. Teachers' high levels of well-being and satisfaction indicate that classroom observation is not viewed merely as an evaluative process but as a supportive mechanism that encourages growth and continuous improvement. Classroom observation becomes more effective when accompanied by the quality of feedback which helps teachers know their strengths, determine the areas for improvement, and develop greater confidence in their teaching skills and abilities.

The supportive nature of the feedback process also contributes to teachers' sense of readiness and capability, promoting a positive professional environment where continuous learning is encouraged. Also, graded classroom observation aids as an effective developmental tool when accompanied by meaningful feedback. Instead of forming anxiety or pressure in mind, the observation process helps teachers to

have proper well-being and instructional improvement (Sajul & Castil, 2026). Accordingly, constructive feedback acts as a catalyst for professional growth, allowing teachers to improve their classroom performance and ultimately enhance the quality of teaching that they provide to student learning experiences.

"Constructive feedback on how to improve areas of improvement and they help me improve and be open minded to more teaching strategies applicable to my diverse learners." (P3)

"I receive suggestions that are helpful, and I also receive appreciation, with feedback that I am doing a great job." (P13)

"I usually receive constructive feedback that highlights my strengths, points out areas for improvement, and suggests practical strategies. It is very helpful because it gives clear guidance on how to enhance my teaching and better support student learning." (P16)

4.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: The dual influence of classroom observation on teachers' professional and emotional well-being

The effect of classroom observation is beyond professional growth, because it also influences teachers' emotional well-being. Teachers' experiences in classroom observation can increase teachers' confidence and enable them to become more motivated. However, stressful observation processes may cause anxiety and emotional pressure. This dual influence emphasizes the aspects of teachers' lives. Classroom observation is one of the ways by which schools monitor and provide support to teachers in instructional improvement. Classroom observation may also result in positive outcomes when it is being implemented in schools successfully. Teacher well-being has become a focus in education because of its strong connection to the instructional effectiveness and quality of teaching (Sajul & Castil, 2026).

Furthermore, when teachers feel supported, appreciated, and guided, they are more likely to excel and perform effectively in their roles. There are some studies that have shown professional support, self-efficacy, and positive school environments lead to higher levels of satisfaction and improved instructional outcomes (Habibi et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025; Sajul & Castil, 2026). Teachers experience a wide range of emotions with varying levels of intensity; they also use emotion regulation strategies to increase instructional effectiveness and professionalism. Teachers who experience school support, engage more in teaching, and may adopt antecedent-focused emotion regulation in disciplining students, which may help these teachers to have greater well-being (Wang et al., 2023).

"Even veteran teachers often feel a 'performance jitters' effect, leading to stress, sleep loss, or second-guessing their natural instincts." (P6)

"Yes, classroom observations have affected me emotionally and personally by making me more self-aware and reflective of my teaching practices. At times, they create a sense of pressure, but they also motivate me to improve, become more confident, and view feedback as an opportunity for growth rather than evaluation." (P10)

"Yes, sudden observations can be stressful, especially at my age, because I need more time to prepare and adjust to modern teaching trends, but they also push me to keep improving." (P12)

5. Synthesis of Findings

The results of this study provide a multi-dimensional perspective on classroom observation through the experiences and perceptions of public elementary school teachers, as they undertook curriculum reform in their classrooms. When looked at through the lens of the four emergent themes, one striking finding indicated that teachers' professional practice acknowledged classroom observation as evaluative and developmental, thus providing for continuous development within a structured system to improve instruction delivery aligned with curriculum area. Classroom observations were conducted in a systematic fashion based on national frameworks and implemented through the RPMS-PPST with COT standardizing all possible criteria that can be used in evaluating and rating lesson delivery, learner engagement, and classroom management.

The range of priorities among observers and differences in the way their feedback was acted upon introduced variations that were inconsistent, undermining any equity-based intentions. Teachers reported that observations catalyze reflection on practice and innovation in teaching methods, contributing more to learner-centered pedagogies – consistent with 21st century competency-based objectives of the curriculum reform. However, the dual effect of classroom observation on teachers' professional as well as emotional well-being highlights its multifaceted impacts – positive feedback boosted self-efficacy and growth but evaluative pressure or inconsistent feedback generated anxiety and emotional upheaval. Building on this, the collective findings suggest that classroom observation can be an effective tool for reform when it is done well, with sufficient frequency and a growth mindset to support sustained change in a positive school climate.

6. Conclusion

Classroom observation is an important tool to evaluate teachers in public elementary schools. This will help them to improve their instructional practices and the support in the curriculum reforms will be acknowledged. The teachers know that classroom observation helps them to measure their performance. By measuring their performance, they know their strengths and weaknesses, and they will enhance what needs to be improved in their teaching pedagogy.

The utilization of the classroom observation tool (COT) under the RPMS-PPST framework gives a clear and consistent process that encourages fairness and consistency in the evaluation of the teachers. However, there are still inconsistencies in what the observers focus on and the quality of the feedback they give. This shows that there are still gaps on how observations are being utilized across all classrooms. Moreover, the criteria in observation and curriculum reform goals alignment, specifically student-centered instruction and 21st century skills, show that the curriculum reformation is still supported by the system of education. Furthermore, as classroom observation becomes an emotional burden to some teachers, specifically in a highly evaluative context, it means that there is

a need to reconceptualize classroom observation not for compliance but as a process of growth for teachers, a supportive, trust-based professional learning process. Generally, aside from having a good relationship between the observer and the teacher, as this will help the teacher to be more confident in teaching, the study concludes that the observers must provide meaningful feedback after the observation, for the teachers to know what needs to be improved in their instructional practices.

7. Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations that must be borne in mind when interpreting these results. First, it used a qualitative phenomenological design and was aimed at understanding the experiences of public elementary school teachers from different district curriculum reform efforts as it related to classroom observation. Thus, while the results give a rich picture of participants' experience it is not meant to generalize for all public elementary school teachers in every domain across educational setting umbrella or even other Philippine contexts.

Second, the purposive sampling method was used to select respondents from among schools under the Schools Division of Pampanga. This sampling strategy allowed the researchers to obtain detailed and rich descriptions from people who have direct firsthand experience with the phenomenon; however, perspectives obtained do not reflect experiences of teachers within other school divisions, regions or even educational settings with different organizational cultures and implementation practices.

Third, the study used in-depth interviews as its main method supplemented with a review of teaching observation protocols and other policy documents that provided context for what was being studied. The results were largely self-reported which may be affected by personal memory, perspective or the tendency to provide socially desired responses.

The study was conducted in the midst of a curriculum reform cycle in the Philippines basic education system. Since educational policies and practices of classroom observation are continuously changing, the findings represent interpretations by participants as situated in one context and time period; comparisons with earlier studies may not hold as reforms, implementation strategies and institutional practice materialize over time.

8. Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, the Department of Education should provide training for observers to address inconsistencies and differences when it comes to evaluating teachers and also to ensure that the classroom observation tool (COT) is applied consistently across all classrooms. School leaders must also provide meaningful discussion before and after the observation, emphasizing the strength and weaknesses of the teacher as this will help them to improve and be motivated. Schools should provide emotional support for teachers such as peer mentoring, classroom observation with colleagues, and wellness programs to help reduce anxiety during the observation process. School administrators should also build a

trusted culture and transparency so that teachers can experience observation as a helpful process of professional growth rather than school monitoring. For future research, the use of longitudinal and mixed methods designs across multiple school divisions and geographic contexts are encouraged to provide a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding about the implementation of classroom observation. Future studies may examine how observer training quality, school leadership style, and institutional culture affect the quality of observation feedback. They should also examine how classroom observation affects the teacher's well-being and the teaching and learning process over time to provide stronger evidence for improving policies in the system of education.

9. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this study. The research was conducted independently, and no personal, professional, or financial interest influenced the study's design, design collection, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of findings.

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