

A Review on Educational Practice Observation Programs

Una revisión sobre programas de observación de la práctica educativa

Uma revisão dos programas de observação da prática educativa

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Abstract

This paper features a review of 58 international observation programs of educational practice to get an international approach about it and to understand what kind of teacher professional development is launched according to the observation model developed: evaluation, development and collaborative (Gosling, 2005). Specifically, we pursue three objectives: (1) to describe the programs; (2) to identify if there is an international trend; (3) to understand the reach of the collaborative model. We examine the following categories through documental analysis: (i) general aspects; (ii) objective; (iii) methods; (iv) role of observation. Results show a rising trend in collaborative programs among teachers and, also, they show a confrontation still present today between the evaluative and the collaborative models. There are several future research areas, highlighting two of them: to study the impact of programs in teacher performance and student learning, as most of them don't gather this information, and to analyze in depth the observation models which are executed in each program. To achieve both, it is important to rise above the limitations of this research, by expanding the number of reviewed programs, focusing on a geographic area or doing a comparative study between countries as to better understand teacher professional development policies through the observation of educational practice.

Palabras clave: observation, reflective teaching, educational practice, communities of practice, teacher collaboration, professional development.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta la revisión de 58 programas internacionales de observación de la práctica educativa, con el propósito de obtener una panorámica internacional sobre la cuestión y comprender qué tipo de desarrollo profesional docente subyace en función del modelo de observación ejecutado: evaluativo, de desarrollo y colaborativo (Gosling, 2005). Específicamente, se persiguen tres objetivos: (1) describir los programas; (2) identificar si existe una tendencia internacional; (3) conocer el grado de impulso del modelo colaborativo. A partir del método análisis documental se han examinado las siguientes variables: (i) características generales; (ii) objetivo perseguido; (iii) métodos utilizados; (iv) papel de la observación. Los resultados muestran la tendencia en alza de programas que fomentan la observación colaborativa y la confrontación aún existente entre este modelo y el evaluativo. Las líneas de investigación futuras son diversas, entre las que destacan: estudiar el impacto de estos programas en el desempeño docente y el aprendizaje del alumnado, ya que la mayoría no recoge esta información, y analizar con mayor profundidad los modelos de observación impulsados en cada programa. Para lograr ambas, es importante superar las limitaciones de esta investigación, ampliando el número de programas revisados y centrar el análisis en alguna área geográfica concreta o realizar un estudio comparado entre diversos países, que permita comprender en profundidad la orientación de las políticas de desarrollo profesional docente a través de la observación de la práctica educativa.

Palabras clave: observación, enseñanza reflexiva, práctica educativa, comunidades de práctica, colaboración docente, desarrollo profesional.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma revisão de 58 programas internacionais de observação da prática educativa, a fim de obter um panorama internacional da questão e compreender que tipo de desenvolvimento profissional docente está subjacente em função do modelo de observação implementado: avaliativo, desenvolvimentista e colaborativo (Gosling, 2005). Especificamente, pretende-se atingir três objetivos: (1) descrever os programas; (2) identificar se há tendência internacional; (3) conhecer o grau de promoção do modelo colaborativo. Utilizando o método de análise documental, foram examinadas as seguintes variáveis: (i) características gerais; (ii) objetivo perseguido; (iii) métodos utilizados; (iv) papel da observação. Os resultados mostram a tendência ascendente dos programas que promovem a observação colaborativa e o confronto ainda existente entre este modelo e o avaliativo. As futuras linhas de pesquisa são diversas, dentre as quais se destacam: estudar o impacto desses programas no desempenho docente e na aprendizagem dos alunos, já que a maioria não coleta essas informações, e analisar com maior profundidade os modelos de observação conduzida em cada programa. Para tanto, é importante superar as limitações desta pesquisa, ampliando o número de programas revisados e focando a análise em uma área geográfica específica ou realizando um estudo comparativo entre diferentes países que permita entender a orientação das políticas de desenvolvimento profissional do professor através da observação da prática educativa.

Palavras-chave: observação, ensino reflexivo, prática educacional, comunidades de prática, colaboração docente, desenvolvimento profissional.

Introduction

There are several studies that recommend the observation processes of educational practice to foster teachers' professional development (Borich, 2016; Burgess *et al.*, 2019; Gosling, 2014; Kim & Silver, 2021; Martínez *et al.*, 2016; Pons, 2018; Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019; Roth *et al.*, 2019). Following Fuertes (2011), we define the observation of educational practice as "a research technique of an intentional, specific and systematic nature that requires advance planning for the purpose of collecting information regarding the problem or issue of concern or interest" (p. 238). Considering the practical and social constitution of the educational field, observation plays a fundamental role provided that the teaching-learning process requires observing both the events and classroom dynamics as well as the subjective experience (Borich, 2016) so as to be understood (Martínez *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, if the observation is systematic and shared with others, it creates educational knowledge (Croll, 1995; Contreras & Pérez de Lara, 2010).

Following Contreras & Pérez de Lara (2010), we may understand this type of practical knowledge as:

that knowledge that enlightens the action, that returns to the experience to gain experience, with the ability to be surprised by what is happening in order to rethink, to make the educational activity more meditative, to discover new meanings, new possibilities. (p. 22)

Thus, the observational role is key to the activation and maintenance of this teachers' educational knowledge dynamic (Kim & Silver, 2021).

In this research, we assume this observational role and extend its definition to any process of voluntary and intelligent attention (Fuertes, 2011) aimed at obtaining information for practice improvement. In this way, we not only collect direct teacher observation experiences ("within the classroom"), but also educational programs that encourage exchange, feedback, and reflective dialogue (indirect observation) (Gosling, 2014).

Observation processes allow teachers to identify their strengths and potential for improvement, as well as to learn which educational practices work best in the school context in which they find themselves (Borich, 2016; Grádaigh *et al.*, 2021; Juárez & Critchfield, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2019; REDE, 2019; Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019; Rupérez, 2014). In this regard, observation would be effective and have an impact on educational improvement if its attributes are changed according to the professional moment in which it is conducted (Fuertes, 2011; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011), and if careful attention is paid to the intended objectives and the methods used for its execution (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Bell & Cooper, 2013; Kim & Silver, 2021).

On one hand, observation is usually associated with professional development in cases of initial training, since it is necessary for future teachers to deploy their practical skills in the educational context and to have a mentor supervising their performance through observation and micro-teaching sessions (Grádaigh *et al.*, 2021; Juárez & Critchfield, 2021; Kim & Silver, 2021; Manso, 2019; Villalta & Martinic, 2020). It is usually conducted within the Practicum subject, aiming at promoting reflective competence and commitment to ongoing improvement from the initial

training (Grádaigh *et al.*, 2021; Juárez & Critchfield, 2021; Kim & Silver, 2021; Manso, 2019). Furthermore, one of the objectives is to reduce the distance between research and classroom practice, to promote classroom research, and to improve the link between universities and educational centers (Domingo, 2020; REDE, 2019; Villalta & Martinic, 2020).

On the other hand, continuous education often has the objective of sharing educational practices with other colleagues, as a collective learning approach to professional performance (Domingo, 2020; Escudero *et al.*, 2017; Gosling, 2014; Moya, 2019; REDE, 2019). According to Lasagabaster & Sierra (2011), teacher observation in the continuous education framework must be determined by the teachers themselves to be effective and not to lose the necessary setting for educational improvement (Rupérez, 2014).

In this respect, there are several approaches (Kim & Silver, 2021; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011; Spencer, 2014) to the features that observational programs should have to be effective in the classroom and to be incorporated into the professional teaching culture. These must:

1. take place in a context of trust and take into account the school's organizational culture;
2. be based on an approach that empowers teachers.
3. differentiate "observation" from "review."
4. provide a simple, flexible, and accessible dynamic.
5. encourage voluntary and systematic observation, defining tangible results in advance.
6. encourage the participants to adopt the process, with the observed teacher being the one to determine relevant objectives and procedures.
7. share collected evidence through constant and constructive feedback.
8. reward this kind of participation.
9. not neglect the students.
10. evaluate, reflect, and continuously improve the program.

It is important to highlight that these observation and reflection processes allow us to address several of the challenges facing continuous teacher education today: a requirement to be linked to the needs of educational centers (Juárez & Critchfield, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2019; Martínez *et al.*, 2016) and the relevance of leveraging teachers' educational knowledge (Domingo, 2020; Domínguez & Entrena, 2017; Escudero *et al.*, 2017; REDE, 2019; Tomás-Folch & Duran-Bellonch, 2017).

In short, thanks to observation, feedback processes, collective learning experiences, and the incorporation of skills like reflective practice and generating educational knowledge, the building of a stronger professional teaching body is fostered (Contreras & Pérez de Lara, 2010; Domingo, 2020; Domínguez & Entrena, 2017; Kim & Silver, 2021; OECD, 2018; Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019). For this purpose,

it becomes fundamental to understand the link between teachers' reflective processes and the observation of educational practice (Kim & Silver, 2021).

According to Domingo (2020), reflection on educational practice allows teachers to develop the pedagogical judgment to adequately face school reality and build knowledge of their own professional activity, and thus, pedagogical judgment becomes an essential element of teaching performance (Sola Reche et. al, 2020). In fact, teachers' educational knowledge will be the dynamic set of all pedagogical judgments formulated and shared from reflection on practices and their associated processes, such as observation (Contreras & Pérez de Lara, 2010; Medina Moya, 2006). This shared reflection allows, first, to collect practical evidence of what works or does not work in the classroom (Lupi3n & Gallego, 2017; Pons, 2018) and, second, to systematize part of the process necessary (observation and collaborative exchange) for the creation of educational knowledge (Croll, 1995; Domingo, 2020; Firestone & Donaldson, 2019; Gosling, 2014). In conclusion, whether direct or indirect, observation allows teachers to refine their pedagogical judgment and, therefore, to broaden and enhance the educational knowledge they already have (Borich, 2016).

However, it is worth noting the relevance of analyzing how the observation of educational practice is implemented (intended objectives and methods developed) to understand the type of teacher professional development promoted (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Bell & Cooper, 2013; Escudero Escorza, 2019; Gosling, 2014; Sachs & Parsell, 2014). In this respect, Gosling (2005) distinguishes three different models of observation: the "evaluative", the "developmental" and the "collaborative". The first, aimed at making a professional judgment, starts from the professional deficit and is conducted from a hierarchical position. The second is focused on training and the introduction of reflection on practice, based on a unidirectional dynamic in which a mentor or experienced professional directs the training experience. Finally, the collaborative model is based on the mutual benefit obtained by teachers after a collegial discussion and seeks to promote educational research. For this author, all models are beneficial for the educational system; however, it is the collaborative model that promotes a stronger professional body, capable of reflecting on practice and creating educational knowledge from it (Gosling, 2005).

According to the TALIS report (OECD, 2018) observation, linked to professional collaborative experiences, correlates moderately to strongly with teachers' professional self-efficacy, which suggests that educational improvement must be linked to the promotion of professional learning communities (Firestone & Donaldson, 2019; Tom3s-Folch & Duran-Bellonch, 2017). Consequently, we assert that without a professional learning community committed to peer observation, the reflective cycle cannot be completed, since the teachers' educational knowledge necessary to refine observation criteria and to collect the value of observed educational practices is not created (Croll, 1995).

Despite all the advantages offered in the observation of educational practice, the data is not encouraging. If we focus our attention on Spain and compare it with the latest available data on this issue (OECD, 2018), we are still far from such experiences being widespread.

First, regarding initial teacher training and induction, the implementation of observation programs is scarce. On the one hand, mentoring for new teachers in educational centers, including observation as part of the program, yields extremely poor results: Elementary Education principals report that only 15% have mentoring programs for first-time teachers and only 10% for teachers new to the school. In the case of Secondary Education, the data are similar: 16% report mentoring programs for teachers new to the profession, and 12% for teachers new to the school. On the other hand, if we look at participation in these programs the data is even worse: only 4% of new teachers in Elementary Education have an assigned tutor, and 3% in Secondary Education (OECD, 2018). This data tells us that the promotion of a professional learning community in educational centers is not yet part of the professional culture.

Second, regarding the role of observation in continuous education, we can underline that in Elementary Education, teacher participation on visits to other schools is 19%. In Secondary Education, this is 14%, with the OECD average of 26% (OECD, 2018). In contrast, the data on teacher participation in peer observation programs are slightly better: 23% of Elementary School teachers compared to 19% of Secondary Education teachers. The OECD average is 44% in this case (OECD, 2018). Likewise, 27% of Elementary School teachers and 24% of Secondary Education teachers (OECD average is 40%) report participating in teacher networks (OECD, 2018), which shows that the level of penetration in professional learning communities is still small. Finally, only 13% of Elementary School teachers claim to have observed another teacher's class at some point, while in Secondary Education it drops to 5%. OECD data for Secondary Education (9% on average) and from 23 European Union countries (11% on average) reveal that it is not a very widespread experience (OECD, 2018).

The need to promote systematized practice observation is noted, both in its individual expression -self-observation- and in its professional expression -peer observation- that seeks to obtain a stronger professional teaching body (Úbeda, 2018) as well as the implementation of specific programs that systematize and realize all the features exposed thus far. Therefore, this research aims to provide an international perspective on educational practice observation through the review, description, and analysis of programs designed to improve the professional development of teachers, based on the observation of educational practice in continuing teacher education (Martinez *et al.*, 2016).

Methodology

This study is of a qualitative, non-experimental, and descriptive nature. Specifically, in this paper we propose to achieve three objectives:

1. to describe the 58 programs found regarding the observation of educational practice.
2. to identify whether there is an international trend on this issue.
3. to learn whether the collaborative observation model is promoted.

We will devote the Results section to the first and second objectives and the Conclusions and discussion section to the third.

For this purpose, we have used the documentary analysis method, which following Bisquerra (2004) we regard as "a systematic and planned activity that consists of examining documents already written [...], these being a fairly reliable and practical source for revealing the interests and perspectives of those who have written them" (p. 349). We have analyzed official documents, i.e., public documents and records (mostly web-based) of the programs studied, prepared by the entities that develop them as external materials (Bisquerra, 2004). We have synthesized this method in three phases, considering Bisquerra's approach (2004):

- 1. Search.** The collection of information was conducted over two years (2017-2019) using the Internet. Our analytical unit and, therefore, our search unit were programs intended to improve teachers' professional development through the observation of direct and indirect educational practice in all teaching profiles: new teachers, practicing teachers, university professors, and management teams. Three search criteria were followed: (i) programs related to the observation and reflection of educational practice; (ii) accessibility of information (free and public), and (iii) the existence of documentation on the program (official documents). We found 58 programs from 18 different countries (see Annex I), which have been divided into two categories: direct observation (44) and indirect observation, categorized as reflective processes (14).
- 2. Systematization and categorization.** The information was systematized in two stages. First, based on the analysis documents extracted from each program, the most relevant information was compiled and systematized in a descriptive Word file. These sheets were stored together in folders with the documents. Secondly, all information from the programs was categorized in an Excel table. The instrument used to categorize and analyze the information collected was a category tree typical of qualitative and documentary analysis. On one hand, the areas of the object of study were created deductively based on the existing bibliography and, on the other hand, the categories and subcategories of analysis were developed inductively based on the information gathered during the program search. Finally, an instrument was created with four areas, 13 categories, and their respective subcategories (see Annex II).
- 3. Analysis and interpretation.** The analysis was conducted at three levels: descriptive, comparative, and interpretative. First, a descriptive analysis of the information was made to answer the research questions: what is it, what is it for, and how has observation been implemented, since, as mentioned above, these categories of analysis (purposes and methods) allow us to understand the observation model developed: evaluative, developmental or collaborative (Gosling, 2005). In addition, this analysis allowed us to order and categorize the observation programs based on the existing theoretical evidence on the subject. On the other hand, to further the analysis and obtain more information, the various categories and programs were related on the basis of a comparative reading (Bisquerra, 2004). Finally, based on the descriptive and comparative analysis, the

information was interpreted to understand whether the observation conducted in each program performs an evaluative function on teacher performance or, in contrast, promotes a vocational vision in which the teacher is a generator of knowledge.

Results

Typology and nature

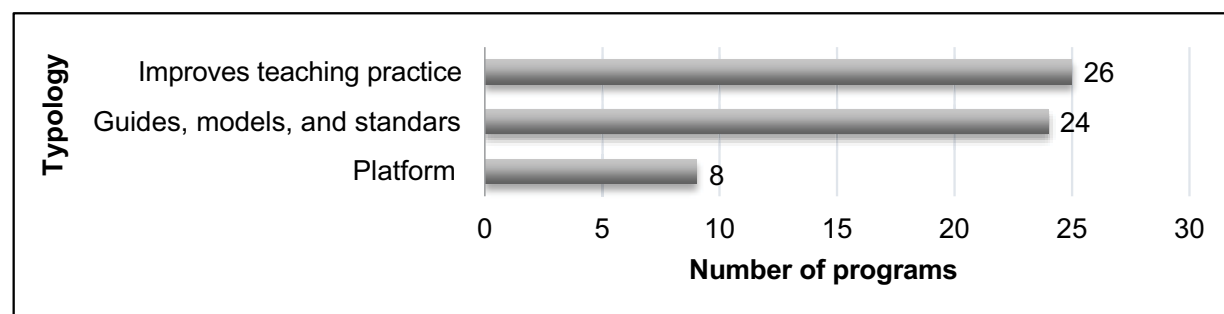
First, the general characteristics of the programs will be introduced, taking into account their typology, the agents involved, financing, access, and scope. We will then focus on the goals and objectives pursued, as well as the implementation methods and modalities. Finally, we will move on to the role played in them by observation.

We begin with the typology of the programs found, which have been organized into three subcategories (see Figure 1):

1. Improves teaching practice.
2. Guides, models, and standards.
3. Platform.

Figure 1

Number of programs according to their typology



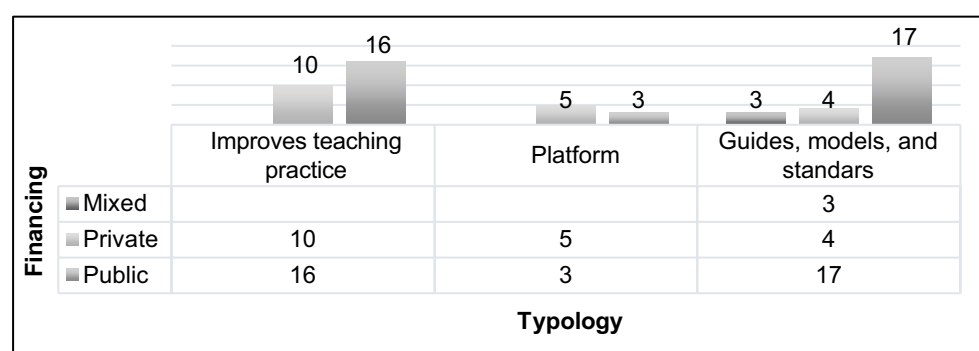
Programs focused on improving teaching practice through observation and reflection promote initiatives in which teachers experience improvements to their practice. Secondly, programs classified as guides, models, and standards are those that provide strategic guidelines for teacher professional development by promoting observation and reflective processes in practice. Most of these programs began as practical applications that were systematized and converted into guides or models. We can distinguish two subtypes according to their design, those that are built from research, and those that are built from experience and theoretical foundations. In the former, we usually find models developed by a university that seeks to obtain a scientific impact. The second usually includes recommendations from organizations and administrations for the improvement of the educational system that pursue a political impact. Finally, the "Platform" category usually includes online tools that allow teachers to share practices and

knowledge with each other. These virtual spaces seek to improve professional practice through continuing education and the creation of professional networks.

In terms of financing, we found that programs can be financed through public or private funds or a mixture of both. In the latter category, we only found guides, models, and standards, although most of these programs are publicly financed. Funding for programs for improving teaching practice is practically split between the private and public sectors, with the latter being slightly higher (see Figure 2). Finally, the platforms come from both private and public funding. We found several funding agents: supranational organizations (3.5%), national administration (20.6%), local administration (15.5%), trade unions (1.7%), non-profit organizations (19%), for-profit organizations (5.2%) and universities (34.5%).

Figure 2

Program funding according to program type



On the other hand, as shown in Table 1, we found that most programs are aimed at practicing teachers (28), followed by university professors (15), and professionals in the general area of education (12). In fourth place, we found programs aimed at management teams (9). Finally, the programs aimed at new teachers (2) have the lowest number of participants.

Table 1

Sample data. Typology and recipients of the programs

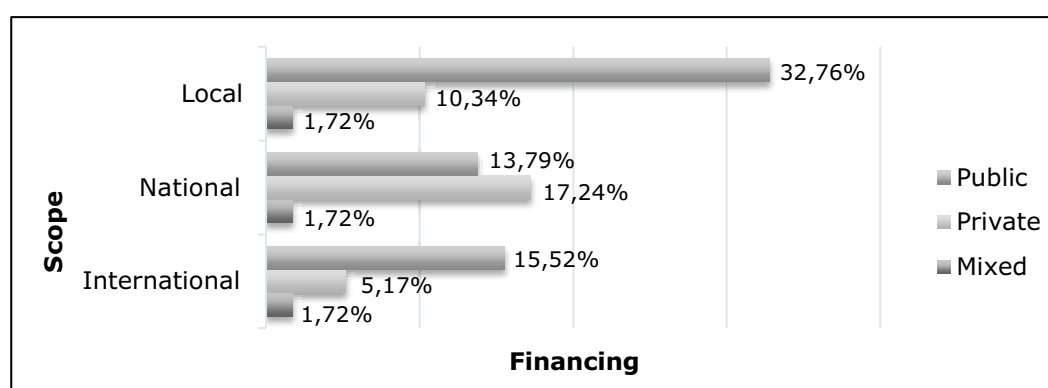
Recipients	Typology		
	Guides, models, and standards	Improves teaching practice	Platforms
New teachers	2		
Education professionals	6	5	1
Management teams		1	
Practicing teachers	7	7	6
Management teams and practicing teachers	4	4	
University professors	5	9	1

81% of all programs found are free of charge to recipients, compared to 12.1% that are paid services. The remaining 5.2% are mixed (part of the service is free and

part is not). Only one program (1.7%) does not show access data. In this sense, we find platforms to be practically free (except for one), while guides, models, and standards, as well as improvement programs, have mixed and paid formats, although this type of access is in the minority.

Regarding their scope, most of the programs, 44.8%, are local, 32.8% national, and 22.4% international. It should be noted that at both international and local levels, public funding is a priority (69.2% and 73.1% respectively), while at the national level the opposite is true, with private funding (52.6%) exceeding public funding (42%). In short, as can be seen in Figure 3, 62.1% of the programs reviewed are publicly funded compared to 32.8% that are privately funded and only 5.2% through mixed funding.

Figure 3
Program funding by scope



Goals and objectives

In relation to the goals, all programs seek to improve teachers' professional development; however, there are differences in the way in which the process is understood, as reflected in the suggested objectives. They are organized into four categories:

1. Sharing educational practices,
2. Educating and training teachers,
3. Promoting good practices,
4. Recommend actions.

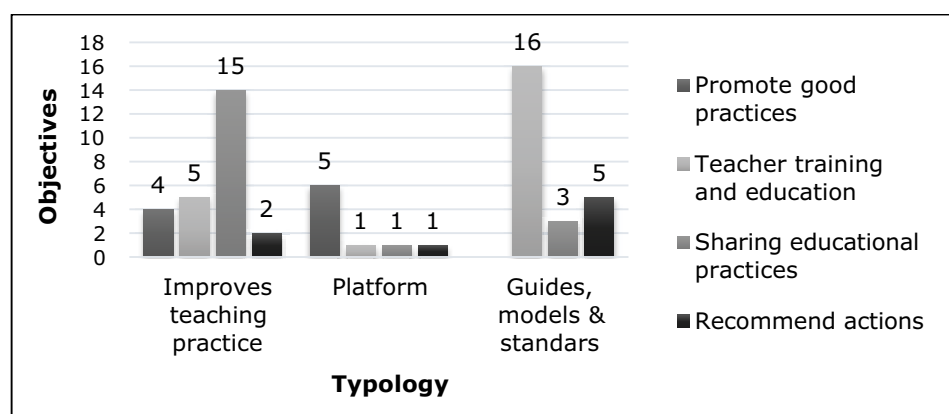
Regarding the first category, we have collected 19 programs aimed at sharing good practices among teachers or institutions, developed through both direct and indirect observation processes. This exchange is defined as bidirectional, oriented towards mutual learning and the development of educational knowledge. It is mainly the programs aimed at improving teaching practice that pursue this objective.

The second category usually involves a mentoring process (a more experienced teacher mentors a new teacher), training (an expert trains the teacher), or evaluation (a teacher or professional, as a researcher, evaluates the practice of another teacher). Of the 22 programs pursuing this second objective, 16 of them are guides, models, and standards. These types of programs are usually associated with validation and obtaining effectiveness indicators and practice efficiency.

The third category is found in nine programs aimed at sharing practice, although, unlike the first category, this exchange is unilateral, informative, and focused on practices considered to be successful. These are programs that provide teachers with access to different practices through videos, platforms, or research as a source of information and inspiration. This objective is most common in the "platform" type programs (see Figure 4).

The last category includes eight programs that make recommendations or suggest standards for observation. Although it appears in all three types of programs, it is slightly more common in guides, models, and standards.

Figure 4
Programs' objectives based on their typology



Methodology and execution of the programs

Regarding the methods used, we have organized the information into five categories:

1. Theoretical training.
2. Mentoring.
3. Teacher evaluation.
4. Practice sharing.
5. Practice exchange.

Table 2

Sample data. Objectives and methodology of the programs

Objectives	Method				Practice exchange
	Theoretical training	Practice sharing	Mentoring	Teacher evaluation	
Promote		8			1
Train	5	1	1	12	3
Share	1				18
Recommend	1	2	1	1	3

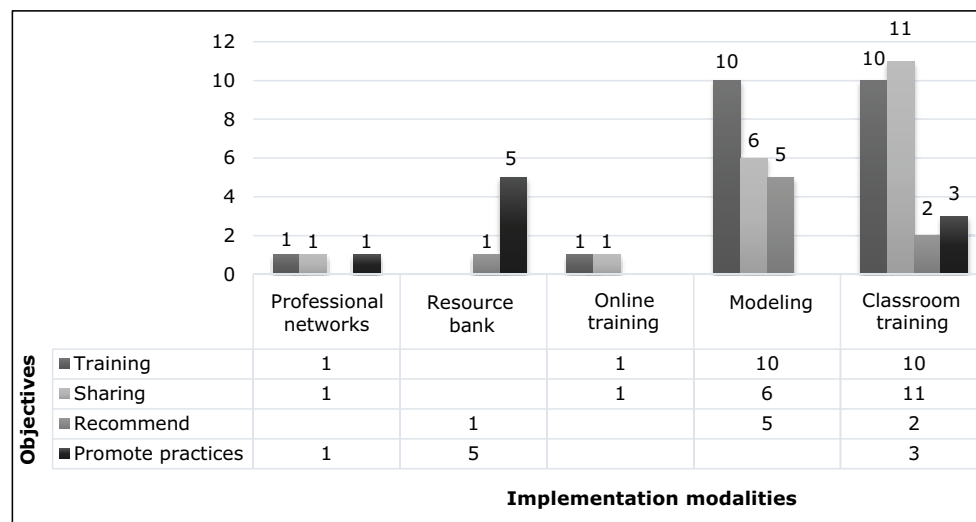
As can be seen in Table 2, the theoretical training method (programs aimed at improving professional development through theoretical training) is mostly found in programs focused on teacher training. Secondly, the method of promoting practices (offering access to information, resources, and tools) is found in those programs that aim to propagate educational practices. Thirdly, we find only one mentoring-oriented program, which may be linked to the “teacher evaluation” method, used when the program is aimed at the training and education of teachers. Finally, the “practice exchange” method relates mainly to programs that pursue the same objective, to improve performance through professional exchange between teachers or institutions, virtually or in person.

As with the methods, the programs are implemented in various ways. Although some combine several options, most of them prioritize one option over the others. As can be seen in Figure 5, those that were found are:

1. Professional networks.
2. Resource bank.
3. Online training.
4. Modeling.
5. Classroom training.

Figure 5

Modalities for implementing programs based on their objectives



First, in-person training is the most common tool (44.8% of the programs use this approach), although it is often combined with other tools (10.34% with modeling; 5.2% with online training; 5.2% with a resource bank, and 1.7% with professional networks). Most of these programs use practice exchange (24.1%), evaluation (8.6%), or training (7%) as a working method, as they aim to share practices or to train and educate (11 and 10 programs respectively). In second place, we find that 36.2% use modeling (programs that propose guidelines, standards, or theoretical models on observation or reflective processes), of which 10 are intended to train and educate, six to share, and five to recommend. In third place, the resource bank is the tool used by those programs intended to promote educational practices and which method is that of dissemination. This approach is used by 10.3%. In fourth place, professional networks are used by 5.2%, however, it is a complementary tool to other modalities, with the percentage of programs using it reaching 13.8%. These are varied both in the method used and, in the objective, pursued. Finally, as the only work tool, online training is the least used (3.5%).

Finally, regarding the programs' rationale, it should be noted that 44.8% are based on the collection of practical evidence, with the majority aiming to share educational practices (24.1%). On the other hand, only 12.1% of the programs are based on theoretical foundations (the study of theories, research, and legislation), and 6.9% are based on both theory and practice. Lastly, proven methods, i.e., those that have been validated through research, account for 36.2% of the programs. Most of the programs in this last category are aimed at teacher training and education (22.4%). In short, it seems that those programs aimed at professional exchange tend to be rooted in professional experience, while those aimed at teacher training tend to be validated through research.

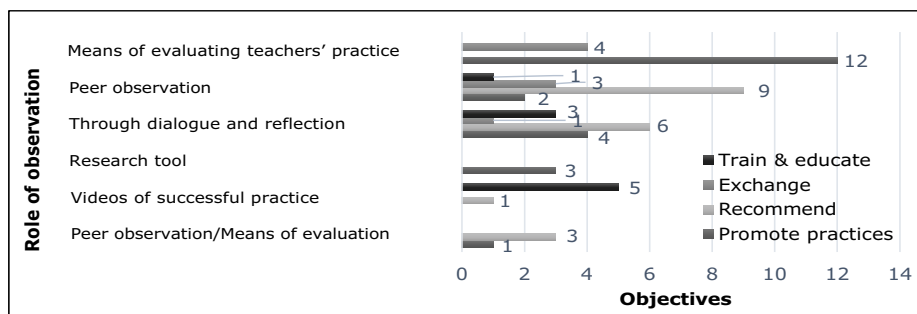
The role of observation

The last area of analysis is the role of observation and its impact. In this sense, we found five subcategories (see Figure 6):

1. Means of evaluation.
2. Peer observation.
3. Through dialogue and reflection.
4. Research tool.
5. From videos of successful practices.

Figure 6

Role of program observation based on objectives



Among the direct observation programs, observation as a way of evaluating practices and peer observation are the most common (16 and 15 programs, respectively). In the first case, most of the programs (12) are aimed at training teachers, while in the second case, they are a little more scattered, with nine programs focused on sharing practices. In addition, there are four programs that have both observation modalities, three of which are aimed at exchange and one at training. On the other hand, in six programs the observation is done through video, five of them with the goal of promoting successful educational practices. To conclude the direct observation category, we find three programs that use observation as a research tool, with the objective of training and educating teachers.

The indirect observation programs are distributed among the four types of objectives: four programs for training and educating, six programs for sharing, one program for recommending, and three for promoting practices. We see that it is a tool employed in all the typologies, the proportion of which corresponds to the number of programs found for each type.

Finally, regarding the impact of the programs, very few of them provide this information (18), including 16 reporting a positive impact and two describing it as neutral. The remaining 40 programs do not provide data on the achieved impact of observation.

Conclusions and discussion

This study has enabled us to describe the reality of practice observation programs, offer an international perspective on the issue, and learn what role observation plays in them. It also opened avenues for research and provided information on the issues to be addressed to make the observation of educational practice part of the professional teaching culture.

As the results of this research reflect, collaborative observation of educational practice is not, as yet a predominant reality in teacher training programs (OECD, 2018). For this collaborative practice to be incorporated into the daily teacher professional practice, it is essential that public policies develop the necessary means and resources to make it happen (Martínez *et al.*, 2016). In fact, in our sample, the public sector (administration and university) is

the one promoting, to a greater extent (62%), this type of program. This information leads us to infer that those developing educational policies on teacher training and professional development are increasingly aware of the importance of promoting the observation of educational practice as a professional dynamic inherent to school culture (Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019), however, the data also reflects that high-impact collaborative dynamics are not yet widespread among teachers (OECD, 2018). In this sense, in our sample, the scarcity of programs aimed at new teachers (two) is surprising, since there is evidence (REDE, 2019; Sola Reche *et al.*, 2020) of the great impact that initial training has on professional culture and, therefore, of its potential to incorporate observation as habitus of the profession (Grádaigh *et al.*, 2021; Juárez & Critchfield, 2021).

Moreover, it is important to note that for the observation of educational practice to be effective, it must be conducted considering the organizational culture of the school (Spencer, 2014) and the training needs of the teaching staff (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011).

On the other hand, the rest of the areas analyzed provided information on the epistemic approach of the programs, a fundamental element for understanding the type of teachers' professional development that underlies them and that as a result, is intended to be promoted (Bell & Cooper, 2013; Roth *et al.*, 2019). In our research, most programs consider direct observation as a tool to evaluate teaching performance (16) or to validate practices among teachers (15), which reveals the existence of tension between two approaches, the evaluative and the collaborative (Kim & Silver, 2021; Martínez *et al.*, 2016).

In this sense, it is important to clearly discern what type of program is promoted, who promotes it, and for what purpose, as it provides information on the kind of policies implemented and consequently, on the sort of perspective held on the teaching staff (Bell & Cooper, 2013; Martínez *et al.*, 2016). In some cases, the observation of educational practice becomes an institutional tool for teaching evaluation (Spencer, 2014; Steinberg & Garret, 2016) although its effectiveness in relation to teacher improvement is usually lower than those oriented to the creation of knowledge (Gosling, 2005), which, despite their great impact on professional self-efficacy, have - as previously indicated by Sachs and Parsells (2014) - greater difficulty in being systematized. In this sense, the results of this research have an impact on the need to define those mechanisms that incorporate both the needs of the educational system (focused on accountability) and the development and collegiality needs of teachers (focused on the dynamics of the school and the classroom) (Sachs & Parsells, 2014). Therefore, we consider that both modalities cannot (and should not) be incompatible with each other, even though there is a need to promote and articulate those programs that enhance teachers' educational knowledge, since they help to form an autonomous and strong professional body (Rupérez, 2014).

Likewise, this study's results confirm the need to know the impact of the programs on both teaching performance and student learning in a specific way (Hendry *et al.*, 2021), since this information is especially relevant for the building of educational knowledge (Burgess *et al.*, 2019). However, we have not been able to collect and describe this information due to the scarcity of programs (18) that have systematically measured and collected their impact. In short, an adequate

understanding of the implications that observation and reflection have on creating teachers' educational knowledge requires the development of rigorous and systematic tools to capture their impact (Roth *et al.*, 2019), taking into account the nature of educational practice as well as the specific reality of teachers (Borich, 2016; Escudero Escorza, 2019), an issue that is still underdeveloped in professional teaching and educational culture.

In conclusion, the data collected revealed that observation of educational practice is a growing training trend (Firestone & Donaldson, 2019; Martínez *et al.*, 2016), although it is not yet a widespread experience in teachers' educational programs. One of the main reasons why it is not standardized is the diversity of goals pursued (Bell *et al.*, 2019), generating a variety of reactions in the teaching staff (Sachs & Parsells, 2014). Specifically, two major trends have been found regarding the observation of educational practice based on the professional development being pursued:

- Programs aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of practice, based on vertical leadership, designed with a deficient vision of the profession and exclusively oriented to accountability (Steinberg & Garret, 2016).
- Programs aimed at collaborative learning among teachers, led by them, with the purpose of creating educational knowledge of their practice (Hendry *et al.*, 2021).

It is necessary to thoroughly review this issue only from an understanding of the needs of both modalities, an explicit statement of the goals being pursued, as well as a detailed analysis of the methods used (Bell & Cooper, 2013; Spencer, 2014). Then it will be possible to consider professional leadership that promotes the implementation of this type of program from and with teachers, to obtain practical and contextual evidence that allows for achieving the desired educational quality (Lupi3n & Gallego, 2017; Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019; 3beda, 2018).

In this sense, the opening lines of research are diverse: first, it is necessary to develop those that allow us to study these programs' impact on teaching performance and student learning, since we can observe that the field is still scarce and little systematized (Burgess *et al.*, 2019; Hendry *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2019; Pons, 2018).

Second, although not the focus of this research, it is important to investigate the type of leadership that fosters an empowered, knowledge-building professional body to shed light on those policies that favor teachers' professional development (Firestone & Donaldson, 2019).

Moreover, as a third point, we consider that it would be interesting to study supranational influence on national education systems since the proliferation of this type of program is an international trend, boosted by organizations such as the European Union or the OECD (Pons, 2018).

Finally, to address these lines of research and expand the study reported herein, it will be necessary to overcome the limitations of this research. First, it would be pertinent to expand the number of programs analyzed and the countries where they are implemented (Pons, 2018), as it would allow further gathering of information on the existing international landscape regarding the observation of both direct and indirect educational practice. Second, to delve deeper into the

analysis of driven observation models: evaluative, developmental, or collaborative (Gosling, 2005), with the aim of understanding how specific programs are implemented and learning from them (Firestone & Donaldson, 2019). Finally, it would be appropriate to extend this research, focusing the analysis on specific geographic areas, studying the specific case of a country or region, or carrying out a comparative study between different countries that would allow for a deeper insight into the orientation of teacher professional development policies through the observation of educational practice (Martínez *et al.*, 2016).

In short, developing a view of teachers as knowledge-creating agents (Domingo, 2020; Medina Moya, 2006) is fundamental for educational success (Moya, 2019), i.e., to evaluate the effectiveness of the practices implemented, and to identify the needs of the context in which they work (Úbeda, 2018). And this is why the systematic observation of educational practice is fundamental for teachers' professional development and the creation of educational knowledge (Burgess *et al.*, 2019; Firestone & Donaldson, 2019; Kim & Silver, 2021; Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2019; Roth *et al.*, 2019).

Notes:

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All the authors developed the scientific paper conception. Macarena Verástegui was responsible for the collection, interpretation, and data analysis, as well as the drafting of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final content.

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Annex I: Studied observation programs and country

Program Name	Country
Fundación Luminis (Luminis Foundation)	Argentina
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL)	Australia
Peer Observation of Teaching (Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation)	Australia
Laboratory for Innovative Experiences in Education Management (INEP)	Brazil
<i>Taller Reflexión Pedagógico</i> (Pedagogical Reflection Workshop) - UC	Chile
<i>Ideas Docentes</i> (Teaching Ideas - Elige Educar)	Chile
<i>Curso de Observación y Retroalimentación</i> (Observation and Evaluation Course - MIDE, UC)	Chile
Project in Shanghai (Chinese Government)	China
<i>MOVA: Redes de maestros</i> (Teacher Networks) - Secretaría Educación Medellín	Colombia
<i>Docentes Red Académica</i> (Teachers Academic Network) - Secretaría Educación Bogotá	Colombia
<i>Palabra Maestra</i> (Master Word) - Fundación Compartir	Colombia
The NEA Foundation	USA
Peer Assistance and Review (AFT)	USA
Teaching Channel	USA
Measurement of Effective Teaching (Gates Foundation)	USA
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Teachstone)	USA
Faculty Learning Communities Salisbury (University of Salisbury)	USA
Educational Program evaluation (Bellwether)	USA
Partnering on Prep (Education First)	USA
Faculty Learning Communities (SBCTC)	USA
The Carnegie Foundation	USA
Derek Bok Center For Teaching and Learning (Harvard University)	USA
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (Iowa State University)	USA
McGraw Center (Princeton University)	USA
Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence (Missouri S&T)	USA
Peer Review of Teaching (Vanderbilt University)	USA
Peer Observation of Teaching (University of Ljubljana)	Slovenia
Meeting of Spanish as a Foreign Language Teachers (Instituto Cervantes)	Slovenia
<i>Observa-Acción</i> (Observe-Action) - Junta Castilla y León	Spain
<i>Mentor Actúa</i> (Acting Mentor) - Comunidad Madrid	Spain
Educa Madrid (Madrid Educates) - Comunidad Madrid	Spain
<i>Plan de Mejora del Sistema Educativo de la CAPV</i> (Plan for the Improvement of the Educational System of the CAPV) - Basque Country	Spain
<i>Comisión de evaluación</i> (Evaluation Commission) - Comunidad Madrid	Spain
TeachersPro (Instituto Escalae)	Spain
<i>Programa muévete</i> (Get Moving Program) - Junta Extremadura	Spain
Oswaldo (Pompeu Fabra University)	Spain
<i>Plataforma Internacional Práctica Reflexiva</i> (International Platform for Reflective Practice)	Spain
LUMA Centre Finland	Finland

Program Name	Country
De l'activité des enseignants [...] (Programme Utique)	France
LeerKRACHT	Netherlands
Datateam (Twente university)	Netherlands
Peer Teaching of Observation (Leicester Learning Institute)	UK
Video Enhanced Observation (Newcastle University)	UK
Teacher Development Trust	UK
Teacher Observation (EEF)	UK
Effective Classroom Practice (University of Nottingham)	UK
Peer Observation of Teaching (University of Liverpool)	UK
Teacher Peer Observation and student test scores (Universities of Harvard, Oxford, and Bristol)	UK
Peer Enhancement of Teaching, Assessment and Learning (OCSLD)	UK
Teaching and Learning Observation College (University of Nottingham)	UK
Review and research (University College Dublin)	Ireland
<i>Centro de Innovación Educativa</i> (Center for Educational Innovation) - Universidad Panamericana	Mexico
Project for autonomy and curriculum flexibility (Government of Portugal)	Portugal
Teach Less Learn More (Government of Singapur)	Singapore
ISTOF (Various research groups)	Various
ISTOF (Various research groups)	Various
Formative Assessment Benchmarking (University of Warsaw, Pecs, Turku, and Vytautas Magnus)	Various
Peer review of teaching (University of Macquarie, La Trobe, Lund and Pretonia)	Various

Annex II: Study instrument: Category tree

Areas	Categories	Description	Subcategories
General characteristics	Typology	Program type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guides, models, and standards, Improves teaching practice, Platforms
	Recipients	Programs target user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing teachers New teachers University professors Management teams Education professionals
	Financed by	Program funding agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit organization For-profit organization Trade union University National administration Local administration Supranational organization
	Financing	Type of financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Private Mixed
	Access	Financial conditions for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Paid Mixed No data
	Scope	Geographical scope of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local National International
	Goals and objectives	Aims	Goal pursued
Objectives		Specific goal to be achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share Recommend Education and training Promote