**Biggest take away from classroom observation**

Learning opportunities come from different sources such as seminars, conferences, workshops, training in person or online, etc. As educators, we look for the resources that can help us incorporate new teaching trends and improve our professional knowledge. In addition to these sources, one can also benefit from class observations. Taking the time to visit our colleagues’ classes will open up a variety of helpful tools as well as an opportunity for reflection.

I reflect on the times I was doing my student teaching observations as well as the times I visited my colleagues´ classes at work. Fond memories came as I remembered how much I learned from them, their classrooms and their students. When I visited a classroom, I got inspiration from the environment, the students and the way my colleagues interacted with their students. There was not a single visit that did not witness the intertwined relationship between teachers, students and the environment.

The way a classroom is set up and the way students‘work is displayed also speaks and sends a message we cannot overlook. I remember visiting my colleague´s pre-intermediate English class with 15 students. She took the time to get to the classroom early to arrange the chairs, write the class agenda, place the lesson materials on her desk and stand by the door to greet her students. She was so cheerful and her students responded positively. Then, she walked around the class and spent a few minutes to talk with her students about it how their day had been so far. She gave her students opportunities to participate in small groups and took the time to listen to them and value their participation. The students had a textbook, but she did not make its content pre-defined as suggested by the book; instead, she developed the lesson following the skills her students needed to improve or learn. When the class finished, she reviewed the agenda and noted topics that were not covered, and planned for them to be taught in the next class. Thanks to this observation, I gained feedback on the importance of taking the time to build relationships by greeting students and talking to them. I learned to set up the environment before students arrive to keep them focused so the lesson would flow smoothly. I also learned that the textbook is just a tool and that students are the main characters in the teaching-learning experience. We later talked and she gave me feedback on her activities, shared her beliefs about teaching and welcomed me for further visits.

Is there one big take away from one class observation? One might expect to find answers to a specific question, but once there, the observation provides us with an array of insights. A 45-minute class gave me first-hand information that contributed to my teaching philosophy. I consider class observation a collaborative learning experience where we reflect and search to implement needed changes. Class observations benefit not only the one who observes, but also the learners who will be impacted by the improvement in the lesson delivery and classroom environment.