Instructional leadership among novice principals in Chile: Practices for classroom observation and feedback to teachers

Liderazgo pedagógico en directores nóveles en Chile: Practicas de observación de clases y retroalimentación a profesores

Leiva, María Verónica; Montecinos, Carmen & Aravena, Felipe

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile)

Abstract

The role of school principals is key to mobilizing the improvement of schools. Through a qualitative-longitudinal approach, using the thin-slice technique, this paper examined the quality of practices associated with classroom observation and the feedback provided by 10 novice principals at the end of their first and second year in office. Results show that from year 1 to year 2, participants changed the focus of their observation from greater attention to content and teachers to more attention to the interactions between content and students. They also changed the type of feedback they would provide to teachers, decreasing the use of evaluative feedback and increasing the use of descriptive feedback. The results of this study show how with more experience principals strengthen their pedagogical leadership. Notwithstanding, the limitations observed in year 1 and the limited use of feedback that promotes teachers' metacognitive and reflective engagement suggest that classroom observation and feedback to teachers are practices that need to be explicitly developed by principal preparation programs.

Keywords: school principal; classroom observation; feedback to teachers; teacher evaluation; instructional leadership

Resumen

El rol de los directores escolares es clave para movilizar la mejora de los centros escolares. A través de un enfoque cualitativo-longitudinal utilizando la técnica thin-slice, este artículo examinó la calidad de las prácticas asociadas con la observación en el aula y la retroalimentación proporcionada por 10 directores nóveles al final de su primer y su segundo año en el cargo. Los resultados de este estudio señalan que el patrón de observación de los directores nóveles experimenta cambios desde el primer al segundo año en el cargo, desde un foco en los docentes y el contenido hacia un foco en la interacción contenidos-estudiantes. Respecto del tipo de retroalimentación en el año 2 se observa mayor uso de una retroalimentación más descriptiva que evaluativa. Los resultados de esta investigación muestran cómo con más experiencia los directores fortalecen su liderazgo pedagógico. No obstante, las limitaciones observadas el año 1 y el escaso uso de retroalimentación que promueva la metacognición y reflexión en los docentes sugieren que la observación en aula y retroalimentación a los docentes son prácticas a desarrollar por los programas de formación para directores.

Palabras clave: Directores escolares; Observación de aula; Retroalimentación a docentes; evaluación docente; liderazgo pedagógico

A significant volume of research situates principal leadership in schools as a key aspect for the continuous improvement of student learning (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010).

Instructional leadership refers to practices that generate the necessary conditions to improve of teachers' capacities and motivations (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Hallinger, 2005; Witziers,

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Corresponding author / Autor de contacto

María Verónica Leiva. School of Education, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile). veronica.leiva@pucv.cl

Bosker & Krüger, 2003). This includes practices geared towards teacher development, curricular development, student and teacher assessment, analysis and decision-making informed by data and curricular monitoring, among others (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014). Instructional leadership includes a whole school community focused on achieving quality education (Padilla, 2008).

Instructional leadership practices for classroom observation and feedback have increasingly become more frequently used in several educational systems (Casabianca, McCaffrey, Gitomer, Bell, Hamre & Pianta, 2013; Ing & Montgomery, 2010; McMahon, Barrett & O'Neill, 2007; O'Leary, 2012; Peel, 2005; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). In a study carried out by the OCDE (2009) more than 70 percent of teachers informed that classroom observation was an important aspect in their performance evaluations. In other studies, teachers state that their daily interaction with principals, along with the nature and time of feedback, renders classroom observation helpful for enhancing their performance (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003). Considering its prevalence and potential impact, it is important to inquire about the quality of classroom observation that school principals are performing and the feedback delivered to teachers from this observation.

This study aims to examine the quality of practices associated to classroom observation and feedback provided by 10 novice principals at the beginning of their first and second years in office. The study follows a quality-longitudinal approach using the *thin-slice* technique, in which principals watched two videos that showed two minutes of a class session each (Murphy, 2005). Using the instructional triangle proposed by Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball (2003) first principals described aspects that stood out in the videos. Through the feedback typology developed by Tunstall and Gipps (1996), feedback offered to the observed teacher was characterized. These theoretical frameworks were used to assess the quality of their practices. Quality observation

and feedback are key elements for the improvement of teacher practices, knowledge, abilities and performance (Blake & Blase, 2000; Bound & Molloy, 2013; Fink & Resnik, 2001; Neumerski, 2013; Robinson, 2010; Santiago, Benavides, Danielson, Goe & Nusche, 2013; Shute, 2008; Southworth, 2002).

Conceptual Background

Challenges in classroom observation

Conceptualization of classroom observation poses a first challenge. Classroom observation has been defined as a pedagogical tool (Wragg, 1999), a transformational tool (Peel, 2005) and a feedback tool (Ing & Montgomery, 2010) that allows for direct evaluation of the quality of teaching-learning practices (Meyer, Cash and Mashburn, 2011; Martínez, Taut and Schaaf, 2016; ez et al., 2016). From another perspective, Pianta and Hamre (2009) conceptualized classroom observation as a central component in accountability, therefore requiring valid and reliable standardized measures. This use has prompted a number of studies on issues of validity and reliability of classroom observation (Pubhead, White & Stephenson, 2006; Barnett, Epstein, Friedman, Boyd, & Hustedt, 2008; Brown, Jones & Rawnsley, 1993; Grubb, 2000).

Wragg (1999) claimed that during classroom observation, even with high levels of pedagogical expertise, "we often see what we want to see" (p.16) Meyer, Cash and Mashburn (2011) noted that interpretation is an inevitable and crucial element in classroom observation, and not a problem. This has led to a concern in decreasing subjectivity through the standardization of observation instruments, thus generating a sustained increase of theoretical considerations, approaches and observation procedures that aim to make classroom observation more objective, both as a process and a tool (Cockburn, 2005; McMahon, Barrett & O'Neill, 2007; O'Leary, 2012).

In the process of increasing objectivity, different countries have developed various classroom observation systems. Methodologically, the design of observation systems includes four main challenges: (a) preparation of the observer (Bell, Gitomer, McCaffrey, Hamre, Pianta & Qi, 2012; Ho & Kane, 2013); (b) observation methods (Casabianca et al., 2013; Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010); (c) frequency or number of observations in a given period of time (Bloom, 2007; Leahy, 2012; Taylor & Tyler, 2012); and (d) the place where the observation comes from (Haep, Bhnke & Steins, 2016). We can distinguish between external and internal origins in terms of who is conducting the observation. External observations can be risky because they tend to produce a falsification of everyday classroom practices. To the contrary, internal observations performed by school principals and colleagues could have a greater impact in strengthening teaching practices (Heap et al., 2016).

Martínez et al. (2016) examined 16 observation systems in six countries: Germany, Australia, Chile, United States, Japan and Singapore. Their main findings were: (a) classroom observations vary according to the system; (b) there are differences regarding concentration and range of the elements observed; (b) observations are part of observation cycles; and (d) novice teachers observe each other more frequently than experienced teachers. For example, in Singapore and Japan performance assessment through observation is a key aspect of teacher evaluation. In the United States, the scores that result from observation vary between 50% and 70% of the total summative teacher evaluation across different school districts.

Classroom observation has also been studied from a relational and emotional perspective (Blase & Blase, 2004; Mathers, Oliva & Laine, 2008). For school principals, classroom observations are extremely sensitive and represent emotional work, considering that the relationship between leader and teacher is the key to feedback quality (Tuyte & Devos, 2011). The asymmetrical power relationship between a principal and a teacher creates barriers to consolidate a focus on learning and a constructive collaboration (Bell et al., 2012). Several authors suggest that classroom observation as a process needs to be considered from an emotional perspective, based on the professional trust between observer and the observed (Mathers et al., 2008; Blase & Blase, 2004). Without trust, there is a significant decrease in the possibility of this instructional practice having an impact in the strengthening teachers' capacities.

What to observe?

When school leaders observe a class, they can focus their attention on various elements, which can be generic or specific. For example, they can pay attention to the class's structure (opening, development and closing) or to specific aspects such as learning resources, quality of questions and feedback given by the teacher (Contreras, Rittershaussen, Correa, Solís, Nuñez & Vásquez, 2013). Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball (2003) developed the instructional triangle as a classroom observation frame that addresses general and specific aspects. This triangle is outlined in Figure 1, showing the following elements, and their interrelations: student's activities, teacher's performance, curricular contents and context expressed in local and national policies that regulate and generate expectations about teaching and learning. According to Cohen and collaborators, teaching consists of interactions between teachers, students and contents that are unfolded with more or less complexity in different organizational contexts.

We concur with Müller, Volante, Grau and Preiss (2013) who argued that if the unit of analysis is limited to teacher's performance we lose valuable information regarding other components of the instructional core. This triangle allows us to analyze classroom elements to which principals pay attention, as well as those they ignore. The focus of the observation influences the information that is later shared with the teacher when giving

feedback about their classroom enactments. In a study with preservice teachers in Chile, Müller, Calcagni, Grau, Preiss and Volante (2013) found that prior to an intervention designed for develop their observational skills, prospective teachers paid more attention to content. In contrast, the least considered element was the activity performed by students. After the intervention, participants increased the number of observations that included elements of the triangle.

Figure 1. Instructional Triangle of Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball (2003)
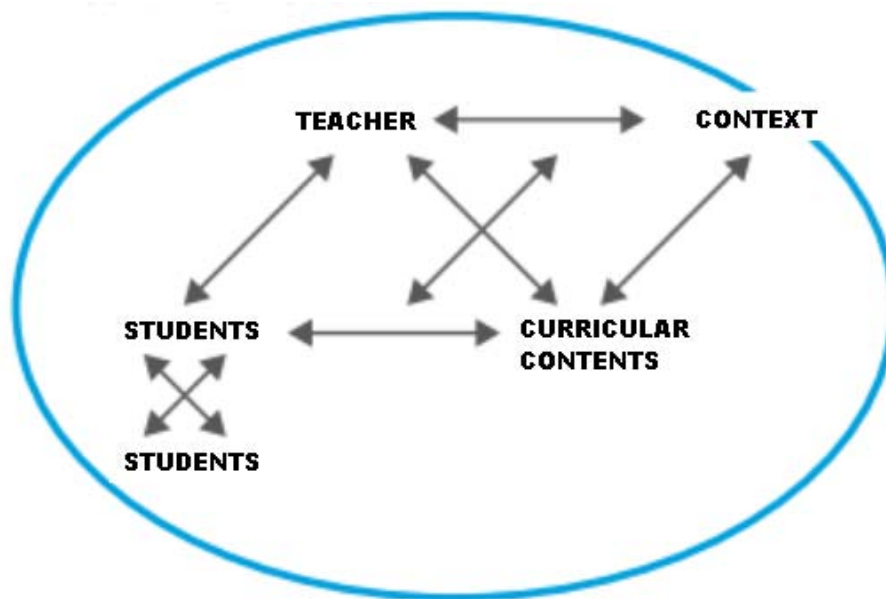
Feedback resulting from classroom observation

Feedback is a process that provides information about personal knowledge and abilities to encourage a systematic reflection process about what teachers know and do, the context of their performance and its consequences (Anijovich, 2010; Insuasty & Zambrano, 2011). Clarke (2003) defines feedback as the information presented through formal and informal messages in order to improve behavior beyond the current capacity. Román (2009) conceptualizes feedback as a process to develop and improve a learner's strategic abilities through a reflection process that identifies strengths and weaknesses in a specific task. Therefore, information, growth and reflection are common ideas in the conceptualization of feedback.

The nature of feedback has also been studied, given that the type of feedback determines its features, interactions and functions (Black & Williams, 1998; Mckimm, 2007; Brookhart, 2008; Román, 2009; Anijovich, 2010; Insuasty & Zambrano, 2011). According to Sadler (1989), in order to select what type of feedback is more adequate it is necessary to understand the difference between real performance and expected performance. A principal should consider this gap as a main factor to decide which type of feedback will be more productive. So when deciding a feedback type the following question must be answered: Where is the teacher now and where do I want him/her to move?

Multiple studies have examined why and how observational feedback can improve teaching, posing some dilemmas (Black & Williams, 1998; Brookhart, 2008; Shute, 2008). One of these is the impact that observational feedback has on the person observed. Some authors argue that feedback is

the most significant factor in the motivation for learning (Clarke, 2003, Tunstall & Gipps, 1996; Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2008). Others propose that feedback has a fundamental impact on actions (Anijovich, 2010; Insuasty & Zambrano, 2011; Ramprasad, 1983). Goedele, Vanhoof, Valcke and Van (2010) applied an online survey to a sample of 198 principals, suggesting that feedback is an aspect of influence not only for teachers, but also for school improvement. Observational feedback is key when school leaders focus on the building of learning communities in a systematic manner. Otherwise, it could be seen only as a time-consuming activity (Day, 2005; Frase, 2005; Hallinger, 2005).

Tunstall and Gipps (1996) have proposed a typology that distinguishes between descriptive feedback (task centered) and evaluative (person centered). As Table 1 shows, evaluative feedback identifies positive feedback (A1 – B1) and negative (A2 – B2). Descriptive feedback includes achievement feedback (C1 – D1) and improvement feedback (C2 – D2). Principals that use these four types of feedback, with their corresponding sub-types, encourage teacher self-efficiency. This means that principals know how to generate quality comments that have a positive impact on motivation, job satisfaction and professional development of teachers. Descriptive feedback is more effective in promoting teacher reflection regarding their performance and how to improve it.

Table 1 Typology of Teacher Feedback

Evaluative Feedback		Descriptive Feedback	
A1 Reward	B1 Approval	C1 Specifies observed achievement	D1 Building of achievement
A2 Punishment	B2 Disapproval	C2 Specifies what needs improvement	D2 Future projections

Source: Tunstall and Gipps (1996)

One of the main challenges for school principals, and for novice principals in particular, is knowing how to control and consolidate a systematic feedback process based on classroom observation. Keeping this systematic feedback approach in mind, Tuytens and Devos (2011) established, through an exploratory factor analysis based on data collected from 414 teachers, five leadership variables to understand the utility of feedback as perceived by teachers. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction with the feedback provided and teachers' satisfaction with their school principals. In this sense, the level of trust of the teacher in their school principal is key to determine how to use feedback data to improve teaching practices.

When school principals are the source of feedback, the disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge principals have is fundamental in order to support teacher professional development (Frase, 2005; Robinson, 2010; Tuytens and Devos, 2011). This means that it is necessary to prepare school principals with general and specific knowledge and abilities to successfully address the challenges posed by classroom observation and feedback. An increase of the time dedicated to instructional leadership practices alone will not produce the

expected positive results if the implemented practices are not of high quality (Papay, 2012; Holland, 2005).

Method

Design and research questions

A qualitative, longitudinal and multiple-case study approach was used (Maxwell, 2005). Data were obtained in the context of a broader research program that examines situated learning among novice principals working in public primary and secondary schools in Chile. In particular, the data reported in this article was produced through in-depth interviews performed at the beginning of the first and second year the school principal was in the position.

The research questions that guided this study are:

- Which aspect(s) of the instructional triangle do novice principals focus on when observing a teacher's classroom?

- What type of feedback do they offer as a result of classroom observation?

- In comparison to the first year in office, are there changes in the second year regarding focus and type of feedback from principals to teachers?

Participants

We identified an accessible population of novice principals in the Valparaíso Region of the central zone of Chile, the third largest of the country in terms of population. All of the Municipal Education Department that had hired school principals during the last three months of the school year in 2013 or in the first three months of the 2014 school year were contacted by phone. Collectively, 14 first-time principals were identified by these departments, 13 volunteered to participate in a longitudinal study about situated learning of

instructional leadership. For this article, we have taken data produced in the first two years of the study with 10 principals for whom we had information available for both years (nine women and one man).

School principals had been selected for the job through a national and competitive system managed by the Civil Service. Table 2 summarizes school data, showing a decrease or variation of enrollment, something characteristic of the Chilean public educational system. Operating under a market model, Chilean parents have increasingly showed their preference for private schools, such that by 2016 only 36% of the student population attends a public school. Private-subsidized and public schools receive funding from the government for each enrolled student. Therefore, parents do not have to pay tuition for their pupils' education. Regarding these schools' performance on the Quality of Education National Measuring System (SIMCE), only two schools are seen as effective. All schools served a high proportion of students growing up in poverty (IVE).

Instruments and procedures

Each principal took part in an active-reflective interview at the beginning of his or her first and second years in office (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). For this study, we selected a part of the interview (20 minutes) in which the principal observed a two-minute video, followed by an interview that addressed the following questions: What did you observe in that class? What comments would you make to this teacher after observing this class? Is this a good class? Why or why not? Afterwords, we requested that they observe a second two-minute video and answer to the same questions. Both interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed for later analysis.

Table 2 Characterization of Schools where Principals work.

School	Levels	Location	IVE*	Enrollment Variation 2010-2014	**Placement in SIMCE in relation to other similar schools in NSE
1	Grades 8 to 12	Urban	83	-46	Low
2	Secondary	Urban	79	-4	Similar
3	Secondary	Urban	68	-38	Above
4	Grades 8 to 12	Urban	72	-47	Low
5	Primary	Urban	89	-10	Low
6	Primary	Rural	88	37	Low
7	Primary	Urban	55	-32	Low
8	Primary	Urban	76	-1	Low
9	Primary	Urban	72	-28	Low
10	Primary	Urban	66	-24	Low

Source: Centro de Estudios Ministerio de Educación, Chile [Ministry of Education Study Center, Chile]. In order to ensure anonymity of participanting schools, the IVE values are presented as a range.

* IVE indicates the percentage of students who fulfill the social vulnerability criteria. The Quality of Education Measuring System (SIMCE) is a set of standardized tests to assess learning achievements and that is applied in a census manner each year in grades 4, 8 and 10.

**NSE: Socioeconomic level stratification.

We obtained the videos from a repository of classroom videos for research and/or professional development purposes, and filmed teachers had agreed to the use of these videos for this purpose. In one of the videos, the chemistry teacher uses an expository strategy with secondary school students. In the other video, a math teacher uses an inquiry activity with a second graders in a primary school. The use of a two-minute video is part of the *thin-slice* technique that includes selecting a sample of instructional interactions recorded on a video of the complete class session (Murphy, 2005). This sample is use to encourage participants to make explicit their beliefs regarding teaching and learning (Craig, Chi, and Vanlehn, 2009; Tochon, 2007).

Data analysis

Using the categories defined by the instructional triangle and by the Tunstall and Gipps typology (1996), two researchers independently analyzed and coded the interview transcripts. Then, they met to compare the assigned codes, reaching consensus those segments where there was discrepancy. Later, a third researcher audited the coding. A total of 407 segments were coded for observation aspects. Regarding feedback types, 249 segments were coded.

Results

Observation focus

We observed an increase in the number of elements of the instructional triangle observed in year 2, both in the mathematics and chemistry classes. In the first interview (year 1), 86 elements were coded for the mathematics class and 84 for the chemistry class (n=170). In the second interview (year 2) 116 elements were coded for the mathematics class and 115 for the chemistry class (n=231). Distribution of elements by class in year 1 and year 2 can be observed in Table 3.

In both years *content* is the aspect that reports most comments from the novice principals for both classes (57 and 85 of coded segments). The *environment* aspect was less mentioned (23 and 33 of coded segments). In year 2, we observed an increase in the four aspects (*student, teacher, content, and environment*); *content* increased in 28 segments and *student* increased in 25 segments. Table 4 gives examples of the comments assigned to each aspect during the transcription process.

Table 3 Observation Focus of Novice Principals by Year and Class (Percentage)

	Instructional Triangle Elements							
	Student		**Teacher**		**Content**		**Environment**	
Class	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**
Mathematics	25	26	27	18	31	41	17	15
Chemistry	18	27	37	30	36	33	9	10
Total	43	53	64	48	67	74	26	25

When observing the Mathematics class in Year 1, 50% of novice principals paid attention to the four elements of the instructional triangle, 40% paid attention to three elements (*student, teacher, content*), and 10% to two (*student* and *content*). In the chemistry class, in Year 1, 40% of principals centered their attention on the four elements of the instructional triangle. The remaining 60% paid attention to three: 40% to *student, teacher and content* and 20% to *teacher, content and environment*. In year 2 for both classes 100% of principals paid attention to all four elements of the instructional triangle.

In summary, the observation pattern of novice principals broadened in year 2 compared to year 1. The number of comments increased and those who did not observe the four elements in year 1, addressed them in year 2. Participants tended to privilege the interaction *content – teacher* in Year 1. In year 2, *content-student* interactions generated greater number of comments. Context which refers to educational policies at school, municipal and national levels, was the element less frequently mentioned.

Table 4: Examples of Transcripts' Excerpts, Exemplifying Instructional Triangle Focus by year

Aspects	Excerpts Year 1	Excerpts Year 2
Content	*How do I teach thermodynamics to students and tell them what it is? If they do not see, do not prove that in the science class? Just as the math class, it has to be practical.* (D1, chemistry class).	*(…) the starting point for motivation with the kids, yes, because she jumped into it and there was no time for motivation and the activation of prior knowledge. I understand that a chemistry class has formulas, exercises, experimentation, I do not know, and there was nothing there, she only talked about thermodynamics.* (D1, chemistry class)
	Virtually about edges, bases, the hmm…sides and then, angles, at least the class was kind of achieving the teacher's goal, ok? However, I would have asked for more participation from the children.(D2, mathematics class)	*There is no differentiation ok? Maybe the kid wanted to build a pyramid with a…square base and he could have asked questions, and from that square base, other questions could have come up, let's say, "How many edges, and how many angles? What is the difference of a pyramid?" Make them compare it with the pyramid from a classmate so that from their own work they could realize the difference between their own and their classmates' work, and from there draw their own conclusions (…)* (D2, Mathematics class)
Teacher	*I thought it was awful ((laughs)) awful, the teacher did not move from the place she was (…) she asked memorization questions, if they remembered this and that.* (D6, chemistry class)	*The teacher does not motivate students, there is also no…mmm…movement from the teacher, at least come closer to interact more. I don't know, she is standing the entire time in the same place, she has no methodology, she needs to increase students' participation, and give them opportunities to interact among them.* (D6, chemistry class).
Student Activities	*(…) but the kids no, they talked, they did what they thought, but there was no guided learning.* (D7, chemistry class).	*(…) This generation ah…they are visual, very visual, and there is nothing visual, only listening. Therefore, I noticed that the kids…got distracted, see? They paid attention for five minutes and then they were not listening anymore.* (D7, chemistry class).
Environment	*We should apply the PAC guideline* [Shared Support Program, a prescriptive curriculum for each pedagogical interaction] *to this teacher. We applied it here in the school, it helps very much to give indications to the teacher regarding his or her class (*D5, chemistry class).	*When you suggest changes to teachers about their class, they say "No, because the curriculum says that…"of course, "No, the curricular bases say it has to be with this activity, this theme", so I think that the teacher needs to have more initiative, and distance herself (…)* (D2, chemistry class).

Types of feedback

In Year 1 interviews, 122 types of feedback were coded, and in Year 2 interviews, 127 for a total of 249 codes. For the mathematics class 145 segments were coded, 72 for the year 1 interviews and 73 for the year 2 interviews. In the chemistry class, 104 segments were coded, 50 for the year 1 interviews and 54 for the year 2 interviews. These results show that in the mathematics class (active-participative, inquiring) we observed more comments in comparison to the chemistry class (lecture). The distribution of feedback types by class in year 1 and year 2 is presented in Table 5. In Table 6, we provide examples of comments assigned to each type of feedback in the process of coding the transcripts.

Type A1 and A2 feedback were provided neither in year 1 nor 2. These are typical of teacher-student interactions since they include the delivery of a reward or punishment. In year 1, the chemistry class presented mostly feedback of a C2 descriptive type (80%), specifying what the teacher must improve. Only 8% of feedback comments were evaluative, often expressing disapproval of the class (B2). In the mathematics class, feedback mostly (51%) specified achievements (C1). In both classes in year 1, descriptive feedback comments of the D1 and D2 types, which aim to promote a reflective and metacognitive process in teachers, were not observed.

Table 5 Types of Feedback to Observed Teachers (Percentage)

Class	Year 1					Year 2				
	Evaluative		Descriptive			Evaluative		Descriptive		
	B1	**B2**	**C1**	**C2**	**D1**	**B1**	**B2**	**C1**	**C2**	**D1**
Mathematics	15	3	51	31	0	6	6	63	25	6
Chemistry	0	8	12	80	0	0	0	18	76	6

In Year 2, in both classes principals provided less evaluative type feedback. We observed the presence of comments of type D1 descriptive typology, (12%) centered on generating better achievement levels. What was observed in year 1 continued, with a majority of comments of the C1 descriptive type in mathematics, specifying achievements, and C2 in chemistry, specifying what needs improvement. In mathematics class, in comparison to the chemistry class, more comments corresponding to an evaluative feedback typology (20%), with a greater emphasis in class approval, were coded.

Table 6 Examples of Excerpts of Transcription by Type of Feedback

Type of Feedback	Excerpts
B1: Approval	*Ehm, I would congratulate him (laughs), I would absolutely congratulate him. I mean a class like this one is wonderful* (D3, mathematics class)
B2: Disapproval	*I found it awful ((laughs)) the teacher was awful* (D9, chemistry class).
C1: Specifies observed achievement	*It was a very interactive class, where a clear activity was implemented, a clear method, and group participation. There was a well-defined teacher role in the sense of him initiating certain activities and having the children perform the tasks.* (D10, Mathematics class).
C2: Specifies what needs improvement	*If you see, the kids are not writing anything, they are not taking notes, you see that it is waste of time. If only she said, "Ok, now we will take notes, I will throw in a concept once in a while, when I mention a concept you write"* (D2, chemistry class).
D1: Building of Achievement	*Ok, I would start by asking her, What is the goal? What should I pay attention to in the class goal? What do you want to achieve with the children? The other thing was, she called out a girl that was, that talked a little and you asked her to step out of the room. Why do you think that girl talked? Think well, reflect. What is it that she wanted to accomplish? I mean…she was asking something of you, and it was a more dynamic class.* (D1, chemistry class)

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that, in their first year in office, half of participating principals showed partial attention to the aspects of the instructional triangle developed by Cohen et al. (2003). In the second year, all principals focused their attention on the four aspects of the instructional triangle. The expansion of their focus of attention when observing the classroom is interpreted as evidence of greater development in their instructional leadership abilities. A second result shows the importance of the teaching-learning model that principals value and would like to promote in their schools. They highlighted the achievement of the mathematics class that used an inquiry approach and were critical of the chemistry class that used a lecture-type methodology.

A third result shows that classroom observation during the first year is associated to a process of teacher performance evaluation rather than monitoring classroom learning. This finding was also reported by Müller et al., (2013), as preservice teachers paid greater attention to teacher-content interactions. When beginning their second year in office, principals participating in this study evidenced a change in the focus from the teacher to the students. In other words, principals began to observe what was happening with students regarding their learning processes, their attitudes, their behavior, how they followed the activities proposed by the teacher, class participation and the feedback they received from teachers.

When principals expand their view during observation, it enriches the feedback process, making it more productive and intentional to monitor learning. On the other hand, when observation is teacher-centered a feeling of "threat" can generate through the observation and the consequences that could result of it

(Müller et al., 2013). This is a relevant aspect to take care of, considering the relational dimension and the emotional work that is part of classroom observation and feedback for both the teacher and principal (Blase and Blase, 2000).

Concerning the feedback types the results of this study show that in the first year there is a greater number of feedback comments of the evaluative type, placed on the teacher. The absence of descriptive feedback at a metacognitive level (D1 and D2 types) concurs with a previous study about feedback beliefs and practices of Language and Communication 9th grade teachers (Amaranti (2010). Teachers received most type B1 and B2 evaluative feedback (approve and disapprove) and C1 and C2 descriptive type (establish achievements and what needs improvements).

In year 2, we observed an increase in the number of feedback comments that stem from a constructivist paradigm. However, comments were mostly descriptive feedback focused on the teacher's expected achievements. In year 2, we observed few D1 type feedback comments that promote metacognitive and reflective processes in teachers. This type of feedback was not made observed in year 1 interviews. Feedback that would ask teachers to project the future was not observed either year. It is possible that this type of feedback requires higher levels of expertise in conceptual terms, with a clearer vision of how to promote teacher learning and motivation.

Considering the importance of teacher reflection to foster improvement, learning how to deliver constructive feedback to teachers is a practice that calls for the attention of principal preparation programs. Helping teachers look at their work prospectively and retrospectively when a task is completed allows them to set goals that will guide their own learning. Reflective and metacognitive processes are key to promote the transference of what has been learnt to other teaching scenarios, given that in order to transfer it is necessary to understand the implicit assumptions that guide the action.

Conclusions

Although this is an exploratory study, given the small number of participants, its results show how principals can advance in their professional development from the experience that they acquire through the different actions and interactions with various actors of the educational community that are required by their job. On the job training, however, seems insufficient considering that classroom observation and feedback are prevalent practices across educational systems worldwide (Meyhed, Chijoke & Barber, 2010; Martínez et al., 2016). The way in which novice principals develop leadership practices associated with improvements in instruction has received limited attention, and therefore it is possible to visualize a developing research field (Lochmiller, 2014).

The results of this study contribute to exemplify how to characterize changes in the quality of principals' instructional leadership practices. The two models used in the current study provide heuristic tools that may be used in principal preparation programs and in schools that seek to strengthen peer observation and feedback. The use of classroom observation with video recording is recommended for teacher evaluation, since it makes it possible for several highly qualified observers to perform evaluative judgments (Martínez-Rizo, 2012). These also represent a good resource for developing observation and feedback skills among members of a school leadership team.

Classroom observation literature agrees in stating that the current classroom observation system focuses only superficially on improving teacher performance and practices. This because most principals consider classroom observation and feedback as part of their contractual obligations, and a task difficult to perform when confronting other demands (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Blase and Blase (2004) studied teachers' perceptions

regarding abilities and knowledge of school principals to perform classroom observation, concluding that classroom observations have an impact on motivation, self-esteem and pedagogical practices. It seems critical to improve the use of classroom observation by principals, since effective principals decrease the probabilities of teachers abandoning schools, and present higher levels of job satisfaction and professional learning (Grissom, 2011).

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Acknowledgements

Authors / Autores	To know more / Saber más
María Verónica Leiva (veronica.leiva@pucv.cl). Assitant Professor. Escuela de Pedagogía, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Av. Brasil 2950, Casilla 4059, Valparaíso, Chile.	ResearchGate
Carmen Montecinos (carmen.montecinos@pucv.cl). Ph. D. Psychology (Southern Illinois University Carbondale: Carbondale, IL, United States). Tenured Professor at Escuela de Psicología. Centro de Liderazgo para la Mejora Escolar, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Av. Brasil 2950, Casilla 4059, Valparaíso, Chile.	ORCID 0000-0001-8382-1848 Google académico ResearchGate
Felipe Aravena (felipe.aravena@pucv.cl). Researcher, Centro de Liderazgo para la Mejora Escolar, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Av. Brasil 2950, Casilla 4059, Valparaíso, Chile.	

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