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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Peer observation: A key factor to improve Iranian EFL teachers' professional development

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Abstract: This study reports on the perspectives of a group of Iranian EFL teachers about peer observation effects. The aim was to investigate if peer observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect EFL teachers' professional development. It has been done based on a mixed method approach. The participants have stated their viewpoints on the effects, benefits, and weaknesses of peer observation by means of a peer observation questionnaire. Finally, it has become obvious that peer observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect on EFL teachers' professional development; or it has played a significant role in improving EFL teachers' professional development.

Subjects: Secondary Education; Education & Training; Teacher Education & Training

Keywords: reflective teaching; peer observation; EFL teachers

1. Introduction

For the outset of the twentieth century, ELT professionals have sought for ways that could achieve better results in their language classes and have used lots of methods. Then they moved beyond methods with the desire of getting better outcomes (Salmani Nodoushan, 2011, p. 1). Teachers like other people in every profession in all over the world have employed several strategies to overcome their weaknesses and to be more effective. They started to change themselves, and make dynamism and flexibility in their classrooms. So, one of those strategies was moving beyond reutilized

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

In the teaching profession, peer observation is a technique by which colleagues agree to observe each other's classes. By doing observation, colleagues help each other to develop their teaching, overcome their weaknesses, share their insights, and provide mutual support. The current study aimed to investigate the viewpoints of some EFL teachers who had experiences of observation on the effects, benefits, and weaknesses of peer observation. Based on the perspectives of the teachers, peer observation has both benefits and weaknesses. But as a total, it significantly improves on EFL teachers' professional performance and development.

classroom situations and evaluating results of teachers' pedagogical decisions "through observing and reflecting on one's own teaching, and using observation and reflection as a way of bringing about change". This approach to teaching can be described as "Reflective Teaching." (Richards, 2013, p. 1) Reflective teaching has been considered as an effective way to develop and empower teachers. Teachers have started to evaluate and examine themselves by means of different approaches. A key word in reflective teaching is "reflection." Teachers in this kind of approach get a reflection of their performance in the process of their teaching. It is believed that in order to be effective, you as a teacher should be reflective. In this kind of approach, teachers have applied many techniques and strategies based on their preferences. One of the popular one is observation. This is like looking through a mirror, you observe and then criticize yourself. Also, teachers have been observed, evaluated, and assessed by the other individuals such as students and colleagues. When it is done by their colleagues, it is called peer observation. But, like other techniques and tools, it has some strengths and weaknesses. Peer observation as a reflective tool has been used by so many EFL teachers especially in Iran. Teachers and especially EFL teachers have had experiences of both have observed and being observed by their colleagues. The aim of this study is to gather the experiences of some experienced EFL teachers in the process of observation both as an observer and observe in the context of Iran and finally examine if peer-observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect on Iranian EFL teachers' professional development.

1.1. Reflection

According to Moon (as cited in Moussa-Inaty, 2015, p. 104), "reflection is a form of mental processing with a specific purpose and/or predicted outcome that is applied to relatively complex or even unstructured ideas."

Richards (2013) defined reflection as a process in which an experience is recollected, examined, and appraised, usually with a special aim.

1.2. Reflective teaching

Pollard and Collins (2005, p. 5) mentioned that "the process of reflective teaching supports the development and maintenance of professional expertise."

According to Tice (2004, p. 1), "reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works—a process of self-observation and self-evaluation."

Rose (as cited in Fatemipour, 2013, p. 74) argued that "peer mentoring partnerships will support individual teachers in reflecting on and describing their practice. As a result of these focused discussions, a teacher is able to better understand practice and be able to take steps to improve practice." Also, Lieberman and Miller (1999) pointed out that "the practice of reflective teaching, reflective enquiry, and reflection on practice results in gaining of the personal and professional knowledge that is so important to bring an effective teacher and in shaping children's learning."

Bartlett (1990) (as cited in Richards, 2013, p. 1) points out that "becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and 'how to' questions and asking 'what' and 'why' questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves."

Therefore, reflective teaching is a need for teachers' development, because it increases teachers' knowledge of their weaknesses and get familiar with them with new strategies and approaches of teaching effectiveness. So, it is a tool for effective teaching.

1.3. Reflection teaching tools

Reflective teaching can be done by different techniques. According to Trice (as cited in Fatemipour, 2013, p. 75), “the reflective teaching tools which are usually applied for obtaining data in teaching English as a Second Language (EFL) are teacher diary, peer observation, audio recording and students’ feedback.”

Jeffrey (2007, p. 100) added that “teacher diaries are personal accounts of classroom experiences with the aim of finding new personal insights as a teacher.”

Hendry and Oliver (2012, p. 1) defined “peer observation is the process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving teaching practice.”

Also, Tice (2002) (as cited in Fatemipour, 2013, p. 76) mentioned that by audio recording as a reflective teaching tool, “you may do things in class you are not aware of or there may be things happening in the class as the teacher you do not normally see.”

Among the above-mentioned reflective teaching tools, observation is used mostly by teachers in Iran. Also, it is as a usual norm in some schools or private institutions. In most institutions, all classes often are observed by the supervisors. But, most teachers believed that if their classes being observed by their colleagues than supervisors, they feel better.

1.4. Peer observation tool

Lofthouse and Birmingham (2010) found the following:

Observation of students’ teaching is used as the trigger for discussion with mentors and tutors with the aim to stimulate student teachers’ personal review of the lesson. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the early stages student teachers tend to be either self-critical or overly dependent on the observer for feedback. For some student teachers a significant transition occurs when they begin to critique their teaching with enhanced autonomy and with a more realistic perspective. It is at this point that discussions between mentors or tutors and their student teachers begin to take on the broader characteristics of collaborative professional dialogue. (p. 3)

Bell (2005) stated that when the main focus of peer observation is on helping colleagues develop their teaching, the process is often conducted as a reciprocal exercise, with staff observing each other, sharing their insights and providing mutual support.

Among different kinds of observation, peer observation is more preferred by teachers. It can be done by the aim of just developing such as critical friendship than other purposes such as assessments by principles or supervisors. Some teachers do peer observation reciprocally for their development and improvement.

1.4.1. Characteristic features of peer observation

Nor Azni (1997) described peer observation by the following features:

Observation is carried out in a non-threatening, supportive atmosphere based on mutual, collegial trust.

It is a structured system of observation with a set of procedures. Although it is possible that individual teachers could undertake peer observation at their own initiative, it is more likely that the program administration will need to initiate a peer observation exercise.

The procedures adopted should provide teachers with as much autonomy in decision-making as possible. For example, they should choose their observers, decide which aspects of their classroom behaviors or activities they wish to be the focus of the observation, and decide on any action to be taken subsequent to the observation.

All feedback is formative, rather than evaluative; it is descriptive rather than judgmental. Observations are objective rather than subjective; data recorded during the observation is in measurable units rather than impressionistic.

The program administration should remain as unobtrusive as possible, although it may have initiated the exercise. It may also be necessary for the administration to facilitate the peer observation exercise by providing supportive activities such as organizing a workshop for participants to clarify the objectives of the exercise and explain the procedures involved. (p.8)

1.4.2. *The stages of peer observation*

Goldhammer (1969) found five stages in peer observation: (1) Pre-observation conference, (2) Classroom observation, (3) Analysis, (4) Post-observation conference, (5) Post-conference self-analysis.

2. Research question

To achieve the goals of the present study, the following research questions were posed:

Q: Could peer observation as a reflective tool significantly affect Iranian EFL teachers' professional development?

According to the research question, this null hypothesis can be made:

H: Peer observation could significantly improve Iranian EFL teachers' professional development and it continues to be used by EFL teachers as a reflective teaching tool.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study are 20 EFL teachers as the Heads of English departments in Iranian schools who were directly involved in peer observations of their colleagues and they had rich and valuable experiences in the program. The teachers aged 30 and above with the range of 10 years' experiences in ELT and more. And all the participants majored TEFL with the degrees of MA and PHD. All those 20 EFL teachers had experiences both being observer and observee for an average of 10 classes. In their observing experience, they were alone in the class as an observer and also being observed by just one observee.

3.2. Instrumentation

Peer observation questionnaire was used as an instrument in this study. It was constructed and validated by Nor Azni (1997) and modified by the researchers based on the aim of this study. In addition, the reliability, .89, and validity of the questionnaire have been checked within the same aforementioned study. The questionnaire consisted of 14 parts which was in a form of open-ended and close-ended questions. In other words, it has given us both qualitative and quantitative data. Close-ended questions were put in part 4 which consisted of 12 statements which was in a form of five-point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The other parts were the open-ended questions. To this end, the participants were provided with the following four open-ended questions regarding the qualitative part of the study:

- (1) Are there any other benefits of a peer observation exercise?
- (2) Are there any disadvantages of a peer observation exercise?
- (3) What is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observer?
- (4) What is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observee?

3.3. Procedures

The aim of this study was to investigate if peer observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. The researchers sent the peer observation questionnaire for 57 EFL teachers as the Head of English departments in Iranian Schools who were directly involved in peer observations of their colleagues and they had rich and noticeable experiences. It was done via the Telegram Software. Of 55 volunteered teachers, only 30 participated in the study and filled out the questionnaire and answered the questions. After receiving the completed questionnaires within a week, their data were analyzed. The quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS software and qualitative ones by hand. On the part of qualitative data analysis, the key words were highlighted first. Then, based on those key words, the answers were sorted and categorized under question.

4. Results and discussions

Through the application of Telegram, a peer observation questionnaire was presented to at least 200 Iranian experienced (10–25 years) teachers teaching a new textbook. They have all been as the head of educational groups throughout the country. Although the teachers here represent a diversity of experience, gender, degree, and age, a highly homogeneous group of teachers is represented in this study. All EFL teachers were either observed or observed at least 10 times. All observations were carried out by just one observer being present in the class throughout the process. Being informed that these elected teachers had long enough time to observe their colleagues during their pedagogical responsibility made us much more eager and motivated to decide to run the program. Participation was on a voluntary basis; the participants were not compelled to take part. Among 57 teachers that expressed their willingness via PV to fill out the questionnaire, only 20 completed questionnaires were sent back to us from participants with MA and PhD degree in TEFL. All respondents were experienced teachers: five have been teaching for more than 20 years. Respondents were both males and females. Responses to the questionnaire formed the basis for this study.

In this study, an attempt was made to find answer to the research question concerning the effect of peer observation on Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. In other words, the aim of this study was to find an answer to this question: Could peer observation as a reflective tool significantly affect Iranian EFL teachers' professional development? According to the peer observation questionnaire, most of the items needed qualitative and reflective answers by the EFL teachers and little attention were given to quantitative data.

4.1. Quantitative data

In order to collect the quantitative data for the present investigation, data were collected by distributing the questionnaires among 20 EFL experienced (10–25 years) teachers who have been the head of educational groups. Chi-square tests (χ^2) were employed to determine the significant variation patterns in EFL teachers' reported perspectives on the benefits of peer observation. These tests were used to check all the items for significant variations with respect to the variables in the present study. This test compared the actual frequencies with which participants gave different responses on the five-point rating scale, a method of analysis closer to the raw data than comparisons based on average responses for each item. For the Chi-square tests, responses of 1 and 2 ("Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree") were consolidated into a single "Disagreement" category; and responses of 4 and 5 ("Agree" and "Strongly Agree") were combined into a single "Agreement" category. The purpose of consolidating the 5 response levels into three categories of beliefs is to obtain cell sizes with expected values high enough to ensure a valid analysis (Green & Oxford, 1995, p. 271).

In part 4, 12 benefits of peer observation have been suggested which have been shown in various studies as being. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

According to Table 1, totally, 91.10% of respondents agreed with all the items, and disagreed with 8.9% of items. So, most of the respondents strongly agreed with all the benefits mentioned in this table. Among all, items most agreed with were "by peer observation, teachers learn new skills,"

Table 1. A comparison of EFL teachers' perspectives on the benefits of peer observation

| | Agreement (%) | Disagreement (%) | χ^2 | sig. |
|--|---------------|------------------|----------|------|
| Item 1. Better communication among teachers | 86.66 | 13.33 | 3.600 | .165 |
| Item 2. More sense of purpose as a teacher | 86.66 | 13.33 | 5.200 | .074 |
| Item 3. Improve atmosphere of cooperation | 73.33 | 26.66 | .400 | .819 |
| Item 4. Teachers gained confidence | 93.33 | 7.66 | 8.400 | .015 |
| Item 5. Teachers learnt new skills | 100 | 0 | 1.667 | .197 |
| Item 6. Teachers gained valuable insights into their teaching/classroom behavior | 93.33 | 7.66 | 6.400 | .041 |
| Item 7. Teachers "opened up" | 93.33 | 7.66 | 5.200 | .074 |
| Item 8. Teachers were able to accept feedback from peers | 80 | 20 | 1.600 | .449 |
| Item 9. Teachers become more reflective about their own teaching | 86.66 | 13 | 3.600 | .165 |
| Item 10. Teachers changed their teaching methods/routines | 100 | 0 | 1.667 | .197 |
| Item 11. Teachers used a wide range of techniques | 100 | 0 | .067 | .796 |
| Item 12. The POE resulted in increased professionalism in teachers' attitudes | 100 | 0 | 3.267 | |
| Total items | 91.10 | 8.9 | | |

"Teachers changed their teaching methods/routines," "Teachers used a wide range of techniques" and "The POE resulted in increased professionalism in teachers' attitudes." And finally, item most disagreed with was: "The POE improve atmosphere of cooperation." As a result, according to the quantitative data, most of the respondents agreed with most of the benefits of the peer observation. Also, the results of the chi-square (χ^2) tests revealed that EFL teachers had significantly various viewpoints about 2 items out of 12-items of 4 & 6-of benefits of peer observation.

4.2. Qualitative data

4.2.1. Payoffs and pitfalls of peer observation

There are several advantages and disadvantages associated with peer observation from both the observer's and the observee's point of view. On the part of related qualitative data, we received the necessary information through the open-ended questionnaire responses. To this end, the participants were provided with the following four open-ended questions:

- (1) Are there any other benefits of a peer observation exercise?
- (2) Are there any disadvantages of a peer observation exercise?
- (3) What is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observer?
- (4) What is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observee?

Their responses showed the inevitable emphasis of most participants on the decisive benefits of peer observation. Obviously, it has had magnificent beneficial effects on the participants throughout their experiences of peer observation. However, they also mentioned some disadvantages. Many of them noted at least one of the most useful things they had learned from peer observation too.

The results from the answers to the aforementioned questions are as follows:

4.2.2. *Other benefits*

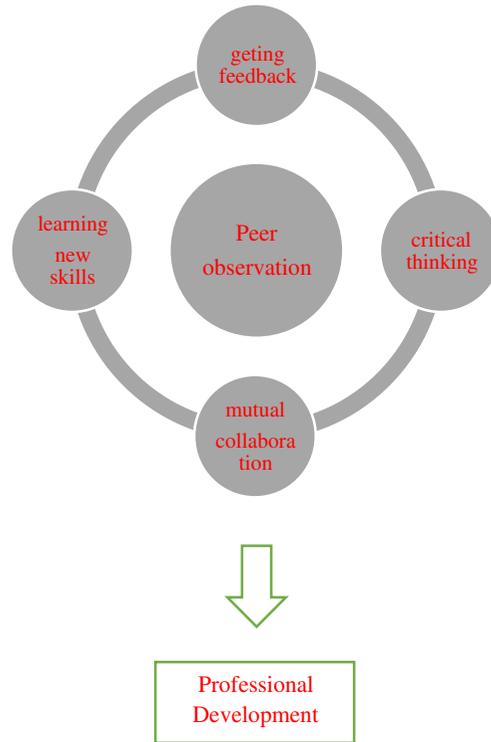
Aside from the advantages due to peer observation listed in the questionnaire, a lot of other benefits were noted by the participants. Among them the following items are of greater importance and worth:

*Peer Observation:

- (1) prompts the observer to be more active dealing with the steps of teaching process.
- (2) helps the lecturers to take advantage of time saving by learning the techniques of presenting the lessons.
- (3) can create a motive for rechecking the pronunciation and stress of words teachers are going to present in order to prevent mistakes.
- (4) is a nice way of learning and enriching the teaching practice. Peer observation causes the observer to revise his/her own teaching procedures and to rethink more about it. Also it gives both peers new ideas for better teaching because they receive instant feedback.
- (5) helps the lecturers know if their presentation was clear and understandable enough. Generally, it also lets them know their audiences' feelings better.
- (6) increases:
 - (a) the sense of shared responsibility.
 - (b) the focus on students' achievements.
 - (c) the professional and collaborative learning.
- (7) can bring about a chance for observer to learn new techniques in practice.
- (8) is self-regulating and gives the observer positive feedback.
- (9) helps the teachers in finding shortcuts in presenting the lessons.
- (10) can save time and energy.
- (11) helps the lecturers a lot learn different ways of presenting the subject, especially if they observe the experienced teachers' classes. They can also learn different techniques and strategies through observation.
- (12) if prescheduled, the observer feels more serious to get prepared in advance, getting a good control over everything, managing the time carefully, reviewing the subject to be taught.

According to the above answers, peer observation has many advantages. It is a time-saving technique, in other words, it helps teachers to get feedback within short time. It helps teachers to develop themselves fast. It creates motivation for teachers to prepare and develop themselves in advance for their classes. Because they know their classes are going to be observed, they try to prepare themselves more. So, it helps them to improve gradually. Also, peer observation is one of the techniques of reflective teaching, it gives teachers useful reflection, feedback and critical thinking. By reflection they get, they think critically and deeply about their manner and methods of teaching. Moreover, peer observation creates a sense of mutual responsibility and collaboration between colleagues. So, it creates mutual development. Finally, by observing their colleague's classroom, teachers learn new teaching skills, techniques and strategies, and apply them in their class (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Peer observation main benefits.



4.2.3. Disadvantages

Besides lots of significant benefits listed in the questionnaire and mentioned by the participants, there are several pitfalls due to peer observation which are important to address and think of; and there may be possible solutions if enough attention is given to this exercise by the policy-makers and teachers.

Among several disadvantages gathered via this study, the following items are of greater significance and worth:

- (1) It really depends on the lecturers' characteristics. Some may get over anxious (phobic), lecturers could feel hopeless and even lose confidence if they don't know the real benefits of peer observation.
- (2) The more involved they get, the less having creativity.
- (3) The lecturer may conceal his/her own deeply established ideas and behavior in teaching.
- (4) Most lecturers cannot teach in their usual and normal way because they feel nervous.
- (5) The observer is frequently biased. It is often done once a year (because of the lack of time) so there is no way to compare and understand how much the teacher has improved. Factors like the time of class or even the day and the teacher's mood can affect the observation. So the feedback is not valid.
- (6) It's all advantageous in voluntary cases, but when it's a must, they may feel uncomfortable. Some may be extremely fearful while being observed.
- (7) The observer may have some degree of bias.

- (8) The observation process makes the students nervous and distracts their attention.
- (9) The observee doesn't feel relaxed and the teaching process may seem unnatural.
- (10) Preparing the environment of trust is hard and it is very difficult to construct the real sense of intimacy.
- (11) Finding a teacher to observe is very difficult because most of the teachers decline to be observed or at least not willingly accept it.

Of 20 respondents, four participants didn't mention any disadvantages for peer observation program. But other respondents mentioned some disadvantages. One of the main disadvantages of peer observation is the sense of anxiety and lack of confidence which may be created when someone observe you and examine your performance with critical view. In this approach, the factor of "trust" is important. If mutual trust exists between peers, they can be more successful in peer observation. The other disadvantage mentioned by the participants is that the teachers may not show their real performance knowing the fact that they are being observed. They may show themselves better than their real performance just in the observation sessions. Also, it can be biased. It depends on the observer's point of view and so it is subjective. When someone as an observer is in the class, the students may be distracted. And because of the above-mentioned factors of trust and sense of anxiety and nervousness, some of the teachers decline to be observed and sometimes accept it reluctantly. Finally, it is suggested that observation should be voluntary not compulsory to get better results.

4.2.4. *The most useful thing I have gained/learned as an observer*

- (1) I have learned a lot of useful tips from my colleagues both in class management and teaching English.
- (2) Confidence in what I am doing as a teacher means that I can decide more easily on continuing my own practices or not.
- (3) Observation can definitely impact our teaching patterns positively, because everything is done practically. Even in cases the teacher is implementing a technique wrong, the observer can internalize the correct way in his/her mind forever.
- (4) I realized my teaching liabilities through observing my colleagues. Sometimes I might have the same flaw, but it wasn't observed or paid attention to. Thus, I realized lots of my faults through observing others.
- (5) It helps us to gain a wider insight toward different methods and techniques.
- (6) I have learnt different techniques and strategies in classroom management.
- (7) We can evaluate ourselves and try to improve through comparing.
- (8) Some new and highly creative techniques of teaching and formative assessment and special ways in assigning students' homework have been noticeable for me.
- (9) Observation increases experience and self-confidence.
- (10) We shouldn't experience everything ourselves instead we can take advantage of others' experiences.
- (11) It gave me a chance of getting familiar with different issues such as; the way the teacher used the course materials, the teaching methods, and strategies, how he/she interacted with students and how the learners responded and cooperated with each other.
- (12) It stresses the need to get help from others if necessary and this will result in students' success.

All 20 teachers in this study had experience of observing a class. When asked the question of "what is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observer?", we got different answers. They learned useful tips regarding class management and teaching, self-confidence, effect of practicality, understanding their own faults and weaknesses, learning different techniques and strategies,

self-evaluation by comparison, gaining experience and learning from experiences of others, cooperation, and students' success. So, those are good and useful things the EFL teachers have learned from peer observation tool as an observer which are interesting for other teachers.

4.2.5. The most useful thing I have gained/learned as an observee

- (1) It helped me develop a better working relationship with my colleague. After observation, I learned the value of evaluation and I realized the need for development and improvement. Generally, I know more about my strengths and weaknesses.
- (2) It prompted me to be well organized and prepared in advance.
- (3) It led me to think of every single point of the lesson.
- (4) It increased my self-confidence.
- (5) I learned how to organize my teaching, writing on the board and how and where to stand in a better way while teaching.
- (6) some problems that may occur during the presentation should be predicted and thought about and certain tactics must be prepared and practiced as alternatives. So if, for instance, my laptop doesn't work or if the electricity is out, I know how to handle the situation.
- (7) I became aware of my weaknesses, after the class, through the discussion.
- (8) The discussions afterwards on the possible strengths and weaknesses was very beneficial.
- (9) I tried to be much more confident and not be affected by the presence of the observer.
- (10) There is always scope for progress, hardly anyone is flawless.
- (11) It made me principled in my presentation techniques.
- (12) I'm always feeling the presence of an observer although he/she is not around.
- (13) I learned how to have a friendly relationship with my colleagues.

Also, all participants in this study had already experienced being as an observee. When asked the question of "what is the most useful thing you gained/learned as an observee?", we got different answers including: developing a good working relationship, understanding more about their strengths and weaknesses, finding motivation for preparing themselves in advance, being more careful in their teaching, self-confidence, thinking more deeply about their teaching, progress, continuing to feel an observer is present in the class, having a friendly relationship and collaboration. These effective and useful things the EFL teachers learned from peer observation tool as an observee are valuable experiences for other teachers and practitioners.

4.3. Quantitate and qualitative data

Quantitative data was gathered by a section in peer observation questionnaire. That section was a table containing twelve benefits of peer observation gathered by Nor Azni (1997) from previous studies. According to the result, 91.10% of respondents agreed with all of those twelve benefits of peer observation and among them, the most agreed items were devoted to the items of "by peer observation, teachers learn new skills". Also, after examining qualitative data, most teachers both as an observer and observee were more focused on the advantage of learning different and new techniques and skills with different wordings.

According to the both quantitative and qualitative data, peer observation has so many benefits for teachers. Among them most EFL teachers believe by peer observation they learn different and new techniques and skills from their colleagues in a collaborative form. Therefore, teachers argued that by observing their colleague's classroom, they learn new teaching skills, techniques and strategies and apply them in their class and this is the most agreed benefit of peer observation mentioned in quantitative and qualitative study. Though, so many other benefits mentioned by teachers which

were interesting and noteworthy. Finally, according to both kinds of data as a total, it can be concluded that peer observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect Iranian EFL teachers' professional development and the research hypothesis was approved.

5. Conclusion and discussion

There are both advantages and disadvantages of conducting peer observation program. Findings from other studies and specifically this one which were carried out on peer observation exercise are really positive, and obviously show that all who are keeping their hands in educational affairs undoubtedly can benefit from the many advantages of peer observation exercise. But such a program needs the help of policy makers to start and provide the all needed facilities both financially and legally to run the program in order to pave the way for professional and mutual developments of the teachers. However, there are some disadvantages for peer observation, there are possible solutions in order to motivate the teachers to participate in the program if enough time, money and energy are devoted to this end. Therefore, according to the whole data, we can answer to this question of "Could peer-observation as a reflective tool significantly affect on Iranian EFL teachers' professional development?" in this way: based on the point of view and experience of Iranian EFL teachers peer-observation as a reflective tool could significantly affect on Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. And most of the EFL teachers strongly agreed with the benefits of peer observation as a reflective tool. So, the research hypothesis was approved.

In the case of peer observation, some studies have been carried out. Santos and Miguel (2016) investigated the development of peer-observation program for the use of an extension language school in Hong Kong. They did an interview with six teachers and according to their answers concluded that peer observation can be a good tool for continuous professional development for teachers in order to develop their teaching strategies. So, our result confirms each other. Also, Jones and Gallen (2016) did a small-scale study of an online peer observation scheme with a group of associate lecturers in physical sciences at the UK Open University and concluded that online peer observation improves development through subsequent reflection and dialog. In another study, Tenenberg (2016) examined Learning through observing peers in practice and his results showed valuable evidence as peer observation for learning and development for the observer.

Therefore, according to this study and other studies peer observation helps to development of teachers and improvement of learning by providing reflection and collaboration and learning new skills and teaching strategies. Teachers get feedback from each other and make change in themselves. Peer observation increase cooperation between colleagues and make sense of confidence and trust among them. As a result, it significantly makes good influence on teachers' professional development. Results of this study provide teachers and practitioners useful implications to prompt teachers to use more this reflective tool and other tools in other to develop their professional competencies. Further studies are needed to investigate other tools of reflective teaching such as journal writing and diary and their results can be compared with the result of this study.

It's true that this study has been run among EFL teachers and as Nor Azni (1997) states that although peer observation is admirably suitable for language teaching classrooms; it shouldn't necessarily be confined to this area of teaching. In fact, it can be implemented at any level of education and in any discipline. He also continues: "it is hoped that the positive reception by the respondents will encourage non-participant lecturers to take part in any future exercise."

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