

# Keep calm—this is a judgment-free zone: teacher perceptions about classroom intervisitations

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This article aims to consider teacher's views about intervisitations regarding its application and its usefulness as a community-enhancer. Many educators venture into the world of teaching because they love learning and value learning from their peers (rather than merely from text or administrators); however, teacher reservations or hesitations towards the practice of engaging in intervisitations do exist and can serve as an obstacle.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The findings reported in this study resulted from the analysis of two teacher's perspectives towards classroom intervisitations. The subset of data presented in this study resulted from the surveys and semi-structured interviews that were conducted. Qualitative methodology was used to address the research question as it allows for a greater exploration, description and ideally the emotions of participants/teachers. The coding process consisted of open coding, which then led to axial coding and the elevation of codes to themes.

**Findings** – In this study, teacher buy-in would be enhanced through the protocol feeling more personalized, less-dictated and more flexible in its execution, especially through the support of administrators and district leaders. In addition, teacher mindsets and perceptions also need some reshifting and should be part of the professional development process involving intervisitation roll-outs as any hesitations/limitations/and lack of willingness need to be honed in on and prioritized. Lastly, limiting teachers from an appropriate amount of time to complete such work may also encourage shallow collaboration among teachers instead of in-depth reflexive practice. By prioritizing intervisitations and/or inter-teacher collaboration in the building and allowing teachers to embark on professional development sessions with each other as a means of growing as a teacher and community, all will flourish.

**Originality/value** – Through examining the narratives of two educators, it was found that teacher willingness to partake in intervisitations is dependent on the school climate, particularly with regards to trust and a year-to-learn among inter-school peers and administrators. In addition, providing ample time and educating teachers on the benefits of such practices enhances one's wanting to independently venture into such work.

**Keywords** Intervisitations, Lesson study, Peer observations, Professional development, Collaboration, School culture and climate

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

It's the idea of being judged by your fellow teachers . . . The nervousness is always there. (Sarah, Urban English Teacher for 15+ years)

It's like we always wonder who it is that's giving us the feedback and advice, and you know, sometimes we think they themselves are not perfect, so why would I believe what they have to tell me? (Nicole, Urban Special Education Teacher for 10+ years)

A novice teacher returned to her building eager, motivated and excited to roll out a series of classroom intervisitations among other teachers at her school after having completed a



district-wide professional development training session. This teacher's principal gave her the go-ahead and told her to choose which teachers she would conduct the series with along with the schedule and findings. The teacher was shocked and confused when some of the responses from the teachers she asked consisted of the following: (1) "Why? Did [the principal] send you to me?" [Are they] saying I need help or something?; (2) "I'll do it if I have to, sure, but I'd rather you ask someone else"; (3) "Depends. How long would you be visiting my room, and can I pick which specific class, date, and time we could do this?" Some teachers also wanted to know if there would be per session or monetary compensation for doing this and/or if this could take place as *in lieu of* teaching periods since they did not want to give up personal time or preparation periods. Now imagine if you are the initial, eager and novice teacher motivated to roll out a new initiative that you were not only freshly trained in but also find value in incorporating into the school culture, all while you yourself are expanding (or attempting to) within the profession. What is going through your mind? Why might there be teacher pushback and from where does it stem? At the end of the day, one could assume that everyone would rather steer clear from the negative opinions of their coworkers. Unfortunately, many ideas that percolate with passion wind up on the cutting floor of fear.

Intervisitations, or teacher-to-teacher classroom observations, generally lead to growth and positive results and are viewed as good practice. However, they can be perceived as threatening by some teachers. According to [Reilly \(2017\)](#),

Peer observation cycles . . . are meant to challenge ingrained conceptions of a teachers' role in schools putting them in a position to consider, together, effective ways to reach students. They invite teams of practitioners to immerse themselves in trying to address problems that are immediately relevant to them and other members of their school communities. Done well, they promote teacher learning that is constructivist and embedded ([Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009](#)), supporting a culture of collaborative inquiry rather than the familiar norms of individualism and isolation that pervade many schools, leaving them intellectually dormant places ([Lortie, 1975](#); [Whitford and Wood, 2010](#); [Hargreaves and Fullan, 2015](#), p. 14)

Many teachers, when surveyed, do find value and necessity in intervisiting as one sees skills/best practices *in vivo* vs by text or word-of-mouth and get to converse about best practices from a peer vs an administrator or during a high-stakes observation. Through engaging in collaborative discussion with peers, a sense of agency or inclusion can ensue and perhaps encourage one to want to participate. However, this is not always the case ([Firestone et al., 2020](#); [Herbert et al., 2018](#); [Sandt, 2012](#)). Teaching, traditionally, has been described as a profession with a high degree of autonomy, which is often appreciated by teachers but can easily lead to feelings of isolation from colleagues ([Herbert et al., 2018](#)). Is teaching individualistic in nature or is that promoted through the culture at the school and/or systematically? In what ways, if at all, may a teacher's willingness to participate in the intervisitation process be affected by a teacher feeling that her pedagogical choices are being valued? This article considers teacher's views about intervisitations regarding its application and its usefulness as a community-enhancer. Many educators venture into the world of teaching because they love learning and value learning from their peers (rather than merely from text or administrators); however, teacher reservations or hesitations towards the practice of engaging in intervisitations do exist and can serve as an obstacle.

### Literature review

How do teachers perceive classroom intervisitations and/or peer observations? Research on this topic tends to fall into two categories: best practices and benefits from intervisiting and being intervisited. In constructing this review, there was an aim for attaining teacher perceptions about intervisitations, specifically their feeling a sense of voice, power,

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ownership, inclusion and control throughout the learning process and camaraderie among a group of learners.

Themes that emerged in the literature review were: teacher self-efficacy, school culture and climate and school leadership and context. Teacher self-efficacy and motivation levels are promoted through peer-to-peer camaraderie, as well as through the support of time, understanding and available resources from leadership within the school and community (Chester, 2012; Fox and Poultney, 2020; Sandt, 2012). The benefits of intervisitations are apparent when paired with a climate of school professionals who strive to enhance their level of expertise and/or when the value of such a form of professional development is understood among a community of learners. In addition, school context must be considered as the benefits of intervisitations cannot flourish among a community of educators who lack trust, resources, time and/or flexibility (Cravens *et al.*, 2017; Morel, 2014).

### *Self-efficacy*

The link between teacher intervisitations and self-efficacy is important: Establishing professional learning communities within the building (e.g. mentoring cycles) can provide a collaborative and stress-and-judgment free environment. Teacher retention will follow, particularly for early teachers (Herbert *et al.*, 2018). Teachers with high efficacy rates are more motivated and likely to experiment with challenging instructional strategies, such as student-directed methods and are more likely to collaborate with fellow teachers as their confidence within the classroom grows with more classroom visits and mastery experiences (Cravens *et al.*, 2017; Herbert *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, teachers who have more effective peers tend to be more effective themselves (Cravens *et al.*, 2017). Hence, intervisitations contribute to promoting a culture of learning among the entire school community.

### *School climate*

Successful intervisitations should essentially take place in a safe space without teachers being judged or feeling as though they were being judged (Fox and Poultney, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider the school climate in which the intervisitations take place and whether or not it promotes the level of adaptive teaching that takes place (Schipper *et al.*, 2020a, b). Peer observations work “only if participants are willing to take risks, have respect for one another, and are capable of reflecting collaboratively” (Sandt, 2012, p. 357). Teachers who feel they are being judged within the process tend to display defensive or evasive behaviors, and thus the intention of this serving as professional development and true collaboration will not take place (Sandt, 2012). Maintaining a strong community of practice within the workplace also requires effectiveness, a high-level of trust and risk-taking that elevates teachers from working in isolation within their classrooms and moving it to the public sphere of communities of practice for the viewing of other teachers (Cravens *et al.*, 2017).

### *Leaders and context*

When leaders introduce programs or initiatives, they should consider the context of school conditions (Fox and Poultney, 2020). Interisitations thrive in environments in which the school leader develops a climate that is conducive to collaboration (Cravens *et al.*, 2017). School leaders are thus tasked with “promoting cultures that value evidence, create environments that are more focused on trust than accountability, harness and spread expertise, and work with staff to evaluate the impact of their practice on learning” (Cravens *et al.*, 2017).

While teachers see potential in peer observations for their own professional development, they simultaneously point out that such observations often become intertwined in power relations, such as inexplicit power structures of fears of judgment from fellow peers that lead

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to feelings of stress and nerve-wrecking reactions that impact their performance mid-visit (Sandt, 2012). In addition, teachers fear being labeled a “bad” teacher. Peer observations should model and address possible power imbalances between the observer, the observed and the facilitators at the leadership level. Peer observations have the potential to stimulate a collaborative environment only if “effective strategies are employed to regulate the ingrained power relations within the school” (Sandt, 2012). What then, of the perceptions of educators embarking on intervisitation cycles? Where in the literature are their perspectives? This study aims to fill that gap.

### Theoretical framework

My current conception of teacher perceptions towards classroom intervisitations and school-wide learning communities is situated in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation. One can see how intervisitations might flourish in school climates where collaboration and peer inclusion/acceptance is at the crux of the values of the school community. When teachers feel their role in the school, choices in practice and culture are valued, a sense of camaraderie and trust among educators ensues. Otherwise, teacher hesitations, fear and low efficacy from such collaboration tools arise.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) framework brings to light some guiding principles that foster the alignment of intervisitations and situational learning theory, such as how learners (novices), in being part of the experience, gain agency within the learning community through mastery, access to experts (masters) and experiential, hands-on-learning. In addition, reflection, feedback and questioning are natural elements of the learning process and essential for continued growth among the ever-shifting contexts of the world/field of practice. The intention of classroom intervisitations is to build on teacher camaraderie, heighten their sense of communal learning and build agency through active and ongoing reflection and feedback cycles, which is a hallmark of Lave and Wenger’s work. Plus, one’s confidence in one’s own practice is strengthened as inquiry and additional modes of pedagogy are viewed in real-time vs via text-book, word-of-mouth or dictates. However, the key assumption is that teachers in the United States (US) do not partake or avoid partaking in intervisitations because they tend to self-isolate within their classrooms, expect to experience a sense of judgment from peer teachers and/or fear that any feedback is negative in nature and that perfection is unattainable (through the eye of the observer) (Courneya *et al.*, 2008; Morel, 2014; Sandt, 2012). Learning is more than just acquiring skills and learning transcends beyond the classroom and could also be absorbed through one’s own community in the workplace. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of membership aligns with the fundamentals of intervisitations through the notion of teachers learning among their community. As they assert:

Learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. In this view, learning only partly—and often incidentally—implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks, and functions, to master new understandings . . . Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations . . . Learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing and social membership entail one another (p. 53).

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning is not just for students as teachers, too, are learners and an essential piece of the endless and boundless cycle of learning. Learning through observation and imitation has its limitations as opposed to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) views of how true learning “crucially involves participation as a way of learning—of both absorbing and being absorbed in the ‘culture of practice’” (p. 95). Their framework has its limitations in that it considers how students, learners and in this case, teachers, would be

more inclined to learn (or collaborate) if they were active participants in the learning experience. However, what is missing is for participants, the “whole” participant, to feel “embraced” in the process (not just active). For this reason, mere membership/agency is not enough for intervisitations to flourish, since distrust/hesitancies may still be factors. Typically, intervisitation protocols consider a static view of lesson plan, rubric and general expectation of pedagogy, as opposed to the rich knowledge that a teacher already possesses – knowledge that is germane to her work in a particular classroom. Intervisitations are not always designed in a way where an avenue for a teacher’s explanation, justification, and contextualization of their choice in lesson planning and execution is allowable (time factors, for example). However, one’s wealth of knowledge, experience, choice in practice and true sense of knowing the students in their room are often not reflected in a lesson plan, within a few minutes of observation and at all moments in the day. For that reason, teachers do not always appreciate intervisitations as a strategy for growth and camaraderie building among peers at the school. Would teacher perceptions towards intervisitations shift if the intervisitation protocol included a forum for “listening” and articulated specific attempts to value one’s peers and his/her knowledge and experience throughout the process? How would that then ultimately impact school culture/climate? In order for true growth and buy-in for a collaboration strategy, such as intervisitations, a sense of trust is needed and that requires beyond-the-surface exchanges, where one is able to constantly provide context to their learning and where an intervisitor’s lens considers the whole teacher (i.e. her knowledge and experience). That is what true agency is all about.

### Method

The findings reported in this study resulted from the analysis of two teacher’s perspectives towards classroom intervisitations through the scope of the following research questions: What are the perceptions of teachers towards classroom intervisitations?; How, if at all, might intervisitations influence schools to become learning communities? The subset of data presented in this study resulted from the surveys and interviews that were conducted. Qualitative methodology was used to address the research question as it allows for a greater exploration, description and ideally the emotions of participants/teachers.

Participants for this study were two public school teachers located in an urban area of Northeastern US. The participants in this study chose the pseudonyms Nicole and Sarah. I had ready access to both participants, having previously worked with them in an educational setting. Both participants were currently middle school teachers who taught for over 10 years. They are Caucasian, identify as female and are classified as receiving effective/highly effective based on Charlotte Danielson Rubric ratings. Sarah is a Special Education English Language Arts teacher in her high 30s and is in her third school. Nicole, the other participant, is a General Education English Language Arts teacher closer to her 50s and this is the only school she has worked for and is closer to 15 years of teaching. For the 2020/2021 calendar year, both participants were working as remote teachers at their schools and also indicated exposure to conducting intervisitations and/or being intervisited by other peers within the past two years of the interview. Prior to beginning the gathering of participant data, I obtained consent from my university and from each participant to partake in this study. I, an English Language Arts teacher and teacher mentor in an Urban district in Northeastern US, also embarked on intervisitation rounds at my school, either independently or via request. I, while born in the US, am fluent in Spanish as I was born to Hispanic immigrant parents and work in the community that I grew up in. To me, being comfortable, supported and feeling valued within my community matters the most to me, and as a result, so does their opinion of me as a fellow educator and school member. Feeling like a welcoming resource and ally in this quest of learning, their fearing my opinions or assuming that I had any judgment towards them is what concerns me most. For

that reason, this work matters to me and I asked them to partake in this study. These participants work in the same district as me, and they embarked on intervisitation trainings and intervisited each other as well as others in their buildings. If there is anyone you should trust in the workplace, it should be your peers.

Before engaging in an interview, both participants completed a survey via Google Forms; this survey afforded me a glimpse of their perceptions towards intervisitations and frequency of exposure. Survey results indicated that both Nicole and Sarah were intervisited more than three times in the past two years but received no intervisitation this school year. There was also a variation in notice of visits (less than 1 week notice). Both teachers supplied low scores for intervisitation formality and consistency and for whether or not they felt that intervisitations provided true data about teacher performance and what actually was going on in the classroom. Both teachers were also quite neutral about whether or not they valued intervisitations and liked participating in the protocol. In addition, both teachers felt so-so about whether or not intervisitations actually aided them in curricular development and they being somewhat helpful/beneficial towards their growth/practice. The teachers provided conflicting answers where one (Nicole) out of the two said they would not volunteer to open up their classroom for intervisitations, and felt that the visiting intervisiter remaining objective throughout the observational or feedback process was just not possible. However, both agreed on the ideas that administrators could be objective, are comfortable with asking their peers/fellow staff members for advice, felt intervisitations should be on a voluntary vs dictated basis and that teachers rated highly effective needed to be intervisited the least. This last bit matters since both teachers are rated highly effective and communicated that their opinion is that intervisitations is more for training “those that need to be trained” vs the master/expert educators.

Participants were then asked to participate in a fifteen to twenty minute virtual interview and were guided by a semi-structured protocol (see [Appendix](#)) focusing on their exposure and experience with intervisitations, their comfort levels and emotions associated with intervisitations and their suggestions/ideals for intervisitations based on their current school climate/culture. The interview was conducted via a Zoom session and each interview was transcribed via the Otter application and then coded.

The coding process consisted of open coding, which then led to axial coding and the elevation of codes to themes ([Saldaña, 2021](#)). Axial codes consisted of resonating keywords that emerged such as judgment, discomfort, lack of control and the expressed feeling that feedback should be positive. [Figure A1](#) (see [Appendix](#)) consists of a word cloud created through the Mentimeter program with the codes/keywords that resonated throughout the coding process. Words that appear larger in text are due to those codes appearing at a higher frequency. Codes were then condensed into the themes of teacher emotions, central concerns pertaining to school climate and culture and ideals towards intervisitations since much of their responses, and/or statements focused on their personal beliefs about the process, preferences and their views based on their own history with intervisitations. Three themes were created from the data. These were teacher discomfort, distrust and its impact on collaboration and school culture:

### **Data/findings**

The data that arose from the interviews pointed at some problems and areas of concern and sheds light on teacher preferences about classroom intervisitations. The interviews, which were aimed towards gathering information about the teachers' past experiences with intervisitations, the present state of intervisitations and climate at their schools and their preferences or ideals towards how intervisitations took place in their building, resonated as a result of the questions and/or through the flow of discussion between the researcher/participant. Three major themes emerged through analysis.

*Theme 1, discomfort: "you make me uncomfortable"*

It is no secret that oftentimes anxiety goes hand-in-hand with teaching, and such anxiety tended to resonate when it came to the topic of classroom observations, whether by an administrator or fellow coworker. Throughout the interview, Sarah stated, "It's the idea of being judged by your fellow teachers" as a reason for why she was hesitant towards partaking in intervisitations and that "the nervousness is always there" even when prepared or aware of the purpose and timing of an intervisitation. In line with [Courneya et al. \(2008\)](#), the participants noted that peers or coworkers are often seen by teachers not only as colleagues, but as competitors and that peer review sometimes represents a threat where power relations between the reviewer and reviewee become evident. For this reason, judgment, stress and anxiety resonate due to a sense of being labeled by fellow coworkers in the workplace. Intervisitations, or peer observations, can heighten anxiety and stress for the observed teacher due to their feeling of being judged, vs where there was a clear objective to learn ([Herbert et al., 2018](#)) for both the observers and the observed. This, according to Sarah, may thus lead to teachers being "not as open to it as maybe they should be." Such anxieties may exist as a result of a fear of the possible negative opinions from coworkers, and this may impact their sense of confidence or self-efficacy.

Another sub-theme that resonated throughout the interviews was the concept of not trusting some coworkers' feedback, as teachers tended to have their own judgments and biases as well towards their coworkers. The interviewees stated that they would be more open to intervisitations, but, as Sarah said, "I hate to say it, but it all depends on who it is." Nicole said, "It's really hard to believe how feedback could really be non-evaluative, and I sometimes feel that that isn't always the case." In addition, teachers are not always welcoming feedback that might potentially be critical of their teaching, and for that reason, they shun the idea of becoming vulnerable to potentially receiving it. Sarah stated, "We sometimes have a tendency to not want to accept that feedback from no matter who it is" and Nicole, in an echo of Sarah, stated, "It's like we always wonder who it is that's giving us the feedback and advice and you know sometimes we think they're not perfect, so why would I believe what they have to tell me."

*Theme 2, distrust: "I rather ask Google than you"*

In the interview with Sarah, the concept of teacher willingness and flexibility resonated through statements such as, "I definitely do still feel like we have a good amount of teachers that are somewhat close minded and not willing to try new things"; "I think it's very difficult because you know people are sometimes stuck in their mindset and their ways sometimes no matter if it's, you know, an intervisitation from a fellow teacher or if it's administration." In Nicole's interview, she stated, "I would [rather] maybe turn to Google and look up best practices or new practices or I would go to my administrator." From Nicole and Sarah's comments, we can see that teachers, who may have felt judged within the process of intervisitations in the past, may now tend to display defensive or evading behaviors ([Sandt, 2012](#)). Participants in the interviews seem to crave a space for learning, and it could be seen in statements such as, "I'd love to work in a building where the professional discussions and growth really happens, and that I have not been able to feel in a very long time" (Nicole), "We, all as teachers, need the positivity" (Sarah), and that intervisitations "can help us to be more open . . . and feeling more comfortable, you know, telling other teachers in our building that they could feel free to come in" (Sarah).

School leadership could shift the attitude and culture of a building in more ways than anticipated. Nicole stated that the rolling-out of intervisitations "definitely has to be something that comes from the administrators and the principals, and if they do not help streamline this or support teachers in doing it, then I do feel it will just become a lost cause, or

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it'll just be another initiative that goes by the wayside". While the principal could also provide much support and targeted feedback, the shifting of power to the teachers is valuable and their communicating of its importance and long-term benefits is essential. As noted by Nicole, "it's much different than if we were to have the principal or assistant principal, tell us about how we did . . . If we hear it from our own teachers in our building, our friends or people we've worked with for years, it would definitely almost seem more powerful."

*Theme 3, collaboration and time: "Let's work together and feel alright"*

With regards to teacher buy-in, Nicole noted that "It [ideal intervisitations] has to be something where teachers value it and see its benefits and potential, so it really needs some professional development and a sense of people really processing those benefits." She also noted that a valued purpose needs to be clear and valued by the observer or else it will feel like a pointless intervisitation not leading to anything. School teachers have to be active participants from the very beginning: Nicole points out that, developing intervisitation goals together can create a sense of comfort within the process, which could lead to teachers more willingly joining the process.

An ideal mentality that is essential for intervisitations to flourish would be one where teachers feel valued. As Nicole says, "If we all feel we're in it together, and that this is something that we love to do, then it makes sense for us to just have that classroom door open and willing for anyone to come in." Nicole provided two pieces of advice having to do with the concept of just taking a chance and overcoming one's fears: "I think my advice would have to be just do it and just go for it. My second piece of advice would be to trust who you're with, and just have the conversations about your fears, maybe set some norms, and maybe read a bit about why you have to do this and why it will help you." Nicole helps us see that when teachers understand the benefits, and have a personal stake in an initiative, then it might be easier to obtain teacher participation.

Both Sarah and Nicole communicated that another limitation with school climate that needs to be addressed or considered in order to accommodate any hesitations one may have towards intervisitations has to do with the amount of time allotted for teachers to engage in such collaborative work. Nicole noted, "This requires a lot of time and training and that's just something we need." Teachers, to them, see a lack of time as a major hindrance for the implementation of peer observation programs and it may lead to stressful or rushed circumstances. If it requires providing time and building it into the teachers' schedule, then administration might want to take that into consideration if it opens the doors to a teacher's willingness to participate.

## **Discussion**

One may not immediately think of fear, concerns or negative emotions if looking at an intervisitation protocol or set of instructions on how to begin the series of sessions. Yet, as this study reveals, such feelings do arise as they did throughout the teacher interviews. Concepts of the participants lacking full control of the classroom and fearing that it will impact the views that their coworkers have of them for not being able to control every single facet in the classroom were mentioned. The participants lacked adaptability and a willingness to try new things because of a resonating resistance due to their preconceived fears and stress levels also emerged through the findings. Nicole and Sarah, when not aware of why such practices are recommended to them and/or when they feel it is an initiative-of-the-year, feel a discomfort towards it and thus merely participate for compliance. There is no growth in any of this, and/or if there is, it is shallow and accompanied with pushback.

Intervisitations, as communicated by participants, should lead to not only positive feedback (something all would love to receive) but constructive and personalized feedback.



Just as with [Lave and Wenger's \(1991\)](#) framework where the novice learns from the master (and vice versa), this is when the observer and the observed sit down and embark on reflexive discussion that makes one (ideally) want to not only accept the provided feedback but implement it right away. When a teacher has some resistance towards another, that area of concern or hesitation should be unpacked, yet it often is not. Teachers will only gain confidence in themselves when aware of their weaknesses, and those weaknesses or areas that could get stronger and stronger will only strengthen through reflection ([Morel, 2014](#); [Sandt, 2012](#)). Growth does not always have to involve emotions, but there may be benefits to unpacking the root cause of any resonating emotions as they emerge. This equally lends to the concept of trust in the workplace, and in a perfect world, intervisitations should work in any environment, with any peer or fellow collaborator.

True coherence among a school community should be understood at the teacher level, not dictated from above, so that optimal teacher engagement and growth begins ([Firestone et al., 2020](#)). An entire school could benefit through a teacher's searching-for-self, and that is through their homing in on chosen individualized concepts through the teacher observation setting ([Courneya et al., 2008](#); [Sandt, 2012](#)). In involving the teachers in the process and designing intervisitation goals around the teachers' goals, any professional development opportunities that involve active learning, collective participation and sustained coherence projects will feel more authentic ([Firestone et al., 2020](#)). In addition, if a teacher really values the process, and builds camaraderie with others in the building, the ideal may become a common practice, which is for teachers to take the initiative and partake in intervisitation work independently ([Cravens et al., 2017](#); [Firestone et al., 2020](#)). Ultimately, teachers may benefit from adapting a mental mindset to that of an open-door policy with coworkers, not just for their students. Plus, if teachers advocate to their students that they should be open to feedback, whether cool or warm, then teachers should be willing to hear that feedback, too.

### Conclusion

True collaboration and growth flourishes in a community of learning where strategies such as, intervisiting colleague classrooms is common practice. However, while intervisitations and collaboration are seen to provide benefits, it is still an activity that teachers tend to avoid due to feelings of stress, anxiety and fears of judgment from their collaborators. Such negative emotions towards intervisitations would thus likely decrease their willingness to partake in a practice where clear benefits and growth opportunities are overshadowed by their negative emotions. For this reason, it is important to consider where such emotions stem from as it becomes apparent that they predate intervisitations.

A crucial needed factor within school climates is for teachers to see the value of inquiry as a sustainable form of professional development and to re-evaluate the values underpinning their practices in order to enhance the quality of their teaching practices ([Fox and Poultney, 2020](#); [Pharis et al., 2018](#)). Teacher buy-in would be enhanced through the protocol feeling more personalized, less-dictated and more flexible in its execution. Obtaining a sense of personalized value as to why to embark on intervisitation work and professional development, instead of intervisitations being merely assigned, would improve teacher emotions towards the practice. The whole community would also benefit when school leaders continuously work towards creating a culture where their word and guidance is not all that teachers strive to impress ([Cravens et al., 2017](#); [Morel, 2014](#)). In addition, teacher mindsets and perceptions also need some re-shifting and should be part of the professional development process involving intervisitation roll-outs as any hesitations/limitations/and lack of willingness need to be honed in on and prioritized. Lastly, limiting teachers from an

appropriate amount of time to complete such work may also encourage shallow collaboration among teachers instead of in-depth reflexive practice and it will diminish the significance that may arise from such work and interpersonal feedback (Sandt, 2012). By prioritizing intervisitations and/or inter-teacher collaboration in the building and allowing teachers to embark on professional development sessions with each other as a means of growing as a teacher and community, all will flourish.

As for future areas of inquiry, I would like to venture into intervisitation work, specifically through the scope of implementing culturally responsive/Anti-racist curricula. Through this, teacher emotions and lesson study would be considered throughout the process and observed through pre- and post-observation sessions, as would the perspectives of the minority teachers with regards to how they learn and collaborate with fellow coworkers. For this study, my participants were two Caucasian females. I wonder how different the responses would be had I sampled from another culture set. It would be worth considering the varying comfort levels and responses of a teacher working with a teacher she chooses and/or holds with high regard vs a teacher she is assigned and/or a new teacher. I wonder how much personal relationships impact their responses towards one another, their observation lens (if at all shifted) and their preferred modes of sharing and attaining feedback.

Some limitations to this study include that while the interview protocol addressed teacher perspectives towards classroom intervisitations, it did not ask any of the participants to address how their individual identity or culture (gender, race, age, etc.) affected their experiences with intervisitations and/or impacted their lens or emotions towards intervisitations or their school community. Furthermore, this study would have benefited from more teacher participants for additional data and the perspective of an administrator as a means of attaining their voice towards the benefits of intervisitations within their school climate and/or some additional reasoning for why intervisitations are not as prioritized in their certain schools.

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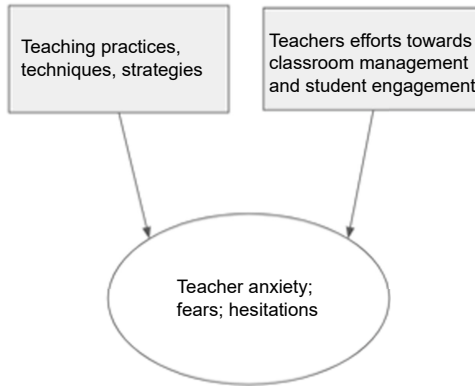
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**Appendix**  
Figures A2-A4

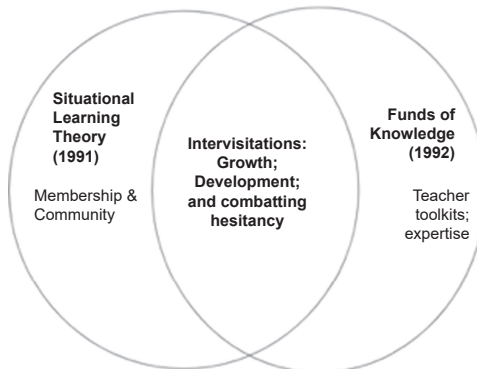
Teacher's  
views about  
mutual visiting



**Figure A1.**  
Interview codes by  
frequency



**Figure A2.**  
Teacher reservations  
towards the  
intervisors' lens



**Figure A3.**  
Theoretical  
Framework and its  
alignment to  
intervisor



**Interview Protocol**

- I formulated my Essential question and considered general assumptions
- I determined the participants
- I then carefully crafted a set of open-ended questions, along with additional questions  
should time allow me and/or should the topic arise in conversation

Participant Group: Two (2) Teachers (Urban NYC School - remote and in-person)

Research Focus: Teacher Perceptions towards Classroom Intervisitations

Essential Question: What are teacher perceptions towards classroom intervisitations?

**Interviewing Guide**

Interview (15-30 minutes) Questions (Red = focus questions):

1. What does a classroom intervisitation mean to you?
2. What do classroom intervisitations look like at your school, if at all?
3. What do you think the intended purposes are of intervisitations?
4. What intended outcomes do you think intervisitations have towards teaching pedagogy?
5. Describe the culture of learning at your school among teachers.
6. How would you prefer for intervisitations to look like at your school?
7. What are your perceptions or attitudes towards intervisitations?
8. If intervisited in the past, how did you feel during the observation process?
9. How, if at all, open are you to being intervisited?
10. What kind of feedback do you expect from an intervisitation?
11. What are your thoughts on whether or not an intervisitor could remain objective in the process?
12. How, if at all, would you say your emotions differ when being observed by an administrator versus a teaching peer?
13. What would be the ideal protocol for intervisitations at your school?
14. What suggestions may you have for teachers about the intervisitation process?
15. How, if at all, do you think intervisitations have shaped relationships among personnel at your building? (optimal setting)
16. What kind of support would you want to receive from your administrator?

**Figure A4.**  
Interview protocol