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Fear, the School Organization, and Teacher Evaluation

Sharon Conley

Naftaly S. Glasman

University of California–Santa Barbara

Fear can be conceptualized differently as experienced by those inside and outside the school organization. Internally, participants respond to fear in a politics of maintenance aimed toward protection against anticipated job loss(es). This article examines internal organizational participants' fear, with particular attention to teachers' fear of being evaluated. It is argued that the cellular organization of teaching contributes to fear, as do certain existing conflicts in evaluation. For example, teachers fearing a summative evaluation may be less than forthcoming about their performance shortcomings and/or goals. An analysis of fear in teacher evaluation should take into account (a) teacher controllability of teaching and its evaluation and (b) principals' preference for evaluation rigidity. In environments compromised by fear, for example, administrators might restrict information in teacher evaluation. Reform directions such as union participation and altering the adversarial tone of evaluation may improve evaluation by more fully developing the skills desired in teaching.

Keywords: *teacher evaluation; school organization; evaluation rigidity; mechanistic shift; politics of maintenance*

Any explanations of behavioral events in work settings that ignore the emotional or affective aspects of behavior are bound to be inadequate. Even more important is the notion that such aspects of behavior are to be regarded as normal and natural. Individuals at work, like individuals everywhere, are both thinking *and* feeling creatures.

L. Porter, E. E. Lawler, and J. R. Hackman, 1975

Authors' Note: We thank Vivienne Collinson, Chris Skinner, and Cheri Scriptor for their very helpful comments on previous drafts. Please address correspondence to Professor Sharon Conley, Department of Education, University of California–Santa Barbara, 507 Mesa Rd., Phelps 2206, Santa Barbara, CA 93106; e-mail: sconley@education.ucsb.edu.

External and Internal Fear

Fear can be conceptualized differently as experienced by those inside and outside of the school organization. Fears of external stakeholders include low student achievement, school violence, controversial ideologies permeating the curriculum, poor skill preparation for the labor force, and low levels of fiscal and cultural accountability. Within schools, fears of organizational participants include accountability-driven sanctions, reduction of fiscal support, difficulty in meeting diverse student needs, and diminished control over intrinsic work features.

Internally, fear is experienced differently by the two key educational groups: teachers and administrators. For teachers, "ambiguity," "uneasiness," and discouragement about the future stemming from state accountability measures have been well documented (Cibulka & Derlin, 1998, pp. 86-87). In two study schools in the state of Maryland, for example, a "reconstitution" initiative created fear of "teacher burnout" that was of "real concern" (pp. 87, 90). Furthermore, teachers feared "personal criticism" encouraged by the state's political rhetoric that "schools are not doing well enough" (p. 90). Additional sources of teacher-related fear are continued increases in class size (Alt, Kwon, & Yenke, 1999), a lack of "boundedness in teachers' work," where teachers believe there is always more that could be done for their students (Bascia, 1996, p. 189; see also Hargreaves, 1994), and a sense of diminished parental support and involvement (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988).

Among the major fears administrators experience are the "multiple, often conflicting priorities" in their work, such that "not everything can always be done well" (Educational Research Service, 2000, p. 33). Pounder and Merrill (2001), for example, documented several complex factors in the principalship, including "bureaucracy, insensitive bureaucrats, red tape, politics, legislative demands (and) regulations" (Lyons, 1999, cited in Pounder & Merrill, 2001, p. 36). In addition, principals may fear that increasing staff "empowerment" will diminish their managerial prerogative (Bredeson, 1989, p. 10). The concept of expanded oversight and review in the No Child Left Behind Act is also a source of fear (Ginsberg & Leiche, this issue). As leaders, principals see and experience political stigmatization (Sutton & Callahan, 1987), reassignment, or replacement should their schools not meet accountability standards designated by states (McGhee & Nelson, 2007; Mintrop, 2004).

Internal and external fear imply very different kinds of school politics (see Table 1). In accordance with Ginsberg and Leiche (this issue), politics may be defined as a system of "alliances among groups," where people use ideas

Table 1
Who Is Fearful, Sources of Fear, and Types of Politics

Who Is Fearful	Sources of Fear	Type of Politics
Fear experienced by external stakeholders	Perception of deteriorating schools; inability of students to compete globally; schools blamed for perceived decline of society/way of life	Politics of intervention (intervening in the educational enterprise)
Fear experienced by internal stakeholders	Lack of manageable workload; expansion of curriculum and uncertainties in testing; less parental availability and support; school sanctions	Politics of maintenance (protecting job retention and client/organization relationships)

to control the formation of policy outcomes. In reaction to fear, external stakeholders may intervene in school management, perhaps by invoking a sense of crisis and/or assuming control over the school. This fear response may be termed a *politics of intervention* aimed at reversing disturbing societal trends. A recent example appeared in the Los Angeles mayor's attempt to take over several of the district's low-achieving schools (Helfand & Blume, 2007). Furthermore, a shift in the politics of that district was reflected in the school board's decision to hire a noneducator as superintendent (Rubin & Blume, 2007).

Responses

Internally, participants may respond to fear by protecting themselves against potential losses such as a loss of employment or the diminishment of professional prerogative. For example, teachers might work with union representatives to influence public policy in protection of such job interests as employment security and compensation based on their belief that they are "first in line when it comes to accountability and last in line for professional rights and monetary reward" (Armiger, 1981, p. 295). In contrast to the "hostile myths" in the politics of fear (Ginsberg & Leiche, this issue), teachers believe that it is the "secure employee, free from anxieties about the future, who will be able to pursue professional tasks to the utmost" (Armiger, 1981, p. 295). In the current accountability movement, a more extreme response of job protection can be seen in recent allegations of principal manipulation of school standardized test results (e.g., Benton & Hacker,

2005). Such fear responses may be termed a *politics of maintenance* aimed toward protection against anticipated job loss(es) (see Table 1).

We focus in this article on the second type of fear (internal participant fear) and specifically, teachers' fear of being evaluated. Regarding the politics of maintenance, teachers' fear response is to protect themselves against losses stemming from less-than-favorable evaluations, particularly when such evaluations have implications for their job security, autonomy, and skill utilization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Administrators, too, appear interested in minimizing losses associated with a lowered quality of instruction, contributing directly to the overall performance of the school. Here, we seek to develop these ideas further and to offer a prognosis for teacher evaluation designed to redirect energy associated with fear to improving the way teacher evaluation is conducted. This improvement is sought to more fully develop the skills desired in teaching.

Teachers' Fears of Being Evaluated: Concepts and Realities

Internal Organizational Features and the Teacher in the Classroom: Loose Coupling and Loneliness

Some time ago, Weick (1976) characterized schools as loosely coupled systems. The features of schools do not closely fit bureaucratic theory, which views organizations as having shared goals, a clear technology, close supervision of subordinates by superiors, and a formal hierarchy as a primary means of coordination (Firestone, 1990). The view of schools as loosely coupled directs attention to the organization's component parts (such as the administrative office and classrooms), which are connected but only weakly.

Consistent with this view of schools, Lortie (1975) related the insularity of teachers in separate classrooms (its "cellular organization" [p. 13]) to a sense of teacher isolation and loneliness. Lortie noted that teachers value the psychic rewards inherent in reaching students and helping them to learn. However, because teachers may transition to the career field rather easily, a significant collegial and supervisory structure that may attenuate loneliness is not needed. In comparison to other professions requiring similar educational levels (e.g., pharmacy), induction into teaching is comparatively brief and casual; teachers are left to sink or swim on their own (Lortie, 1975). Despite recent attention provided to teacher peer assistance, such as formal mentoring and coaching for new teachers, collegial and supervisory supports are generally less available to teachers than to those in other professions.

In addition, the isolation of teaching makes it difficult for teachers to assess their effectiveness. Teachers often develop their own methods of monitoring student progress; therefore, the feedback they receive is largely self-originating and contained (Lortie, 1975).

This isolation that marks teaching from induction to later in teachers' careers arguably instills fear because teachers may continually question whether they are on the right track in meeting students' needs. Lortie (1975) suggested that "endemic uncertainties" (p. 134) in teaching owed to the indeterminacy of school goals, a pedestrian rather than arcane knowledge base, and difficulty in measuring teacher performance. These observations contributed to an early characterization of teaching as a semiprofession. Teaching appeared low on some of the characteristics typically ascribed to a full-fledged profession, including a formalized code of ethics, a prescribed and lengthy training process, a belief in self-regulation, and societal recognition as a profession (Bacharach & Conley, 1989; Hall, 1985).

Lortie's (1975) observations appear relevant to the evaluation of teaching. Owing to "endemic uncertainties" (p. 134), teachers may question the subjective basis of evaluation. Furthermore, because of the cellular organization of schools, teachers' contact with superiors is likely to be less frequent, intense, and directive than in other kinds of work organizations. These conditions are likely to further exacerbate uncertainty in establishing fear (Ginsberg & Leiche, this issue; Krishnamurti, 1995) in evaluation procedures and outcomes between teachers and their supervisors.

The Role of the School Principal: Authority to Evaluate Teachers

During the last three decades, administrators have evaluated teachers for a variety of purposes—hiring, assignment, tenure decisions, improvement, and even dismissal (Glasman & Heck, 1987). In the last decade, quite a few "fearful" objectives have been added to teacher evaluation. In the current era of accountability, individual teachers (as well as principals or entire staffs in some cases) may be evaluated for purposes of their possible dismissal from schools based on schools' low test scores, uneven performance on state-mandated tests, and other factors (Rice & Croninger, 2005). These fearful objectives resulted from criticism in the 1980s leveled at the looseness of schooling (Firestone, 1990). Advocates of an "updated bureaucratic approach" push for "stronger administrative leadership (direct supervision) and using tests to guide instruction more" (Firestone, 1990, p. 349).

This political reform emphasis has arguably intensified conflicts already inherent in teacher evaluation. The evaluation process has implications for important extrinsic rewards, pay, and seniority benefits. Conflict and fear are natural factors when individuals seek valid feedback about their performance (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975). In the context of current school accountability, such tensions are likely to increase. For example, individual teachers fearing a summative evaluation may be less than forthcoming about their performance shortcomings and/or goals, and supervisors may hesitate to give teachers detailed feedback. The result is that teachers may fear that evaluation is less about personal improvement involving professional growth and more of a political hurdle.

In many occupational settings, good evaluations are tied to benefits such as improved job assignments or favorable promotion decisions. However, the relatively flat occupational structure of the teaching profession (Lortie, 1975) makes such rewards as promotion less available. As noted, although evaluation is carried out for a variety of purposes, teachers may report little sense of career accomplishment and progress from their evaluation. There is evidence that the latest entrants into the workplace (e.g., Generation Xers) desire just these sorts of benefits and opportunities (Taylor, 2005). Thus, at a time when fear is increasing, insufficient advantage may be accruing from teacher evaluation to offset career uncertainties in teaching. The identity loss can also be expected to be a continuing source of fear and perhaps a diminished quality of work life (Hall, 1985).

Topping the list of fears for new entrants to the teaching profession is the threat of job security. The market-driven system constantly presses the evaluators (consumers) to offer a better and different educator (provider) (Ginsberg & Leiche, this issue). An unsatisfactory evaluation of a new teacher perpetuates this system when he or she is prevented from achieving tenure. Although concerns about the outcomes of evaluation may be paramount among beginning teachers, midcareer and veteran teachers may ideally look to evaluation as a primary source of extrinsic benefits, improvement of intrinsic job characteristics, and a source of satisfactory supervisory relationships (Conley, Bas-Isaac, & Brandon, 1998).

Research and Working Assumptions

In school situations, the prime professional role of teachers is to teach students: "Instructional expertise is at the heart of the educational enterprise" (Tucker & Kindred, 1997, p. 70). One of the school principal's or assistant principal's formal roles is to evaluate the teacher's teaching performance.

The corresponding implications exist. Teachers make numerous ongoing professional decisions during the process of teaching. And with regard to the evaluation of the performance of all of their teachers, principals strive for uniformity of process for legal, moral, and control purposes (Johnson & Glasman, 1983; Glasman & Nevo, 1988). These two implications yield two working assumptions that guide our further research as follows:

1. If teachers control teaching, their principals should evaluate only those teaching phenomena which teachers control.
2. If principals abide by 1, they are liable to neglect uniformity in evaluating teachers.

These two working assumptions or their opposites (principals evaluate also what teachers do not control and thus teacher evaluation in the school is standardized), we believe, constitute the core of the politics of teacher evaluation. In addition, we believe that although there is a standardization of evaluation in a climate of fear, direction toward reform in evaluation involves evaluating teachers in a nonuniform manner.

Controllability of Teaching

The psychological uncertainty of fear is an upsetting emotion that is marked by alarm. Teachers experience such fear in relationship to being evaluated (Langer, 1983). This fear is highly evident, especially in cases where they perceive insufficient control of both a particular dimension of teaching and insufficient control over how such a dimension is evaluated.

On what dimensions of teaching and its evaluation do teachers desire control? In one study (Cooley, 1980), elementary school teachers were given a list of seven domains of teaching and were asked the following four questions about each domain:

- How important is it in your teaching?
- To what extent do you think you should control it?
- To what extent do you feel that you actually control it?
- To what extent would you resist being evaluated on it?

Teachers rated *motivating students* highest on all four questions (e.g., importance, desire for control, actual control, and receptivity to evaluation). *Controlling student conduct* was ranked second highest on the first three questions; on the fourth, it ranked sixth of seven choices. Therefore, motivating students and controlling the conduct of students in their classrooms is not

only important to teachers, but something they believe they should and actually do control. Interestingly, teachers reported that they would most resist being evaluated on *providing materials to students*, followed by controlling student conduct, *selecting learning objectives*, and *evaluating students and providing them with feedback* (Cooley, 1980, p. 160).

In general, the study found that teachers' receptivity to evaluation was positively related to their views about "their controllability of the evaluated behaviors" (Cooley, 1980, p. vi). That is, teachers feel comfortable being evaluated only on areas they feel that they can control. This was particularly true in regard to motivating students (Pearson correlation coefficient was .39, and the beta in the multiple regression was .62 [pp. 162-163]); they have control over this dimension and are receptive to being evaluated on it. From these findings, we can speculate that lowered receptivity to evaluation might be expected should teachers perceive less control over, for example, their ability to motivate students, while being evaluated on such things as providing quality student materials, controlling student conduct, and selecting learning objectives.

In a second dissertation study, teachers at the secondary level rated the degree to which they controlled eight different domains of teaching, and their corresponding willingness to be evaluated on these dimensions (Paulin, 1980). Teachers ranked their desire to control decisions about their teaching in the following (descending) order: *planning and pacing classroom activities*, *establishing classroom organization and learning climate*, *choosing instructional materials*, *selecting learning objectives*, and *maintaining student discipline*. The less control teachers perceived on a dimension, the greater was their resistance to being evaluated on it (p. 56). Furthermore, teachers were found to not desire more-than-equal input to that of their evaluators regarding how much they wished to control the evaluation (p. vii).

The above two studies indicate a strong association between a teacher's sense of control and his or her receptivity to being evaluated. These relationships appear important in the context of some consequences of the loss of the perceived ability to control events (Langer, 1983). Initially, reactions to a perceived loss of (or uncertainty over) the ability to control events are anger, resistance, and protest (Langer, 1983). For example, a district might provide inadequate support materials to teachers, thus creating difficulty in teaching (e.g., students read about a lab experiment instead of carrying it out themselves). Teachers may then resist being evaluated on their ability to provide quality materials to students, such as student-centered learning opportunities, or to select learning objectives. Or teachers might lack access to good computer resources and/or relevant textbooks and thus object when they and their students are evaluated on the quality of student work.

Langer (1983) suggested that a sense of helplessness might also emerge from a perceived inability to control events. An example of a reduced sense of control over events might be when a teacher, who otherwise wishes to control important domains of teaching, perceives restricted authority to decide instructional techniques. To increase control, the teacher might narrow the focus of his or her instruction or "teach down the middle," that is, focus instruction only on students of average ability (Irujo, 2004). To teach down the middle, the teacher might modify curricular goals to stress facts and easily measurable content areas as opposed to concepts that are more difficult for students to master.

Furthermore, administrators adopting efficiency concerns (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981) might adhere to a one-shot nature of evaluations, thus decreasing ongoing discussion with teachers about particular teaching situations and contexts. A higher level of uncertainty over one's evaluation may result, leading to a further lessening of receptivity to evaluation as well as feelings of dissatisfaction or even apathy.

Principal Control and Evaluation Rigidity

There is a broad organizational literature on how organizations cope with crisis, threat, and adversity that may explain why rigidity in behavior emerges in these contexts (Barnett & Pratt, 2000; Cameron, Kim, & Whetton, 1987; Staw et al., 1981). These coping mechanisms are part of a politics of maintenance (previously described), whereby managers attempt to protect their enterprise against loss but fail to alter responses sufficiently. Groups under threat or faced with stress may, for example, seal off new information and/or discount deviant members' views (Janis, 1972, cited by Staw et al., 1981). Glickman's (2006) observation of principals who pressed for the "concept of democratic education beyond what influential parents, school boards, and superintendents were willing to accept" (p. 690) and were replaced in their jobs appears to illustrate this phenomenon. Principal replacements, in turn, returned schools "to their old regimented ways" (p. 690). The opposite tendency may also be apparent; in some groups, there is so much information available that leaders do not have the stamina or time to sort through the information and act (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Staw et al. (1981) proposed a theoretical model that posited that change in an organization's environment leads to the identification of threat; that is, an impending loss or cost to the entity. They suggested that a distinction be drawn between crisis and threat. Under crisis, three conditions are present: "(1) there is a major threat to system survival, (2) there is little time to react, and (3) the threat is unanticipated" (p. 511). According to Staw et al., threat

rather than crisis is a “likely driving force behind most of the events that the term *crisis*” attempts to explain (p. 512). The perception of threat (as opposed to concrete crisis) also appears closely aligned with the theme of fear in this journal issue. A perception of threat in the external environment of a school (previously described) appears to cause individuals and groups within an organization to react maladaptively, bringing about rigidity or the persistence of well-learned and dominant responses. This rigidity can occur at the individual, group, and/or school (organizational) level. At the individual level, rigidity may be apparent when people adhere to a previously learned solution even when the solution is no longer appropriate. At the group level, for example, in an administrative team, rigidity may be characterized by an initial increase in group cohesiveness but followed by increased hostility between groups. That is, “an outside threat is posited to lead to an increase in the salience of intragroup relationships and a decrease in intergroup ties” (p. 508). At the organizational level, threat is expected to lead to both a restriction of information and a constriction in control by upper management (i.e., organizational centralization).

Threats to the organization appear most relevant when attempting to understand how principals may attempt to maintain control (e.g., introducing rigidity into teacher evaluation). According to Staw et al. (1981), managers can be expected to do four things: restrict information, centralize authority, formalize procedures, and promote efficiency concerns. The latter three correspond to what Staw et al. term a *mechanistic shift* (Burns & Stalker, 1961) or a tightening of managerial control. With regard to information processing, threat is expected to have a somewhat paradoxical effect. As threat develops, the search for information may increase initially but then decrease as information channels become overloaded. Second, in a mechanistic shift with administrators maintaining tighter control over subordinates, administrator-staff relationships may be eroded (Staw et al., 1981, p. 513). All of these organization-level effects appear applicable to the case of teacher evaluation within schools.

In environments compromised by fear, administrators might restrict information in teacher evaluation by generating evaluation criteria that are overly simplistic, such as those that can be measured on simple behavioral checklists. Teachers may also contribute to a restriction of information by—on the day of evaluation, putting on their “game face”—performing just as predictably and reliably (but noncreatively) as administrators expect them to (see Stronge & Ostrander, 1997). Teachers and their unions may similarly press for more restrictive rules such as a time frame for evaluation, further restricting information. Furthermore, in a mechanistic shift, administrators

might use their authority to delineate the exact steps to be taken by a teacher in preparing for the evaluation of his or her performance (e.g., document preparation). Such actions may also contribute to a sense of rule pervasiveness in the evaluation performed of teachers (i.e., increased formalization). As a result, teachers' sense of autonomy—not only over the steps in the evaluation process but also over the criteria by which they will be evaluated—will diminish. Finally, a conservation of resources may be evident when evaluations conducted of teachers by administrators are performed much less frequently, such as in a one-shot manner.

The threat-rigidity model suggests that administrators and teachers resist a tendency to react to threat with rigidity in teacher evaluation. In one sense, the rigidity response appears to create an organizational “space” that is then filled with fear and distrust. The model thus suggests the need for managers to decentralize authority, increase flow of information, and expend sufficient resources in the evaluation of teachers.

Even Evaluation Without Immediate Consequences Leads to Fear: Moving Toward Solutions

So far we have focused on what is evaluated and on who controls what is evaluated as well as administrative rigidity in response to threat. A resulting issue in the politics of maintenance is that teachers fear evaluation even when they may not fear the consequences of evaluation results. This may occur, for example, even when results are not tied to job tenure, salary, dismissal, or reassignment. What has happened recently is that the sources of teachers' fears have widened; namely, teaching standards are mandated, threatening teachers' control of what and how they teach and the performance feedback they receive. This bureaucratic accountability stands in direct conflict with teachers' professional accountability (Glasman & Glasman, 2006). Some efforts to reduce this tension still appear to present a number of challenges to designing systems of teacher evaluation.

The fear of evaluation even absent high-stakes consequences may be traced to difficulties with the current state of teacher evaluation practice in schools (see Ellett, 1997; Stronge, 1997; Stronge & Ostrander, 1997). Stronge and Ostrander noted, for example, that in current evaluation practice, (a) opportunity for “error” exists based on subjective judgments about what is good teaching; (b) there is “disagreement about what constitutes the best practices with regard to the complex act of teaching,” and (c) a “subjective-judgmental” model is dominant (p. 131). This subjective-judgmental model tends to equate teacher evaluation with administrative observations of

teachers' classroom performance and thus conforms to a bureaucratic model. Such an emphasis appears bureaucratic in nature by emphasizing a "surveillance" role for administrators as opposed to a formative, collegial-assistance role. Although observation is one important aspect of evaluation, Stronge and Ostrander (1997) noted a number of limitations with its use (see also Scriven, 1981).

First, the number and length of observations are almost always inadequate for making generalizations. Second, evaluators focus attention on their own personal interests; thus, what they notice reflects their personal viewpoints. Third, poor recording systems force observers to rely on recollections that are influenced by preexisting conceptions. Fourth, any personal relationships or alliances between evaluators and their subject present confounding factors. Finally, the visit itself alters the behaviors of teacher and students, narrowing the chances of the evaluator's seeing a representative sample of teaching (Stronge & Ostrander, 1997, pp. 131-132).

As a result of these limitations, teachers may question whether the evaluations conducted of them reflect "good teaching" practices and/or their goals for improvement. In addition, administrators can be uncomfortable providing feedback to teachers or become "defensive about the whole issue of performance assessment" (Stronge & Ostrander, 1997, p. 133; see also Bridges, 1986). As a result, teachers and administrators may carry out evaluation in a pro forma way, while looking to other aspects of organizational life as sources of school improvement and a sense of progress in one's career (Stronge, 1997).

"Fair and effective teacher evaluation systems," by contrast, would provide for both teacher accountability and teacher personal growth (Stronge, 1997, pp. 1-2). Such a system also "recognizes that there is no 'one best way' to teach, appreciates teachers' professional autonomy and choices, and is sensitive to variations in classroom life" (Ellett, 1997, p. 116). A variety of approaches have strong potential to enhance such aspects of teachers' work and professional growth (see Ellett, 1997; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Kimball, 2002). However, even in systems that have teacher professional growth as a primary emphasis (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Kimball, 2002), studies suggest that there is difficulty with reconciling organizational and individual (teacher) goals.

Milanowski and Heneman (2001), for example, examined the implementation of a standards-based system in one medium-sized Midwestern district and the reactions of teachers to such a system. The standards-based evaluation system provided guidelines for improving performance across four

levels: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. By doing so, it provided a "blueprint to teachers for guiding their behaviors and to evaluators for assessing the quality of those behaviors" (p. 195).¹ Furthermore, the standards were intended to be applicable to "all levels of K-12 teaching" and to "accommodate different teaching styles without prescribing any one style" (p. 197). In addition to formal classroom observation, self-assessment and teacher portfolio components were included, with teachers having a means of exercising some control over which standards would be used to evaluate them.

Interviews with teachers following the initial implementation of the evaluation system indicated that teachers had an overall favorable impression of the system, particularly the self-assessment component, feeling that they understood the domains, standards, and performance levels. However, feedback "was too much summative and not enough formative" (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001, p. 203). That is, feedback confirmed that a teacher was "doing well" (or not doing well) as opposed to offering specific suggestions for improvement (p. 207). In addition, some reported that feedback was "too general" to help them improve (p. 207). Finally, teachers reported that they viewed the portfolio component (including such things as lesson plans, student work, and family contact information) as a source of additional "workload" and "stress" (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001, p. 207; see also Wolf, Lichtenstein, & Stevenson, 1997, for improving the portfolio process).²

Such findings illustrate the difficulty of reconciling the tension between furthering organizational goals in a teacher evaluation system (e.g., maintaining high-quality instruction) and accommodating individuals' (teachers') desires and preferences. This balance is likely complicated, as Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring (1999) noted, by the complexities and uncertainties of teaching, which pose difficulties in "the linking of individual performance and organizational effectiveness and, thus, the balancing of personal and organizational goals" (p. 281). Nonetheless, the performance evaluation systems purposed toward teacher formative assistance appear to provide the most promise of blending organizational and individual needs.

Toward Reform

Controlling fear requires identifying its sources. Thus far, we have delineated several causes of individuals' (teachers') fear: (a) the prospect of losing control and autonomy in one's work, (b) working in an atmosphere of organizational rigidity and inflexibility, and (c) failing to be continued in one's profession and/or lacking a sense of continuous skill development or career

progress. Given its multiple sources, a single “Band-Aid” remedy that would redress fear appears unlikely. However, there might be a rechanneling and redirection of fear from these sources. Such strategies as union participation, altering the adversarial tone of evaluation, furthering collaboration and teamwork, principal evaluation, and joint principal and teacher analysis of student learning might remove a bit of fear, giving more certainty and enhancing teacher evaluation within a school.

Union Participation

Teachers, particularly those new to the profession, might address their fears of failing to achieve tenure or of being unfavorably evaluated by relying on union representation (Cooper & Sureau, this issue). Unions provide sanctioned recourse to employees who perceive their evaluation to be unfair. Tucker and Kindred (1997) observed that negotiated agreements provide procedural protections to teachers in the evaluation process as well as play a substantial role in teacher dismissal by making it subject to grievance procedures. Interestingly, McGhee and Nelson (2005) noted, too, that in the case of principals dismissed from their positions on the basis of student test scores in the state of Texas, stronger union representation would have caused principals to fight these dismissals. Thus, unions provide one means of ensuring the protection of individual rights in the evaluation of their performance.

Having noted that lack of feedback about one’s professional growth and career progress is an additional source of fear, negotiated agreements also appear instrumental in designing approaches to teacher evaluation that emphasize professional growth. Tucker and Kindred (1997) pointed out that courts have often considered specific evaluation criteria to be outside the scope of collective bargaining. However, the (research) literature provides descriptions of labor management committees used to provide teacher participation in various aspects of new teacher evaluation systems. Milanowski and Heneman (2001) described one district’s effort to bring together three labor-management committees to improve teacher evaluation: a labor-management committee charged with developing a new teacher evaluation system, a committee exploring a knowledge- and skill-based pay system, and a third concerned with teacher licensing. These committees’ joint efforts to deal with the question “what is good teaching and what does it look like?” (p. 197) resulted in a multiyear commitment to improving the district’s previously described evaluation system (p. 197).

Finally, union participation can mitigate fear by reducing teachers’ sense of isolation. Lortie (1975) suggested that growing teacher unionism might

evolve into a form of stronger “collegial discipline” (p. 224). Agreements signed by teachers’ representatives would carry an obligation to ensure that members conform to stated agreements. On one hand, this may lessen individual teacher control by reducing voluntaristic ties and increasing coercive rules (p. 224), but on the other hand, fear might be reduced by making teachers part of a strong professional collectivity. Richardson’s (2007) recent documentation of a district and union’s efforts to “bargain time” appears an illustration of this idea (p. 1). Time in the schedule was allocated for teachers to meet as grade-level or subject-area teams. Although teaming was required, the terms of meetings were specified, and teachers valued “opportunities they have to work closely with colleagues” and their effect on enhanced student learning (p. 7).

Altering the Adversarial Tone of Evaluation

As noted, there is a tendency for organizations to respond to a sense of threat by bureaucratically structuring the organization. Administrators may respond to threat by restricting information, centralizing authority, formalizing procedures, and promoting efficiency concerns. These measures may appear adversarial, with evaluation taking on a formal and judgmental (summative) tone in evaluation. Alternatively, the organization and evaluation system can be structured according to a professional model, which capitalizes on collaboration, encourages teacher risk taking and experimentation, and enhances two-way communication between evaluators and teachers (Collinson & Cook, 2007). From their experiences with a network of 25 multiracial, urban-suburban school districts across the United States, Ray-Taylor, Baskerville, Bruder, Bennett, & Schulte (2006) emphasized the importance of a school culture that makes it safe for teachers and administrators to change and take risks. They provided the following example:

Another promising practice in creating safe environments for educators is an evolving change in teacher evaluation. Ann Arbor (Michigan) Public Schools leaders developed a collaborative teacher evaluation system that encourages veterans to try an alternative form of evaluation resembling an action research project. Teachers identify goals for improvement, develop and implement an action plan, and share results with colleagues. A strong collaborative teacher evaluation process, as well as similar processes for principals and other administrators, can lay the groundwork for constructive conversations about student achievement, including pedagogy, assessment, and expectations. (Ray-Taylor et al., 2006, p. 24)

Such a model would appear to enhance teacher control of both evaluation procedures and criteria. The following recent examples are but two that appear to illustrate a more professional mode of teacher evaluation.

In the first, a district located in central California that attempted to intentionally restructure teacher evaluation is documented in a dissertation study (Palazuelos, 2007). The system, developed in 1998 jointly by the district and union, was designed to incorporate California teaching standards into the evaluation of beginning and tenured teachers. Beginning teachers were evaluated according to a traditional evaluation system that included three administrator observations per year. Tenured teachers were evaluated on alternate years and chose among three evaluation options: (a) to be evaluated by an administrator, (b) to be evaluated by a peer or “partner,” and (c) to be evaluated by a portfolio. All teachers additionally conducted a self-assessment.

The evaluation conducted by the administrator was similar to a typical evaluation; he or she met with the teacher prior to the classroom observation (two per year) to discuss the goals and objectives of the lesson and held postobservation conferences. The partner option involved teachers choosing a teacher peer at the same school site but not necessarily in the same department. In the year the teacher was evaluated, the partner would conduct four observations with preconferences and postconferences. Finally, in the portfolio option, formal observation was omitted, and there was one meeting between the teacher and evaluator to review in-class work that was then used to develop a portfolio selection and a reflection. In all three options, the administrator added comments and approved the evaluation. In addition, in all three options, the teacher chose an “area of investigation” from six California Teaching Standards provided by the state (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1997), offering teachers some control over which area they would be evaluated.

The study of approximately 300 teachers from three high schools found that teachers’ choice of evaluation was fairly evenly split between the administrator option (44%) and the partner option (43%), with the portfolio option less common (10%). Teachers selecting the partner option were fairly similar to the other two groups in perceiving that the evaluation conducted of them reflected good teaching and could be used to improve their teaching. In addition, teachers in all options reported having control over the setting in which they taught (e.g., establishing classroom organization and learning climate, establishing the physical setting of the classroom). Interestingly, establishing classroom organization and learning climate was cited in an earlier study (Paulin, 1980, p. 56, previously described) as an area teachers wanted to exercise control in and would not resist being evaluated on.

In the district studied, a veteran English teacher remarked that the “idea that teachers would have some choice as to how they were going to be evaluated” has been of continuous appeal to teachers (Palazuelos, 2007, p. 136). From the same teacher’s participation in all three options, she indicated that portfolios were not “burdensome . . . if you adhere to the schedule” for assembling materials throughout the year (p. 138). In addition, she described her partner collaboration with an agriculture teacher, as a “great collaboration” that featured exchange of information about student writing and reading (p. 139). For example, the agriculture teacher would see her “students in his class with their novels, and when students had spare time they would get out the novels and be reading them and he knew why” (p. 139). In discussing the program, she emphasized, “Make sure that every single one of your administrators who are going to be monitoring the program understand every single part of it. And make sure the teachers understand what their responsibilities are. It’s that whole thing about choice and consequences. Choices have responsibilities. . . . As long as everyone understands what you’re supposed to do [it’s easy]. Communicate with and monitor everybody” (p. 143).

A second example illustrates a reform not initiated as an effort to improve teacher evaluation but eventually incorporated into a teacher evaluation system to encourage joint teacher and administrator inspection of student learning. Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O’Connell (2006) described a five-year implementation of lesson study in a northern California school of 400 students, an effort that was based on a “dominant form of professional developmental in Japan” (p. 273). In lesson study, small groups of teachers from the same or adjoining group levels analyzed relevant background materials on a faculty-selected schoolwide research theme, collaborated in planning a research lesson “that is taught by one team member while others observe and collect data on students,” and conducted a “post-lesson discussion in which teachers share information and discuss implications” (p. 274).

The school’s experiences with lesson planning included the following: Lesson study increased the opportunity for teachers to “be researchers,” testing new ideas about how “students think” (Lewis et al., 2006, p. 274). In addition, more postlesson discussions were focused on how students strategized and organized information (as opposed to whether students followed directions and treated peers respectfully), which in turn became guidelines for further observation of lessons. Furthermore, whereas initially groups did not work with those outside the school, study groups began to make greater teacher use of “knowledgeable others” (p. 275; e.g., teachers, research literature) to provide ideas for lessons or to come to the school as data collectors and sources of feedback. Finally, there was greater balance in time spent in

each phase of lesson study as opposed to spending more time in simply planning the lesson. Lesson study provided for joint discussion of student work: Team members brought back student work from the lesson to the group and “discussion of the student work helped team members pinpoint students’ differences and design the research lesson” (p. 275).

Notably, in the context of this research, lesson study “replaced evaluative observations for tenured teachers,” indicating that the approach has shown “signs of institutionalization” at the school (Lewis et al., 2006, p. 274). In addition to substituting for evaluation observations, lesson study served as a vehicle for mentoring teachers “because veteran teachers and new teachers participate in the same lesson study groups” (p. 274). In addition, the principal supported lesson study in a variety of ways, such as by including it on faculty meeting agendas and assessing “the progress of the lesson study” through participation in groups or “reading notes from the various groups” (p. 278). Principal familiarity with teachers’ instructional efforts apparently led to a perception that sufficient information could be gained about teacher performance through participating in joint lesson planning forums.

Although these are nascent and lightly tested examples, recent experimentation with new systems of teacher evaluation appears to address some of the concerns of fear raised in this article. First, the examples increase teachers’ choice over and control of procedures and criteria used to evaluate them. Second, they place the primary emphasis in teacher evaluation on improving teaching to improve student learning. Third, as Stronge (1997) noted, they appear to remove interpersonal barriers in evaluation including “fear of failure” and “stress” as well as inability to address “mutually beneficial goals” (p. 6). Fourth, the illustrations share a concern for teacher collaboration and teaming. Teaming makes teachers’ skills and talents more visible within the school and encourages teacher sharing and distribution of skills with other team members. Fifth, a key paradigmatic shift is to treat skilled veteran teachers with greater professionalism than the bureaucratic or traditional evaluation method allowed. These changes can be expected to directly address the atmosphere of distrust that fear foments, characterized by a reluctance to experiment with new ideas, and a constriction of administrative control.

Conclusion

This research has discussed phenomena that link teacher evaluation with the teacher’s sense of fear. Toward that end, we employed some key concepts

and realities that have been examined in somewhat of a systematic way. On the teacher evaluation side, we emphasized control of teaching, control of evaluation, teacher satisfaction, and consequences of evaluation in organizations without necessarily monitoring the use of the evaluation activities. On the fear side, we introduced notions of control of personal choices in a variety of cognitive and emotional domains, fear of uncertainties, fear of evaluation consequences, fear of impinging on the profession, and personal perceptions of teachers as professionals, perhaps fearing their professional status will be jeopardized.

In addressing these two areas, we sought to identify a number of key dimensions (Conley, 1999). The *policy* dimension deals with how evaluation operates within the context of accountability systems that attempt to align school curriculum and instruction with state standards. The *organizational* dimension deals with such issues as teacher satisfaction with the evaluation system, autonomy and choice in evaluation, professional collaboration, and teacher participation and involvement. The *psychological* dimension deals with how teachers and administrators react to fear, such as protecting against losses or becoming more rigid and inflexible. Finally, the *unionism* dimension is important because most teachers are unionized, and their evaluation system is negotiated through collective bargaining.

Involving all of these dimensions, the intensification of public, political, bureaucratic, and market accountabilities in education has placed teacher evaluation as one of the pivotal controversial foci of the debate involving both accountability-related policies and accountability-related student outcome-based measurement and evaluation (Glasman & Glasman, 2006). This development exacerbates teachers' fears of being evaluated for responsibilities and activities that they control only minimally. The drama involves politicians, policy makers, measurement specialists, and lay stakeholders. But as far as teachers' professional norms go, their leaders in schools and school districts must serve as their codesigners of work environments that provide sufficient resources to meet the increased demands of teaching. Indeed, fear could lead to bland and cautious teaching outcomes.

One obstacle the teachers who are to be evaluated for accountability face is that their presumed conegotiators are under the accountability gun themselves. Some of the latter group members push for shared intraschool responsibility. They face difficulties in empowering corresponding shared authorities. Other leaders simply do what they are told from the outside. Still others are motionless. And finally, there are those who leave the leadership professions and positions. All of these factors lead to the intensification of the teacher's fear of being evaluated.

What can be done, if anything? Does the drama have to play out with no interim influence on its direction and with no control of its consequences? Or should the politics of fear and teacher evaluation take a turn in the direction of balancing the various actors and scenes? Some of these participants include status of professional teachers, teacher evaluation, fear of being evaluated, teacher satisfaction, teacher control, administrative authority, evaluation consequences, and additional actors and scenes such as parental involvement, mayoral control, and others. But one key to unlocking the unbalanced current situation in the area of fear and teacher evaluation is to differentiate between what constitutes political value and what does not. The latter has at least a chance of being unlocked.

Notes

1. A "comprehensive" evaluation was designed for first- and third-year teachers, teachers who changed subjects, and teachers seeking a continuing contract or tenure. A less comprehensive or annual evaluation was developed for other teachers. Teachers receiving the comprehensive evaluation were "more concerned about process issues due to greater stakes for the process and results" (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001, p. 203).

2. Teachers on the annual process had few perceptions about workload or stress as compared to those on the comprehensive evaluation. Wolf, Lichtenstein, and Stevenson (1997) offer a number of suggestions for increasing the usefulness of portfolios as a means of enhancing professional growth, in evaluation, and in the interview process.

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Sharon Conley is a professor of education at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California–Santa Barbara. Her interests are in the areas of school organization, work redesign, and the managerial work environments of teachers. Her recent publications have appeared in the *Journal of School Leadership*, the *Journal of Educational Administration*, and the *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*.

Naftaly S. Glasman has served as a professor of education at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California–Santa Barbara since 1968. His research interests are in the areas of administration, leadership, personnel evaluation, governance, and politics. He is the author of *The Expert School Leader: Accelerating Accountability* (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006).