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How Can Teachers Benefit from Teacher Evaluation?

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Teacher evaluation is part of the life of teachers. It is an integral component in the professional life-cycle of teachers from the time they decide to join the profession through their process of training, their certification, their employment, and their professional development. But teacher evaluation is usually perceived as a means to control teachers, to motivate them, to hold them accountable for their services, or to get rid of them when their performance is poor. Thus, teacher evaluation has the image of something that was invented *against* teachers rather than *for* teachers.

And so was *student* evaluation. Tests and other student evaluation instruments were traditionally perceived as means for controlling students, motivating them, or making sure that they measure up to the expectations of their teachers and parents. Students always hated tests, but some of them also knew that they could learn quite a bit from the results of their tests to improve their learning, or at least learn how to improve their performance on the next test. Some years ago somebody suggested a distinction between "Summative Evaluation" and "Formative Evaluation" (Scriven, 1967). The first referred to use of evaluation for selection and accountability, and the latter to the use of evaluation to provide feedback for improvement. A few years later a distinguished group of evaluators prefaced their evaluation book with the motto: "The purpose of evaluation is not prove but to improve" (Stufflebeam et al., 1971). Evaluation started to play a more constructive role in education.

Teachers are usually evaluated by their principals or heads of departments, by their peers, or by specially assigned evaluators (Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1994). But in recent years an increasing number of teachers have also shown interest in using evaluation techniques for self-evaluation to improve their own teaching performance (Barber, 1990), and evaluators started to admit the legitimate role of teachers in providing major input into the process of being evaluated by others. This recent development is especially apparent in the use of "teacher portfolios" for summative evaluation of teachers (Bird, 1990), and in active participation of teachers in the development of professional standards for teachers to be used as a basis for teacher evaluation (Kelly, 1988; National Board, 1991).

Teachers who understand how teaching is being evaluated could not only improve their self-evaluation; they could also benefit in preparing themselves for being

evaluated by others or demonstrating the quality of their skills and performance to designated audiences. Teacher training students could use their knowledge about teacher evaluation to demonstrate their teaching competence, and later prepare themselves for certification by state agencies. Teachers could learn how to collect and organize evaluative information regarding their competence and teaching experience that would help them to win a teaching job, to use evaluation (feedback to improve their teaching performance, be accountable to the parents of their students, to negotiate better evaluation agreements with their school districts, or to get national recognition as outstanding teachers.

Work on reviewing teacher evaluation systems[1] has suggested eight ways in which teachers can benefit from teacher evaluation. Teaching is a demanding profession; before people decide to choose it as their life career, they might want to find out if they have the aptitudes required to succeed in teaching or in teacher training, and if the nature of teaching work is in line with their personal interests. If they decide to apply for a degree in teacher education, they will find out that colleges and universities assess their teacher education applicants' aptitudes, interests, academic skills, and prior achievements. Different institutions use different assessment methods, such as special aptitude tests, personality inventories, attitude questionnaires, interviews, and review of prior school records. Those who aspire to be teachers should acquaint themselves with such assessment methods and learn how they are being used to screen teacher education applicants, so that they will be able to make a better decision regarding their plans to become a teacher and also improve their chances of being accepted into a teacher education program.

Developing and demonstrating teacher competence

Colleges and universities responsible for teacher training programs have to confirm students' mastery of course and field experience requirements and certify fulfillment of graduation requirements. This is usually carried out by professors, teaching assistants, and field supervisors who use written and oral examinations, writing or field work assignment, and observations of simulated or authentic field work experience.

Unfortunately, the technology and practice of evaluation during the process of teacher training is greatly in need of improvement, and the involved assessment issues are complex (Stufflebeam & Sanders, 1990; Dwyer & Stufflebeam, in press). One of them is the issue of clarifying the duties of the teacher. Many studies were concerned with this issue (Travers, 1981; Shulman, 1987, 1988; Scriven, 1988, 1989; Iwanicki, 1990), although no consensus has been reached regarding a single set of duties that would be appropriate for the entire teaching profession.

Another issue, related to evaluating teachers during their training process, concerns the necessity of evaluating teaching in situ. Almost all of the training and the concomitant evaluation of teachers occurs in college or university classrooms. Typically, there is only a small amount of minimally monitored field experience in schools or other field settings. Thus, at the end of the training program the college or university can

certify that the student completed course assignments and passed the program's examinations but usually cannot verify that the student can effectively teach in a real classroom and carry out his or her duties as a teacher in a regular school.

A radical response to our failures in adequately training teachers and evaluating their field-based performance during their training program has been recently provided by the so-called "professional development school movement," stemming from the work of the well-known Holmes Group (1986, 1990). According to this approach, teacher education would be transferred from the university to professional development schools, and operated jointly by universities and school systems within the framework of actual elementary or secondary schools. Such schools have an analog in medicine in the form of "teaching hospitals," where new physicians receive in-depth, extensive, and supervised on-the-job training and are closely evaluated in the field setting. Under this concept fewer teachers would be prepared at higher cost, but they would learn educational theory and methods in the context of real schools and communities, would complete an array of carefully selected educational experiences, and would be systematically evaluated and guided by master teachers from the school and teacher educators from the cooperating college or university.

Shifting to professional development schools has definite implications not only for teacher training but also for teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation would increasingly become performance-based. The "clinical professors" would need to concentrate on formative evaluation, providing confidential feedback to teacher trainees while avoiding summative evaluation. Summative evaluation would have to be conducted by some other mechanism, such as supervisor assessment, accumulated performance data, and peer review. New methods, such as teacher portfolios, where potential teachers present themselves by means of portfolios containing samples of outstanding pieces of their work and other evidence of meeting high professional standards, might be especially useful in professional development schools.

Using evaluation during the process of teacher education could be beneficial to teacher trainees in at least three ways:

1. A well-organized and valid evaluation system could provide leader trainees with a clear definition of the program requirements, assisting them in setting goals and priorities and planning their efforts directed to developing teaching competence.
2. Formative evaluation throughout the training program could provide them with constructive feedback about their strengths and weaknesses in a way that would help them improve the effectiveness of their studies, and thus increase their chances to graduate successfully from the program.
3. Summative evaluation could help them demonstrate their teaching competence at the end of training and get a graduation certificate, required for future licensing and employment.

Preparing for certification

Teacher evaluation is also being used to provide evidence needed to confer a formal license or certificate on competent teachers when such licensing is required by state or other educational systems. This use of evaluation may include review of course work and degrees, assessment of professional skills and competencies, and a review of success in professional work for a designated time period. The main role of licensing is to assure that students will receive educational services from appropriately qualified professionals and is required not only from teachers but also from other professional personnel.

Historically, states in the United States certified teachers on the basis of records provided by their graduating institutions. In recent years, many states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, and Texas, have greatly increased their use of formal tests and probationary field-based service as additional bases for licensing graduates of teacher education programs.

There also has been a trend to offer alternative certification procedures for teachers who did not graduate from a regular college/university teacher education program. This latter movement has allowed many persons with degrees and expertise in mathematics, science, and other specialists, but no formal training in education, to enter the teaching force. The main evaluation requirements associated with alternative certification procedures are review of credentials and probationary service in a school. To some extent, this trend might reflect a loss of confidence in the degrees given by colleges and universities and the teacher training programs offered by such institutions, but it also reflects the need to attract more qualified people to the teaching profession, especially those who could teach such subjects as math, science, or computers.

Knowing how teacher evaluation is being used for certification could help teachers, or future teachers, to prepare themselves for certification in such a way that will help them demonstrate their teaching skills and competencies to the licensing agency. The article by Carol Dwyer, appearing later in this issue, describes the use of NTE and its successor, PRAXIS, in certifying teachers.

Winning a teaching job

Upon completing their teacher training program and obtaining a teaching certificate, teachers are ready to seek a job as a professional teacher. Soon they find out that for most teaching positions they are one of many candidates, and that in most cases some systematic evaluation procedure is being used to screen the applicants and attempt to select the best candidate.

Such an evaluation procedure might usually include review of certificates/credentials and recommendations from previous employers, supervisors or teachers, interviews, formal tests, or trial teaching. The focus of the evaluation is formal training in teaching methods, knowledge of subject matter, actual teaching ability, classroom

management, and teaching-related intellectual and professional qualities, such as intellectual curiosity, conscientiousness, and commitment to teaching.

With the increasing popularity of portfolios in recent teacher evaluation models (Bird, 1990), teachers might profitably develop their personal portfolios for use in documenting their competence when applying for a teaching position. This is common in other professions (for example, architecture, interior decoration, or copy-writing) where a person applying for a job would present him/herself by means of a portfolio containing samples of outstanding pieces of work and other evidence of meeting high professional standards.

A new teacher's portfolio could include documented teaching credentials, samples of teaching-related papers or personally developed instructional materials, prizes or scholarships won during teacher training, or letters of recognition from teachers and others who observed the teacher's first experience. An experienced teacher looking for a new job could include in the portfolio samples of teaching materials and lesson plans, data on students' achievements, samples from students' projects, samples of published and unpublished writings, student evaluations of teaching, and letters of recognition from students, parents, school administrators, community leaders, or colleagues.

Improving teaching performance

The most direct way in which teachers, and their students, can benefit from teacher evaluation is probably its use to provide teachers with feedback about the way they teach and the way their students learn. Such evaluation is intended to help teachers improve their teaching performance according to the needs of their students, and thus improve students' learning.

This is a formative use of evaluation and is therefore more descriptive and less judgmental in its nature. It can be based on self-evaluation, peer evaluation, or evaluation by principals, students, or parents. Various evaluation tools and procedures can be used for this purpose, such as classroom observation protocols, rating scales, analysis of instructional materials, student questionnaires, or individual clinical supervision.

It is crucial that this use of teacher evaluation be conducted in a constructive and nonthreatening way. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to take initiative in seeking and using evaluation for self-improvement rather than waiting for their principals or their school districts to impose it on them.

Being accountable to parents, schools, and school districts

All educators are expected to be accountable for their services, but the general demand for accountability, posed by politicians, parents, administrators, or the general public, has been heavily directed toward teachers. Because teaching is the major profession in education, and the one having the most direct interaction with students, teachers are

usually the ones held accountable in cases of public dissatisfaction with the performance of students or schools. As a response to the demand for accountability, states and school districts have been using a variety of evaluation methods to assess the job performance of teachers on a continuous basis including classroom observations by principals and other administrators, rating scales, evaluation by students, and the use of student achievements. None of these methods is clean of criticism, and, as can be seen in the teacher evaluation literature (Millman, 1981; Millman & Darling-Hammond, 1990), various issues have been raised regarding the use of these and other instruments to assess the ongoing performance of teachers. Obviously, teachers could use such criticism to protect themselves against unjustified demands for accountability. However, rather than resisting such evaluations on the basis of their limitations, teachers could develop a more realistic perspective on accountability, accept the need of being accountable to their schools, to the parents of their students, and to their school districts, and work together with their school districts in designing appropriate systems for teacher evaluation.

Teachers have valuable and unique insights into the strengths and weaknesses of their work. If they would also be more receptive to the need to be accountable for their services, and would be better informed about the advantages and limitations of the various evaluation methods, they could help assure that appropriate methods are used to assess their work. When teachers participate in developing an evaluation system most appropriate to help *them* be accountable for their job performance, they are also more likely to be supportive of its implementation and use.

Negotiating an evaluation agreement with the school district

Teacher evaluation systems that have been developed and adopted by states or by local school districts are usually grounded in some kind of agreement with teachers or their unions. At a certain stage teachers get involved in the process of developing a state or district teacher evaluation system. Sometimes they are involved from the early stages of its conception and policy development. Sometimes they are asked to join at a later stage to ensure their cooperation in the process of implementing the system. Teachers should insist on getting involved as early as possible in the development of a teacher evaluation system that is intended to be used to evaluate their performance, in order to increase their probability of having an impact on determining the purpose(s) of the evaluation, its methods, and its way of implementation. Such issues and others will eventually become major items in the agreement to be reached between the teachers and their school district.

In negotiating such an agreement, teachers, or their representatives, could take advantage of their understanding of the functions of teacher evaluation, and the strengths and weaknesses of its prevalent methods. Specifically they could benefit from the use of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee, 1988), which were developed by a national group of prominent educators and evaluation experts, to ensure that educators are evaluated in a way that is ethical and legal, useful in

improving the performance of educators, efficient and easy to use, and that provides sound and accurate information on the performance of teachers and other educators.

The Personnel Evaluation Standards include 21 standards reflecting four major categories: *propriety, utility, feasibility,* and *accuracy*. The four categories represent four basic attributes of a sound evaluation. These attributes can be ensured by meeting the 21 standards that have been developed and published by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. The above-cited publication also includes guidelines for each standard, which provide procedural suggestions intended to help meet the requirements of each standard.

Teachers negotiating an agreement with their school district should be advised to make sure that they are not going to be evaluated by a teacher evaluation system that does not meet most of these standards.

Getting national recognition/certification

Professionals are typically interested in meeting the highest possible standards of their profession and getting formal recognition for their professional achievements. This is a concern of individual professionals, of professional groups, and of the entire society which is interested in promoting excellence and encouraging outstanding performance.

In this regard there is currently a major development in the United States that might have a significant impact on the teaching profession in the years to come. The recently established National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has undertaken the development of special national laboratories for assessing competence in each teaching specialty, defined by subject and grade level (Kelly, 1988; National Board, 1991). Each laboratory will provide independent evaluation of any experienced teacher in the specialty area who applies for national certification in that specialty. The results of this evaluation will be used to confer a national certificate of outstanding competence. This effort is intended to elevate the status of the teaching profession in the United States, to provide differential pay to teachers on the basis of certified competence rather than age or seniority, and to encourage outstanding teachers to stay in the classroom.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has invested much effort into setting standards and developing assessment methods in collaboration with professional teachers, school administrators, educational researchers, and evaluation specialists. It has been planned originally to offer in 1993 the first assessments to accomplished classroom teachers who would apply for national certification, but the system is still in its developmental stage functioning on an experimental basis.

Conclusion

Teacher evaluation is now an inevitable factor in many educational systems, and teachers should know more about it, and show interest in the ways it is done and in the

ways it should be done. This article presents eight ways in which teachers could benefit from teacher evaluation. Among other things, it could help them develop their teaching competence, improve their teaching performance, get national recognition for their outstanding skill and competence, and be accountable for their teaching service. Evaluation could make them better teachers for the benefit of their students, because better teaching might inspire better learning.

The active involvement of teachers in the process of teacher evaluation is also very important if we are to follow a professional rather than a bureaucratic approach to teacher evaluation and to teaching in general (Haertel, 1991). If we follow the bureaucratic conception of teaching, assuming that administrators and specialists plan curriculum and that the role of teachers is to implement it, then the performance of teachers can be evaluated by their superiors without much involvement of teachers. But if we follow a more professional conception of teaching, assuming that teachers identify needs, analyze goals, choose their instructional strategies, and plan and monitor their work, then teachers are an integral part of evaluation, and teacher evaluation cannot be conducted without their active participation. This is where evaluation becomes an important component of the teaching profession, rather than a tool of supervision in a bureaucratic system. This is where teachers can benefit from evaluation and evaluation can benefit from teachers.

Notes

1. This article is based on work with Daniel Stufflebeam on the Teacher Evaluation Theory Project. Many of his ideas are reflected throughout the article, and I am grateful for the benefit of working with him on developing constructive ways in which teachers could benefit from teacher evaluation.

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