

Pedagogical Perceptions of Classroom Performance in the Teacher Evaluative Process: A Mixed Methods Study

Abstract

This sequential explanatory, mixed methods research design examines the role teachers should enact in the development process of the teacher evaluation system in Louisiana. These insights will ensure teachers are catalysts in the classroom to significantly increase student achievement and allow policymakers, practitioners, and instructional leaders to direct as learned decision makers.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' lack of involvement in the development of evaluative systems to effectively measure teacher performance represents a unique problem. Policymakers and instructional leaders on the state level in Louisiana have failed to involve teachers in the development of evaluative systems to effectively assess teacher performance. Teachers' voices as a catalyst to affect change, to create buy-in for improvement in the evaluative process, and to increase measurable performance outcomes deserve to be investigated.

Policymakers continue to address education reform in the United States. As a result, many school districts have piloted and implemented a variety of teacher evaluation systems to improve students' achievement levels for college and career readiness. The push by policymakers and educational leaders to implement new teacher evaluation systems to improve student achievement has raised numerous concerns. Glatthorn and Holler (1987) expounded that it is important to study teacher evaluation because traditional teacher evaluation has had significant problems nationwide improving an evaluation process that everyone agrees is effective. Understanding teacher insights on research based evaluative practices are necessary to

ensure teachers are evaluated appropriately to produce significant student achievement outcomes. Additionally, policymakers, national, state, and local educational leaders and practitioners need to learn more about this problem.

Purpose and/or Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to determine how teachers view the factors related to attaining proficiency in the teacher evaluation system in Louisiana by obtaining their perspectives, opinions and ideas. The primary research question is:

- How do teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrators think teachers should be assessed for proficiency in the classroom?

Literature Review

The theoretical framework of constructivism, social learning, adult learning, and social capital girds the foundation of this study. Understanding how individuals construct their experiences within their lives aides in the interpretation of their experiences and their meanings. Constructivism develops theory by understanding the social and historical views of multiple participants as they relate to the phenomena studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Vygotsky (1978) noted that social interaction in the learning environment is essential for knowledge building and understanding. Learners are enculturated in their environments through peer collaboration, discussion, experimentation, idea sharing, and active participation (Hua Liu & Matthews, 2005).

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory embraces Vygotsky's (1978) constructionist views noting that the learner develops efficacy when engaged in experiences through self-regulation. The experiences and knowledge of the adult learner maximizes the learning process as posited within the adult learning theory by Knowles (1978) and lend themselves to the

collective voices of teachers to be studied by building trustworthiness, and developing norms and expectations as espoused by Coleman's (1988) social capital theory.

The literature published in the past decade relating to teacher evaluation has been consistent. Some of the literature noted that teacher proficiency in the classroom must be supported through research-based instructional strategies, collaborative efforts in informal and formal settings, targeted professional development, and habits of mind (Almy & Tooley, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Green, 2009). Major discourses in the literature addressed recommended interventions to ensure instructional leaders evaluate teachers with fidelity. Key findings from the literature espoused that teachers are the catalyst for change and improvement in education systems, as they become experts in their craft (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Gottlieb, 2012; Yusof, Hazri, & Abdul Rashid, 2012).

Teacher evaluation studies concluded that teachers develop proficiency through mentoring, develop reflective practices, develop efficacy, and embrace collaborative efforts (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Clark & Greer, 2012; Hall & Hord, 2011; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). The studies on teacher development, teacher effectiveness, efficacy, and mentoring provided insight on the impact of the current evaluation systems in these specific areas (Cantrell & Kane, 2013; Marzano, 2012; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009; Youyan, Shun, & Liao, 2012). None of the studies have explored teachers' perceptions of how teachers' are assessed for proficiency in the evaluation process.

Research Methodology

An explanatory sequential mixed methods research design will be used to study how Louisiana public school classroom teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators think teachers should be evaluated on student achievement, classroom management, professional

responsibilities, and planning/preparation. An anonymous, voluntary, web-based survey instrument will be provided to approximately 19,000 teachers and administrators for completion. The instrument will collect demographic data about teachers in various PreK-12 settings and participants' perceptions, opinions, and ideas on the teacher evaluative process. Trained evaluators vetted the survey instrument for validation purposes and revisions were made to strengthen the design of the instrument. The SPSS software will be used to analyze the data via the one-way ANOVA parametric test and compare the means of the three groups of participants.

The interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenological strand will consist of three focus groups containing a convenience sample of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators from the quantitative strand. In the semi-structured interviews, the participants will share their stories, address the trends that emerge from the quantitative stand, and answer the research questions from the study. This will allow for saturation of information, to understand how the phenomenon affects teachers, and to identify recurring patterns (Merriam, 2009). The development of themes will be analyzed through constant comparison analysis and micro-interlocutor analysis to ensure the individual voices are heard within and across groups.

Findings or Results

This investigation is currently in the data collection phase of the quantitative strand. Due to inclement weather in 44 school districts, schools have been closed for the past three days limiting participant access to the survey instrument. As a result, the 10-day data collection window has been extended three additional days to allow participants the opportunity to participate in the research process. Once the window for data collection in the research process is complete, means of the three groups of participants will be compared for significance, developing themes will be analyzed, and questions to further understanding will be developed for

the qualitative strand of the study. Focus group interviews will be scheduled approximately one week after data collection and analysis of the quantitative strand. A two-week window will be utilized for the three focus groups to allow for data collection, thematic development, and saturation of data. The administrators will be interviewed first then the teacher leader group will follow to allow the researcher to develop further questions for the teacher focus group, the last interviewees. The goal of the study is to demonstrate that teachers are knowledgeable in best practices and have value in the development of teacher evaluation systems.

Implications for the Field

Understanding teacher insights on research based evaluative practices are necessary to ensure that teachers are evaluated appropriately. These insights will ensure teachers continue to be the catalyst in the classroom while serving as facilitators to develop and maintain student efficacy. The implications of this study will allow policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and postsecondary educators to address ineffective assessment of teacher performance, poor instructional support for teacher empowerment, misidentification of ineffective teachers and their subsequent termination from the teaching field, limited improvement in the area of student achievement, and the resultant failure for teachers to be adequately compensated for student academic progress.

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