The Tools of Teacher Evaluation: What Should Be Used in Teacher Evaluation from the Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract

This paper presents a study that was conducted to investigate the tools of teacher evaluation. The focus is on what teachers state about such tools in terms of what should be used when they are evaluated. Teachers were asked by questionnaire about their support of observation, students' achievement, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, student evaluation and portfolios. The sample consisted of 599 teachers and heads of departments from nine primary schools in three different educational districts in Kuwait. The most favoured approach was observation, and the least favoured was student evaluation. Nevertheless, the results show that teachers support the use of several tools in their evaluation.

Introduction

Evaluating teaching is essential to improve learning because teachers' performance is linked to student learning, as a result, teachers' performance should be assured through the use of teacher evaluation. Nolan and Hoover (2008) define teacher evaluation as an organisational function or system that is designed to make a judgement about teachers' performance with regard to both instructional duties and other responsibilities. This, in turn, allows decisions to be made, such as those relating to tenure or dismissal.

There are two major purposes of teacher evaluation: ***A)*** Accountability through the identification of teachers' performance as a means of arriving at decisions regarding career advancement, salary, bonuses or sanctions as a result of underperformance. ***B)*** Improvement by providing feedback to the teacher to improve teaching practice and helping the teacher to learn about teaching (Santiago and Benavides, 2009; Jiayi and Ling, 2012). Accordingly, the purposes of teacher evaluation can be seen as either formative or summative.

There are several tools that can be used to collect evidence about teachers' performance. *Classroom observation* is a tool that is used to assess the quality of teaching practice, different aspects of learning and the interaction between students and teachers. The strength of observation can be detected through the rich information that evaluators can obtain through observing teachers in the classroom (Goe et al., 2008). Moreover, *student achievement* can be used as tool to measure teachers' performance, such as through the use of standardised tests to determine the extent of student learning. It would then be possible to determine whether a teacher is effective (Little et al., 2009). *Portfolios* can also be used for teacher evaluation purposes by collecting a range of documents about the teacher and his or her teaching, activities and responsibilities. An advantage of a portfolio is that it can measure a wider range of aspects of teaching or activities than can be determined through observation, it can also give the teacher the opportunity to reflect and analyse on his or her performance. However, for teachers preparing portfolios and evaluators subsequently assessing them, time might be issue (Tucker et al., 2003). *Self-evaluation* that requires the teacher to report or evaluate his or her performance to reflect his or her practice, it could be conducted by a questionnaire or interview (Little et al., 2009). *Peer-evaluation or peer review* entails colleagues evaluating each other through observation, the outcome of which can then be used for both formative and summative purposes (Partee, 2012). *Student evaluation* allows students to act as evaluators and provide their opinions of the teacher (Geo et al., 2008). A study was carried out among teachers in Kuwait to find their opinions about these tools for teacher evaluation.

Context

According to the Kuwait Teacher Society (2010) the teacher evaluation system in Kuwait was designed by the Ministry of Education on behalf the Civil Service Commission in order to appraise individual teacher performance during the school year. Individual teachers are evaluated by three persons: head teacher and head of department as internal evaluators, and an inspector as an external evaluator on behalf the Inspection Department in the Ministry of Education. Each evaluator has to observe the teacher teaching and fill in an official observation form. Once the three evaluators have reached an agreement, the information on their forms is used to complete a final evaluation report about the individual teacher's performance.

The final evaluation report consists of three scales: the efficiency of individual performance, the efficiency of personality, and the efficiency of collective performance. The rating scale is 'outstanding', 'very good', 'good', and 'inadequate'.

Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach. A Likert scale questions, asking teachers about the extent to which they think observation, students' achievements, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation for formative purposes, students' evaluation and teachers' portfolios should be used in teacher evaluation was incorporated in a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was submitted to 697 teachers and heads of departments in nine primary schools in the Ahmadi, Farwaniya, and Asimah educational districts in Kuwait. A total of 599 teachers from different subjects (Arabic, English, Islamic studies, Mathematics, Science, Social studies and Computer studies) responded to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Results are presented in Table 1, which shows the frequency and percentage of respondents in each category and the mean scores for each type of evaluation tool. The highest mean, 4.15, was for classroom observation, which had a standard deviation of 1.0.The mean was just above the 'often' category, which suggests the teachers strongly supported this tool. The mode, 46.7%, was in the category 'should always be used'.

In terms of using students' achievement as a data resource for teacher evaluation, the mean was 3.90; this was just below the 'often' category, and standard deviation was 1.00. The distribution was skewed toward the highest categories 'often' and 'always', and as many as 68 % of respondents chose one of these categories. In term of the extent to which 'self-evaluation' should be used as data for teacher evaluation, the mean was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 1.07. This gave a score of 4 pertaining to the 'often' category. The mode of this item was 37.4% for the 'often' category.

In terms of the extent to which peer evaluation should be used in teacher evaluation for formative purposes, the mean was 3.73; this was almost in the 'often' category, with a standard deviation of 1.20. The distribution was again skewed toward the highest categories, as 63.1% of respondents stated 'often' or 'always'. Additionally, the mean of teachers' opinions about the extent to which portfolios should be used as tools for teacher evaluation was 3.88, with a standard deviation of 1.19. Again, this was close to the 'often' category. The mode, 39.2%, was in the 'always' category.

The lowest mean,3.45, was for using student evaluation in teacher evaluation. This also had the highest standard deviation 1.43. This means that evaluation based on students' evaluation was just above the 'sometimes' category. The mode was 31.6 % for the 'always' category.

Table 1: Teachers Responses with Regard to the Tools that Should Be used in their Evaluation

The tools of teacher evaluation that should be used		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	**Mean**	**S.Deviation**
Observation	Frequency	16	26	92	185	280	4.15	1.00
	%	2.7	4.3	15.4	30.9	46.7		
Students' achievement	Frequency	25	32	135	192	215	3.90	1.00
	%	4.2	5.3	22.5	32.1	35.9		
Self evaluation	Frequency	24	42	119	224	190	3.86	1.07
	%	4.0	7.0	19.9	37.4	31.7		
Peer evaluation for formative purposes	Frequency	45	46	130	185	193	3.73	1.20
	%	7.5	7.7	21.7	30.9	32.2		
Teachers' portfolios	Frequency	42	31	116	175	235	3.88	1.19
	%	7.0	5.2	19.4	29.2	39.2		
Students' evaluation by Survey or Interview	Frequency	99	51	117	143	189	3.45	1.43
	%	16.5	8.5	19.5	23.9	31.6		

Discussion

Teachers' opinions about the tools for teacher evaluation show some variety in terms of the various tools. Teachers supported the use of classroom observation most strongly. Most teachers reported that teacher evaluation should be used with students' achievement, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and teachers' portfolio 'often' and 'always'. While, Student evaluation was the only tool with a mean closer to 'sometimes'.

From the data, it can be deduced that teachers are supportive of evaluation and would like to arrive at an accurate judgement about their performance by participating in their evaluation, and allowing their students to state their opinions about their performance through interviews or surveys, and having inspectors or head teachers undertaking the evaluation as is the most common in observation. Students should also participate in teacher evaluation in an indirect way by basing the evaluation on achievements data. In addition, teachers would like to help each other by applying peer-evaluation in a formative way. Moreover, teachers favoured teachers' portfolios that included activities and what teachers have otherwise done during the school year to reflect their performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some suggestions can be provided based on the data described in this paper. Teachers indicated that evaluation should involve a mix of teacher evaluation tools. Teachers also believed that, in addition to head teachers and inspectors, evaluation should be conducted by other evaluators, such as students, colleagues, and the teachers themselves, either for formative or summative purposes.

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