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Instructional leadership: Qualifications of the evaluator

Abstract
A well-designed teacher evaluation process provides a communication link between the school system and its teachers. The evaluation process imparts teaching concepts to teachers and it helps the system structure, manage, and reward teachers. Principals as instructional leaders are responsible for those teacher evaluations. In order to be effective evaluators, they must be qualified. Principals need to be a source of expert information, knowledge, and skill. They should be capable of enriching the content of an instructional program by determining the best teaching methodology for their schools. This paper examined what the principal needs to know in order to be an expert formative evaluator.
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: QUALIFICATIONS OF THE EVALUATOR

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A well-designed teacher evaluation process provides a communication link between the school system and its teachers. The evaluation process imparts teaching concepts to teachers and helps the system structure, manage, and reward teachers. Principals as instructional leaders are responsible for those teacher evaluations. In order to be effective evaluators, they must be qualified. Principals need to be a source of expert information, knowledge, and skill. They should be capable of enriching the content of an instructional program by determining the best teaching methodology for their schools. This paper examined what the principal needs to know in order to be an expert formative evaluator.

According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, the definition for evaluation is a determination of significance or worth through careful appraisal and study. Evaluation is broken down into two main areas, summative and formative.

Summative evaluation is observable data used to supply information that will lead to the modification of assignments such as placements in other positions, promotions, and terminations (McGreal, 1983; Grossnickel, & Thiel, 1981). If teachers feel that evaluation is only
a means to judge suitability for continued employment, they resent and fear the evaluation (Edwards, 1986). Fear of bias or incompetence on the part of the evaluator adds to the negative attitudes of teachers. Edwards (1986) noted that in actuality, evaluation gets rid of only two percent of the incompetent teachers; therefore, improving the instructional techniques of the other ninety-eight percent through formative evaluation should be more important.

Formative evaluation is observable data used to improve teaching through the identification of ways to change teaching systems, teaching environments, or teaching behaviors (Peterson, 1982; McGreal, 1983). Assessment should be a non-threatening process to monitor and guide teacher efforts in acquiring and using effective teaching skills (Edwards, 1986). Effective teaching leads to effective learning (Manatt, 1984; Lovell, & Lucio, 1967).

In today's evaluation (Peterson, 1982) the trend is away from the negative and toward the positive. In a Massachusetts survey, teachers and administrators felt that evaluators provided little assistance to teachers in developing competencies in the areas of their evaluations. This points out the necessity for principals to be trained in evaluation techniques.
Peterson (1982) notes that:

The performance of the classroom teacher can be evaluated only by a qualified professional educator. Competent evaluation depends on perceptiveness, experience, and technical skills of the evaluator. His knowledge and intelligence are chief measuring instruments used in the program. The evaluation needs well defined technical skills to make meaningful assessment of teachers' expertness. He must be a skilled scientific observer, have extensive professional experience, know how to relate an observed action, and be thoroughly acquainted with the classroom program and the conditions he is observing. (p. 77)

Appropriate training includes guided practice in evaluation and can be gained from elective in-service courses, university courses, principals' meetings devoted entirely to evaluation, written manuals describing procedures and explaining forms and policy, one to three day workshop-clinics with outside help from consultants, or work of central office personnel with individual principals (McGreal, 1983; Olivero, & Armistead, 1981; Bolton, 1973). However, care must be taken when selecting any of these types of training to insure that
the training contains the proper formative procedures.

Formative procedures according to Manatt (1984) are goal setting, observation and information collection, post-observation and communications, decision-making, and assessment.

Goal Setting

Goal setting provides for competent individuals such as teachers, administrators, consultants, parents and students with a wide range of specialties to create and develop the criteria on which to base evaluation (Lovell & Lucio, 1967; Hyman, 1975). Teacher involvement in goal setting can result in receiving the best judgement and thinking of all concerned. Teachers gain a sense of identity with a program they have helped create. Peterson (1982) and Bolton (1973) note that teachers should be taking part in the development of goals so they know and understand the basis on which they will be evaluated. Identity with the development of the goals also provides teachers with a feeling of responsibility toward the evaluation and an obligation to make it work (Brighton, 1965).

The principal's role in goal setting is two-fold, that of leader and participant (Lovell, & Lucio, 1967). As leader, the principal must clarify the purpose of evaluation. As a participant, the principal needs to let
teachers know that these sessions are open to new and different ideas, their opinions will be respected, and mistakes will not be negatively criticized. Brighton (1965) states that a principal must have faith in the faculty’s decision-making abilities. This faith will influence teachers’ confidence in the principal’s capabilities.

Cooperative goal-setting models promote professional growth, foster positive working relationships between teacher and principal, focus on the needs of each teacher, and integrate individual performance objectives with school objectives (Iwanicki, 1981). In order to identify the purpose of the evaluation, a pre-conference between teacher and principal is necessary (Manatt, 1984; Bolton, 1973). A pre-conference, according to Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krajewski (1980) allows the principal to become familiar with the lesson’s objectives, activities and methods to be employed, and specific items or problems the teacher wants feedback on.

Observation and Information Collection

A prerequisite needed for good observation according to Bolton (1973) is an identified purpose with an emphasis on a specific and systematic approach. A more specific purpose helps give focus to the observation. The principal then needs to set up the
time, date and place for the observation. Specific plans for carrying out the observation need to be ironed out so both principal and teacher know what is going to take place during the evaluation (McGreal, 1983).

Before observing, principals need to identify some teacher performance areas (Manatt, 1984). These areas may be contained in the written evaluation instrument. They are productive teaching techniques, organized structured class management, and positive interpersonal relationships. Knowledge of these areas is essential to qualified evaluators.

Teaching techniques that are associated with effective teaching and will be observed by evaluators have been detailed by Manatt (1984); Edwards (1986); Russell and Hunter (1977); and Johnson and Orso (1986). These are organized into seven basic areas that include anticipatory set, stated objectives, input (information student needs to learn), modeling, checking for understanding (through observation and questioning), guided practice, and independent practice (gain fluency without teacher assistance).

Thirteen basic principles of classroom management that are included in many large school district evaluation instruments have emerged from research cited by McGreal (1983):
2. Defined consequences.
3. Elimination of constraints and interruptions.
4. Emphasis placed on academic goals.
5. Predominance of whole-group activities.
6. Clarity of presentation.
7. Practice of skills or concepts.
8. Feedback and evaluation through assistance, praise, and questioning.
9. Reviews of previously learned material.
10. Monitoring behavior so the teacher is in control at all times.
11. Transitions are few with infrequent interruptions.
12. Student accountability for homework and classwork, and
13. Classroom climate that strives for consistency, enthusiasm, and involvement. (p.91-93)

Evaluators that have knowledge of these principles will be able to recognize them when observing teachers. In the formative evaluation process, evaluators will be able to encourage teachers to maximize their teaching skills in classroom management. Johnson and Orso (1986) note
that structured classroom management provides an environment conducive to learning.

Teachers' interpersonal relationships must be gleaned from several observations. Positive interpersonal relationships are the most difficult to evaluate because they are based solely on judgment (Meek, 1986). That judgment is difficult to support in legal actions without plenty of documentation. In Johnson and Orso's (1986) research, they found this criteria:

1. Establishes positive relationships with students, parents, and community.
2. Works effectively with school personnel.
3. Meets requirements/responsibilities of committees served on.
4. Accepts constructive criticism.
5. Willingly shares knowledge and materials.

(p. 34-35)

In order for data on interpersonal communication to be considered valid and reliable, Bolton (1973) suggests that the evaluator learn behavior categories used for classifying teacher/student messages, be able to master use of behavior record forms, and be consistent in record keeping from one observation to another.

Observation of direct teacher instruction is clearly the most significant aspect of teacher evaluation.
Observation enables the evaluator to witness and judge the quality of the interactions between teacher and students (McGreal, 1983). Hyman (1975) says that observation involves the intentional and methodical viewing of the teacher and students. Observing involves planned, careful, focused, and active attention by the observer. Brighton (1965), Turner (1986), and Grier (1986) recommend: frequent visits with a minimum of one visit per semester per teacher, the length of an observation (approximately 30 to 55 minutes) for an elementary principal should be an entire lesson and for the secondary principal it should be one whole class period. Arriving before class begins and staying until it ends gives the evaluator a chance to understand the context of the lesson and see the interactions between teacher and students (Bolton, 1973; Brighton, 1965; Hunter, 1976). It also allows the class time to get used to the evaluator's presence. Finally, an unobtrusive position with the advantage of viewing the entire class will aid in the observation.

Training in the use of an information collecting system will provide the principal with a common language and a way to determine student accomplishment (Bolton, 1973). The first skill that should be developed in classroom observers is the ability to write descriptively
rather than judgmentally. Note-taking is essential in the observation (McGreal, 1983). Detailed notes can be taken during the observation and then used to prepare a narrative description. This report is shared with the teacher and serves as the basis for the post-observation conference by helping to diagnose problems more accurately and make recommendations for improvement much easier (Grier, 1986; Brighton, 1965; Hunter, 1976; McGreal, 1983).

Post-observation and Communications

The post-observation conference is crucial to effective evaluation. It has the most impact if done soon after the observation. Grier (1986) recommends two days. Grossnickle and Thiel (1981) and Grier (1986) suggest a possible agenda for the conference:

1. The evaluator reviews what was seen in the observation.
2. The evaluator and teacher review the positive behaviors observed.
3. Jointly identify alternative ways of improving performance in order to expand the teaching methods and strategies.
4. The teacher proposes a plan for improvement.

The evaluator needs to be positive, but also realistic. Being open-minded and receptive to the myriad ways a
lesson could be presented, setting aside personal bias, using constructive criticism; and maintaining a relaxed, comfortable environment can go a long way to ensure continued favorable relationships between teachers and evaluators (Lovell, & Lucio, 1967; Turner, 1986). Evaluators can obtain a productive conference if it resembles an effective teaching lesson (Griffith, 1973).

Communication is a two-way process; therefore, the post-observation conference should be approached as a two-way communication. Problems of mistrust, tension, and conflict could then be diminished. Feedback with a sensitivity to the frustration level of the teacher paves the way for cooperation (Lovell, & Lucio, 1967). Hyman (1975) lists several characteristics of helpful and meaningful feedback (a form of communication):

1. Focus feedback on the actual performance of the teacher.

2. Focus feedback on observation rather than assumptions, inferences, or explanations.

3. Focus feedback on description that is specific and concrete.

4. Focus feedback on sharing of information rather than giving advice.
5. Focus feedback on what the teacher can use and manage, and

6. Check the feedback you give by asking the teacher to summarize the points for both of you. (p. 146-149)

**Decision-making and Assessment**

After observing teachers, the principal has the responsibility to compliment, support, counsel, and correct teachers. The evaluation process should be considered a diagnostic tool to assess teachers' strengths and weaknesses, and provide the means to correct those weaknesses and support those strengths (Drake, & Roe, 1986). Marks, Stoops, and King-Stoops (1985) report three broad stages in the decision-making process. First, identify and analyze the problem. Second, arrive at several possible solutions to the problem. Third, evaluate the solutions to eliminate all but the most likely to succeed.

Assessment of the evaluation process must produce reliable, valid measures of teaching performance (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Berstein, 1984). Assessment is necessary in order to make sure the evaluation is tailored to the local situation. It must meet the needs of the educational goals, management style, conception of teaching, and community values of
the school district (Wise, et al., 1984; Drake, & Roe, 1986).

CONCLUSION

If teacher evaluation is to be effective, its general purpose should be that of safeguarding and improving the quality of instruction received by students. The instructional leader must be qualified to assess teacher expertness through knowledge, skill, and experience. Training in the areas of goal setting, observation, post-observation, and assessment will provide a background for effective evaluation. Communication is a key component in the evaluation process and must be two-way. Teachers are an integral part of the process and their input is necessary for acceptance of an appropriate and realistic evaluation.
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