

Chapter 78

Traditional Teacher Evaluation Models: Current and Future Trends for Educators

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ABSTRACT

Student achievement has become one of the main focal points regarding education across the United States. With this intense focus on students, teachers are thrust unwillingly into the spotlight. Teacher practices and student outcomes have become the new norm for evaluation in PK-12 education. That method of evaluation is crossing over into teacher preparation programs as attempts are being made to connect the quality of a teacher preparation program to the performance of those graduates in the classroom. This chapter focuses on the current trends that exist for both pre-service teachers as well as teachers of record. A brief history is examined as well as issues that currently exist within these structures. The chapter concludes with the implications of these practices and suggestions for future trends and recommendations for evaluating teachers at both the pre-service experience level and when they are employed in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

It has been proven time and time again (Harris & Sass, 2011; Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011; Rockoff & Speroni, 2010) that the biggest difference in how students perform academically is dependent upon the teacher that they have in the classroom. As noted by Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) there is a core belief that teachers can make a difference. So how do we know which teachers should remain in front of students and which teachers should pursue other avenues? This basic premise leads us to teacher evaluation.

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Traditional Teacher Evaluation Models

Teacher evaluation is being thrust more and more into the spotlight, even the federal government has taken stake in the process. In 2012 the Race to the Top (RTT) Initiative (2013) was refunded with \$4.35 billion dollars of federal monies, and one of the components of this initiative was a call for an overhaul of teacher evaluation systems. One of the conditions that must be met is the inclusion of student gains on their standardized test scores to demonstrate learning. This very initiative alone placed a very strong connection between student learning and the receipt of federal funds that schools and districts may receive; therefore putting additional pressure on the teachers, by both the school and the district to produce students who perform at high levels. As noted in Marzano and Toth (2013) this initiative has instigated measures that include student growth and the measure of pedagogical skills of teachers as evaluation components. Unfortunately both of these come with a variety of issues.

As institutions of higher education that contain Schools of Education as well as PK-12 schools strive to meet these performance demands the current curriculum may be examined to determine if it's appropriate for meeting the desired outcomes, in this case it would be an increase in student test scores. In the past this has been a relatively static process of curriculum development and evaluation. Institutions of higher education tend to strive for certification and produce strong pre-service teachers based upon the designed and approved curriculum. PK-12 learning establishments strive for high achievement on the desired tests based upon their curriculum. It seems that the curriculum evaluation is disrupted more frequently in PK-12 learning establishments as the outcome is evaluated yearly, in the form of student assessment tests. Whereas in institutions of higher education the curriculum may only be re-evaluated if their accreditation standards change or there is a call from the state that requires an adjustment to ensure that the graduates of their programs can be licensed. Both processes of evaluation seem to follow the fourth point in Ralph Tyler's (2013) model of assessing the learning objectives. Simply focusing on whether or not the outcomes are meeting the objectives.

Effective teachers in classrooms are fundamental towards ensuring student success both in grasping content and achieving some level of academic success. It is commonly known that the longer a teacher remains in their profession the more effective they become. Pre-service teachers are exposed to both andragogy, as they are students themselves, as well as pedagogical methods in their teacher education programs. Their experiences prior to becoming a teacher of record contribute to their teaching methods, pedagogy, and strategies for personal success. The exposure to these areas helps shape their overall effectiveness as teachers.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2012) indicates that teachers are the strongest predictors of student success across the United States with the realization that just passing a specific content level test or test on pedagogical knowledge does not ensure that a pre-service teacher is truly able to be successful in the field. Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wykoff (2009) indicate that new teachers may not be as effective at the point of entry into the classroom and therefore may be contributing to the poor achievement of students. The challenges for institutions of higher education reside in creating some type of assessment or evaluation that will allow deficiencies in practice to be addressed prior to the pre-service teacher upon completion of their teacher preparation program, in addition the evaluation system should be similar to what pre-service teachers will be assessed on when they become teachers of record. The inability to compare effectiveness across programs becomes an additional issue as each institution of higher education has their own program and their own evaluation pieces and artifacts in place. The vision and goals of teacher effectiveness may be viewed differently from institution to institution. Just as the evaluation process of teachers of record will also vary from state to state.

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