

## Assessment of Teacher Performance

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The assessment of teacher performance is a routine, mandatory practice in most schools and universities. Its relevance in the context of school accountability on the learning of students cannot be underestimated. As an old adage goes, “a school is only as good as its teachers.” But how can we determine if a teacher is good? The answer is obvious and we do not need to light a candle in order to see the sun - it is through assessment. This report explores the meaning and process of assessing teacher performance. Specifically, this report explores the description and the procedure of each of the most common form of assessment of teacher performance - supervisor, student, peer, and self. This report also contains a discussion of the purpose of assessing teacher performance, as well as some criteria used in assessment of teacher performance and effectiveness. In addition, the use of integrated assessment and student outcomes in assessing teacher performance is discussed. Some examples of foreign and local frameworks of teacher effectiveness are also cited. Lastly, a discussion of some basic guidelines in communicating the result of assessment of teacher performance is presented. This report hopes to contribute in the awareness and understanding of the meaning, procedure, and importance of assessing teacher performance and effectiveness.

**A**ccountability is a top priority in educational settings and programs are now undergoing assessments to prove that what they are doing is successful and effective. Assessment is one of the processes/activities that characterize a school system and usually, the learners in the school system are the principal focus in assessment (Joshua, Joshua, & Kritsonis, 2006). However, while the usual goal of such assessment is determining the presence and extent of learning among students, the teachers are given a large amount of responsibility to promote and ensure learning in students. Schools and teachers are being asked to be more accountable for student outcomes (Naugle, Naugle, &

Naugle, 2000). Shymansky (1978) once argued that there are numerous factors contributing in effective classroom instruction, but it is the teacher that is recognized as having the greatest influence on the program success. Assessing the performance of teachers then seems to be as important as assessing the students or learners.

This report presents the basic issues in the assessment of teacher performance and discusses the different approaches of assessing teacher performance and effectiveness. Obviously, one of the most important concerns in an educational institution is the assessment of teachers' performance. This assessment can give one an insight on how teachers perform their roles as facilitator of learning inside the classroom which translates into students' learning achievement and their progress towards the desired skills and abilities. Given the importance of assessing teacher's performance, certain critical issues still need to be resolved; first, what is the most effective way of assessing teachers' performance? Is peer evaluation more effective than student's evaluation or the reverse? Or is it better to leave evaluation of teacher's performance to their immediate supervisors or administrators? Second, what are the appropriate criteria to be used in assessing teacher's performance and effectiveness? Should it only involve classroom facilitation of learning or should it also entail students' learning performance (e.g. test scores, achievement, etc.)?

Several solutions were offered by different experts to resolve the issues or concerns on teacher's performance assessment; however, just like in any scientific inquiry, it is more appropriate to define first the main problem at hand before we can offer a wide array of solutions. In this case, it is just right to define first what an "effective teacher" is before we can decide on the most effective mode of assessment (peer, supervisor, self, or student evaluation) and the most appropriate criteria for assessing teachers' performance.

### Criteria for Assessment of Teacher Performance

Basically, an assessment of teacher performance involves assessing if a teacher has the competencies in general areas required of a teacher. But in view of the accountability of teachers in the learning process of students, whether they are being effective or not form part of their assessment. The teaching process can be viewed as a well thought of series of steps or action to facilitate learning and teaching effectiveness can be measured by the degree to which the expected learning takes place (De La Rosa, 2001). Effective teaching is said to be brought about by the inner drive of the faculty to guide student learning equipped by his or her mastery of subject content and competence in utilizing appropriate pedagogical requirements (de Guzman, 2000). The strengths or limitations of teachers with regard their content and pedagogical knowledge are the most basic measures of teacher effectiveness and are usually assessed in most teacher assessment or evaluation frameworks.

Danielson & McGreal (2000) proposed a model containing four domains embodying the components of professional practice. These are *planning and*

*preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.* This model highlights the fact that teachers' functions and responsibilities are varied and encompasses several areas of competencies. Competence in these domains can serve as criteria of teacher's performance and effectiveness. Meanwhile, Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen, and van der Vleuten (2004) proposed a framework of teaching effectiveness with the following major domains - *person as a teacher, expert on content knowledge, facilitator of learning processes, organiser, and scholar/lifelong learner.* The most significant addition in this framework is the authors' giving importance on aspects of a teacher's personality that are conducive to learning by proposing the domain of 'person as a teacher'.

Indeed, outside of the teaching competencies and other professional responsibilities that help define what makes an effective teacher, a teacher must also have certain traits or characteristics that are imperative to make his or her teaching effective. The absence or lack of such traits may spell the difference between success and failure in bringing about the desired learning outcomes in students. For example, the qualitative study of Bustos-Orosa (2008) on Filipino teachers' conception of good teaching reveals that both dispositional traits and professional competence are seen as components of good teaching. Furthermore, Bustos-Orosa named *personality-based dispositions, content mastery and expertise, pedagogical knowledge and teaching competence traits* as critical factors in good teaching (2008). Orosa's findings on the importance of personality traits in teaching fit in the framework for teaching competencies developed by Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen, and van der Vleuten (2004). On the other hand, a quantitative study of Magno and Sembrano (2007) using structural equations modeling (SEM) found that the personality characteristics of a teacher influences his teaching performances, effective teaching characteristics, and teaching efficacy.

Recently, Goe, Bell, and Little (2008) developed a *five-point definition of teacher effectiveness* through research analysis, policies, and standards that addressed teacher effectiveness. This endeavor did not only end in constructing definitions but it proceeded to series of consultations with a number of experts which further reinforced and strengthened the definitions of what an effective teacher is. The following explains the five- point definition:

1. Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures, or by alternative measures.
2. Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.
3. Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.

4. Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure.

These definitions imply that teacher effectiveness goes beyond direct classroom instruction; instead, it also encompasses other job facets of teachers like, collaboration with parents, other professionals, and school administrators. The concept of teacher effectiveness also covers the teacher's roles as citizens in classrooms and schools, communities, and society as a whole. Most importantly, teacher's effectiveness can be assessed through its reflections on students' progress in the academics and their development as a person.

Each educational institution may have its own definition of teacher effectiveness depending on the school's goals and thrust. An institutionally defined teacher's effectiveness may include the teacher's participation and partaking on the achievement of institution's objectives. In view of these things, regardless of the model or framework to which assessment is based, assessment of teacher performance and effectiveness ought to include assessment of both professional competencies and personal qualities.

### **Purpose of Assessing Teacher Performance**

In general, assessment of teacher performance is for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. In education, there is greater concern over methodological issues like the purpose of evaluation and how it should be evaluated more than the question of who should assess or evaluate (Nhundu, 1999). In terms of purpose, we can surmise that data obtained from the assessment of teacher performance could be used to make decisions on both tenured (for promotion or advancement) and untenured (for renewal, separation or permanency) teachers. It may also provide information on the area of strengths and weaknesses of a teacher which could be used as basis for improvement, not only for teachers, but also for the school in general in terms of policy-making in teacher hiring and professional development. Lastly, data from assessment and evaluation of teachers can provide a clear and objective picture of the state of education in a particular institution of learning. This exercise helps to determine the degree to which an educational institution meets the challenges of its own standards of excellence (Tan, 1998).

### **Supervisor Rating of Teacher Performance**

Assessment of teacher performance through the school administrator or supervisor is the traditional way of assessing teachers. This is commonly done through classroom observation where the supervisor visits the class of the teacher (announced or unannounced) and observes the teacher handle the class, in part or the whole duration. The schedule and frequency of observations depends on the needs of the school and the purpose of

observation. Obviously, a classroom observation for the purpose of formative evaluation necessitates observation in more than one occasion.

The rating scale or checklist is the common instrument of choice and involves observation of how the students respond to their teachers. In a typical elementary or high school class, the observation may involve assessing the lesson plan of the teacher prior to the class or while the class is on-going. The supervisor can also review other class-related documents of the teacher (e.g. teacher's portfolio, students' works). A conference with the teacher is usually conducted by the supervisor before (preobservation conference) and after the observation (postobservation conference). The purpose of the conference varies but the primary aim of the post-conference is for the supervisor to communicate the result of his observation and assessment to the teacher.

The main criticism of having administrators/supervisors as raters or evaluators in assessing teacher performance is the threatening nature of such exercise. There is the possibility of inducing fear in the evaluatee due to perceptual dilemma resulting from contradictory bureaucratic and professional expectations inherent in administrative and supervisory roles (Nhundu, 1999). To some teachers, this exercise may feel more like an administrative task conducted by the supervisor and less of an exercise for the purpose of teacher's development. The validity of the rating may also be questioned because it is susceptible to subjectivity, especially if there is only one supervisor acting as rater or evaluator. Nhundu (1999) adds that the assessment of teacher performance using supervisor-ratings is often too sporadic, and supervisory visits are too few and far apart in their frequency that they may not have any meaningful effect in the modification of teaching behavior.

### **Student Assessment of Teacher Performance**

The most widely used technique to measure teachers' competence inside the classroom is through student evaluation or student rating (Ochave & Abulon, 2006). This is based on the premise that students are the direct consumers of the services provided by teachers and are therefore in a good position to assess and evaluate their teachers' performance. First introduced in the 1920s in the United States, it has now become a routine and mandatory part of teaching. This is most often done by the use of rating scale or checklist where classes are visited by proctors and asked the students to rate and evaluate the performance of a particular teacher in a single course or subject. Sometimes, provisions for qualitative reports are given by asking the students to write their unedited comments about the teacher and the course/subject. This guarantees that the assessment data will not be limited to quantitative score but will be reinforced by qualitative data.

This assessment covers the most observable teaching habits of teachers in classroom situations to the personal attributes encompassing communication styles, attitudes, and other dispositions observable in a teacher. Algozzine, Beattie, Bray, Flowers, Gretes, Howley, Mohanty, and Spooner (2004) wrote

that student rating using a “cafeteria-style” rating scale generally has the following characteristics:

- a. an instrument is developed, comprised of a series of open-and-closed questions about course content and teaching effectiveness
- b. at least one item addresses overall effectiveness
- c. written comments about the course content and the effectiveness of the instructor are solicited
- d. anonymity of responses is assured and assumed
- e. responses are obtained at the end of the term in the absence of the instructor
- f. item and scale responses are summarized across instructors, departments, and colleges, as evidenced of teaching effectiveness used in making various professional development decisions
- g. student, course, and instructor differences are largely ignored in analysis and reporting of scores reflective of effectiveness (p.135)

However, in spite of research findings pointing that students are in a unique position to assess a variety of aspects concerning effective instructions (Hanif & Pervez, 2004), the validity studies of student ratings yield inconsistent findings. And even if some studies have supported the validity of student rating of teacher performance, many still express reservations about their use, especially for personnel and tenure decisions (Algozzine, et al, 2004). Some teachers have negative reactions to student evaluation of teacher’s performance and they usually complain about the intellectual and personal capacity of students to objectively evaluate teacher’s effectiveness. It is possible that some ratings become assessment of students’ satisfaction or attitude toward their teachers instead of being able to assess actual teacher performance and effectiveness. There is also the possibility that students may rate higher teachers who seem to be fair in grading or those who provides easier classroom tasks. For instance, Wright (2006) cautioned that a teacher evaluation from a student could be based solely on latent anger resulting from a recent grade received on an exam, or from a single negative in-class experience with an instructor over the course of an entire semester.

### **Peer Review of Teacher Performance**

Peer Evaluation is a process or system for the evaluation of teacher performance by a peer or colleague. Many scholars believe that informed and well-trained peers are usually and ideally suited to evaluate their colleagues, especially colleagues in the same field (Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007). In usual cases, peer evaluation is conducted by a more senior faculty who has similar knowledge or expertise about the subject being taught. This is in consonance with the observations made by Yon, Burnap, and Kohut (2002) who said that the most trustworthy peer reviewers are those who know the discipline content

of the teacher being reviewed and those who are trained and experienced in observation are deemed more competent in peer review.

The method of peer review provides for a more constructive feedback for the improvement of teacher's performance. Peer evaluation is commonly done through classroom observation wherein a peer evaluator visits another teacher for an on-site or actual teaching assessment. In many institutions, classroom observation schedules are announced and expected randomly on the classes handled by a teacher on a day of visitation. Also, teachers are already oriented on the criteria as reflected in the observation forms being used by evaluators. The process of peer review typically includes a pre-observation conference between the teacher and the evaluator, followed by classroom observations by the evaluator, and concludes with a meeting to review and discuss the results of the evaluation with the teacher (Kumrow & Dahlen, 2002).

Although many faculty members feel they benefit from thoughtful attention to their teaching, other faculty find the peer-review process intimidating, meaningless, or both (Carter, 2008). One common argument against this approach is that classroom observation may give one an adequate measure of teachers' ability to teach and their teaching practices but little it can give the evidence about the students' actual learning. Other problems identified in many literatures concerning the process of peer evaluation include issues on validity of instruments used, high subjectivity of the observer, and the negative notion of other teachers regarding the purpose of observation. Thus, in order to guarantee a reliable and useful teacher assessment using peer review, schools should try to address the problems mentioned by ensuring validity and reliability.

Carter (2008, pp. 85-87) proposed five steps for peer reviewers to enrich the peer-review process:

(1) Understand alternative views of teaching and learning - A peer reviewer must understand that there is not one best way to teach. Different methods suit different goals. The question a reviewer should be asking is how well a particular pedagogy is advancing the learning goals, not whether the pedagogical choice is the right one.

(2) Prepare seriously for a previsit interview - It is imperative for peer reviewers not only to collect course materials before the classroom visit, but to spend time reading them carefully and trying to develop an understanding of overall course goals, objectives, and strategies. It is the reviewer's responsibility to try to gain an understanding of the framework before the preconference interview and to prepare questions on any element that remains unclear.

(3) Listen carefully to what the candidate says in the previsit interview - The reviewer's first task during the previsit is to confirm his or her understanding of course goals and instructor strategies, as indicated by course

materials. The reviewer should also ask about the personality of the class to be observed. Finally, it is not only important but courteous and collegial for the reviewer to ask the candidate if there is something in particular to which he or she would like the reviewer to pay attention.

(4) Watch the students, not just the candidate - The goal of any class is student engagement and learning, and the best way to gather information in that area is to watch students themselves. Student behavior is a rich mine of information about how well a class is progressing.

(5) Check your impressions during the postobservation conference interview and focus on helping rather than judging - Peer review works best when it resembles formative assessment (intended to focus on improvement) more than summative assessment (intended to pass a kind of final judgment). It is equally important to offer suggestions for improvement.

### **Self-Assessment in Teacher Performance**

An alternative approach in assessing teacher performance is self-assessment - where teachers rate and evaluate themselves based on a well-define set of competencies or characteristics. Nhundu (1999) argues that self-evaluation have the greatest potential of producing changes in teaching practices because they provide teachers with the rare opportunity to reflect on their teaching and modify accordingly.

Ross and Bruce (2005) proposed a model of self-assessment comprised of three processes. First, teachers produce self-observations, focusing on aspects of instruction relevant to their subjective standards of success. Second, teachers make self-judgments in which they determine how well their general and specific goals were met. The primary data are teacher perceptions of changes in student performance gleaned from student utterances, work on classroom assignments, homework, and formal assessments. Third, are self-reactions, interpretations of the degree of goal attainment that express how satisfied teachers are with the result of their actions. This model can be adapted by teacher assessment frameworks that incorporate teacher self-assessment.

### **Current Trends: Integrated Assessment and the Use of Student Outcomes**

Many schools and universities now practice the use of integrated forms or approaches of assessing teacher performance. In some institutions, they conduct peer rating and supervisor rating on top of the use of student rating. Others also include self-assessment in addition with the aforementioned ones. One of the strength of this practice is the provision for varied sources of the teacher's performance which contribute in the validity of findings. One of the most glaring limitations of this practice is that it is not really cost-efficient. A considerable amount of time and physical resources is needed to effectively implement integrated assessment. The possibility of having varying frameworks



for each form which lead to varying criteria for assessing teacher performance and effectiveness also defeats the point of integration to some extent.

Another trend that has been getting attention in the literature is the use of student outcomes as basis for assessing teacher performance and effectiveness. Students' test or achievement scores (standardized or teacher-made) and grades are used as measures of a teacher's performance, effectiveness, and achievement. In the United States, there have been efforts seeking to employ standardized test score gains as a key policy instrument for holding educators and school systems accountable (Kupermintz, 2003). This approach has its share of criticisms; primary of this is the validity of using students' scores to assess teacher's performance and effectiveness. Indeed, there are several factors that contribute to student outcomes. While teachers should also be held accountable for student outcomes, using students' scores to make decisions on a teacher can be unacceptable to some people. Perhaps, this approach can be of better service when use alongside the more common forms of assessment within an integrated framework.

### **Basic Guidelines in Communicating the Findings of an Assessment**

The reviewer or evaluator must be able to use assessment terminology appropriately and must be able to articulate the meaning, limitations, and implications of assessment results. Whether the assessment data came from the supervisor or peer or students, communicating the results of assessment could be one of the most challenging tasks that a supervisor or colleague will have. The following are some basic guidelines to remember when one has the task of communicating the assessment findings:

(1) Set an informal mood - Most teachers experience a degree of fear and anxiety whenever the results of their observations or evaluations will be communicated to them. This is especially true for novice and untenured teachers. Providing an accepting and secure atmosphere minus the formality of a paper presentation can help teachers feel less threatened which in turn makes it more probable that a meaningful discussion will occur.

(2) Keep it short and simple - The duration of the meeting will depend on the purpose of the assessment. However, it is advisable to keep the discussion concise. All important elements observed must be communicated to the teacher in a succinct but effective way.

(3) Be honest with the ratee - Honest and objective observations must be communicated to the teacher. Limitations or weaknesses on the part of the teacher must be seen as opportunities for growth and improvement.

(4) Choose appropriate words in communicating the result- Genuine compliments for positive observations must be communicated to the teacher. When it comes to seemingly negative findings, one must refrain from using

negative words. It is also more advisable to start with the good points. Be concise on the areas that need improvement

(5) Be on-guard for sensitive teachers - Communicating the assessment result should not look like an exercise for passing judgment on the teacher. Even when the findings of an assessment contain several difficult issues that a teacher may be defensive about, communicating it in a civil and cordial manner can lessen its impact.

## Summary

Assessing teacher performance in an academic institution is as important as assessing learning in pupils and students. Teachers are accountable in the educational process and their assessment serve as one way to monitor and regulate accountability- that is, through assessment, the performance and effectiveness of a teacher can be determined. Two key issues - the most effective way of assessing teachers' performance and the appropriate criteria to be used in assessing teacher's performance and effectiveness - is explored by presenting the most common forms of teacher assessment, namely, self-, peer, supervisor, and student assessments. Each of this form of teacher assessment has their own merits as well as limitations. Their usage may depend on the specific needs of an institution. Many schools and universities nowadays make use of the integration of these forms. Also, using student outcomes as basis for assessing teacher effectiveness has been part of the literature on assessment for accountability. The specific model or framework which serves as basis of what criteria will be used in assessing teacher performance and effectiveness is an important concern. Such framework should be anchored on the vision and mission of the academic institution. Communicating the results of teacher assessment is also an important concern. Certain guidelines must be observed in order to ensure that the essential purpose of assessment is achieved. Assessment of teacher performance is more complex than most people perceive. It is an essential exercise and it is here to stay. It is important, however, that as new models of what effective teaching means or what how learning is measured, modified approaches and new mechanisms of assessing teacher performance also emerge.

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