Teacher Evaluation As Professional Development

By

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TEACHER EVALUATION AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study examines the connection between teacher evaluation and the goals of professional development by using the perceptions of a sample of experienced teachers. Teacher performance significantly impacts student learning outcomes. It is the teacher evaluation process that is intended to provide the public a process to ensure the quality of teaching in its schools and give teachers a tool to identify, improve, and validate effective teaching practice. This study looks at the current state law, local practices and teacher views to gain insight into how effective teacher evaluation is as a means of developing teachers' professional performance.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Many studies indicate that the most fundamental ingredient in the recipe for successful schooling is the classroom learning environment and the role the teacher takes and the relationship the teacher has with his/her students. Studies by Meredith Philips (1997), Waxman and Huang (1997), as well as Jeanie Oakes' Keeping Track (1987), substantiate the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Students learn best when they are in a supportive environment or culture for learning. It is the teacher who is foremost responsible for establishing the learning climate by having developed craft knowledge and skills using a variety of approaches that can meet the needs of our schools' diverse learners. The teacher's role or performance is fundamental to student learning outcomes.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to identify and describe teachers' perceptions of professional development and the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation practices used in a rural school district. The school district cited in this project will be referred to as the Sheltonville Union School District. This study is intended to give insight into the following questions:
1. What connections are there between professional development and teacher evaluation?

2. What are the teacher's perceptions of the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation practices in use in the school district?

3. How might the evaluation procedures be improved to make the process a more meaningful form of professional development?

Background

In the fall of 1998, a member of my school's teaching staff took her own life. In the days that passed, the staff spent time in reflective thought and conversation trying to make sense out of the shock of this event. Her death was like a large piece of glass shattering into smaller pieces. One of the pieces that I picked up and studied was how the teacher evaluation process and its current short comings may have factored into her life and death.

The colleague we lost was "technically" a first year teacher, although she had substituted in the district for about four years, beginning with daily on-call work and then proceeding to several long term positions at various sites and grade levels. At least some of the students to whom she was assigned at the time of her death were acquainted with her before beginning the current school year. However, this was her first full-time contract with a school district, which would enable her to be on a track toward tenure. According to our district's mentor coordinator, the teacher was utilizing many, if not all of the various support services provided by the district and state through the Beginning Teacher Support Assistance (BTSA) programs. She was attending weekly in-house
classes and had an on-site mentor. In addition, she was also receiving additional assistance, such as training in classroom management and curriculum development provided to first year teachers by the county's office of education.

During the immediate days that passed after her death, I tried to figure out what may have been going on in her classroom and whether or not what was happening may have been a factor in the choice she made. Despite all the support she was receiving, she was having trouble developing positive interactions with students. More specifically there were serious classroom management issues that had led some students to write letters to an administrator expressing the depth of the difficulties and timbre of the climate in the learning environment. In her pocket when she died, was a hate-filled note from one of the students. In the days that followed her death, my own students wanted to stay in during break or after-school, seemingly looking for an opportunity to talk about what had happened. They asked a lot of questions and offered recollections of the deceased teacher as well as descriptions of their own behavior toward her.

The students' information provided a vivid picture of what it was like to be in her class. The image that came through the discussion was that this was a teacher who was struggling and had a history of conflict with her students. According to those who knew her, the personal problems she was confronting went well beyond what was going on at school, but it seemed evident, that school had contributed to her desperate frame of mind.
This was a teacher who served as a substitute in the district for four years previous to becoming a full-time, contractual employee and had had difficulties coping with the challenges of teaching. The thought that kept running through my mind was: could the school problems that might have contributed to the death of a teacher have been avoided? Could the function of teacher observation, supervision and/or evaluation have been a factor in this picture? My mind wanderings took me further to question a system that allows a substitute teacher to work for months, even years in a district, and receive no professional support or assessment of the job performance.

One might counter with what does the plight of a substitute teacher have to do with the overall picture of teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation? The fact is, many teachers come to the profession by way of substitute teaching and make up the pool of teachers on contract on any given school site. Likewise, all teachers, from the newest rookie to the most experienced tenured member of the faculty, do benefit from the support, supervision, and feedback that the process of evaluation can offer.

The genesis of my action thesis came from the tragedy I have described. Her death made me think about the many challenges there are for those who select to go into teaching. I reflected on the often isolating feeling teachers get when they are in their own classrooms, especially during the first few years. It made me want to investigate the general concept of teacher evaluation and the
part it plays in encouraging and supporting the learning process for teachers.

Political Context

As mundane as the topic of evaluation might seem, it can be the source of many controversial political arguments. Both at the state and national levels, we have seen teacher unions and professional teachers' groups often balk at the suggestion of any kind of change, especially change that can affect the job security of teachers (teacher tenure system). On the other side of the battle front, we find nearly every year, a conservative voter group producing a new initiative that would eliminate the present tenure system and evaluation process. A popular proposal would tie students' standardized test scores and other measures to the teacher evaluation process. Merit or reward pay would be offered to those teachers whose students performed well. Conversely, those teachers' whose students do not perform well, could see the results be used by administrators and school board members to make such personnel decisions as retention or demotion. Ostensibly, the intent for such proposals would appear to be to improve classroom instruction and promote student learning. While the unions and politicos argue it out, however, the two groups of people who need the process to work the most --classroom teachers and students-- are without anything better. They deserve more.
Definitions for this study

- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA): California public school program, established in 1992, which provides learning opportunities for first and second year teachers to expand and deepen their teaching knowledge and skills (www.btsta.ca.gov/).

- Formative, on-going evaluation: evaluation designed, done, and intended to support the process of improvement (Scriven, 1999, p.20). Often, it is evaluation that offers specific advice, based on a clear diagnosis. It is an assessment of the teacher's practice and offers feedback for the purpose of advancing the teacher's learning or performance (Daneilson and McGreal, 2000, p. 25).

- Migrant: A person who moves regularly in order to find work, especially in harvesting the crops (Websters, 1985). Within the school system, it has come to be used as a general descriptor for any program, benefit or curriculum intended to support the learning of dependent school children of migrant workers.

- Peer evaluation/assessment: performance appraisal performed by an employee's peers, colleagues, team members, or other employees of equivalent rank who have ample opportunities to observe performance. Typically used as a supplement to either collaborative or reciprocal performance appraisal (Tracey, 1999).
• Professional development: 1. A continuing and deliberate process aimed at assisting, encouraging, and enabling professionals as individuals to improve their performance and potential by developing their knowledge, skills, abilities, and values. 2. The process of keeping current in one's occupation or profession, maintaining competence in one's practice, and remaining open to new theories, techniques, and approaches (Tracey, 1999).

• Summative evaluation: evaluation done for, or by, any observers or decision makers who need evaluative conclusions for reasons besides development (Scriven, 1999, p. 20).

• Tenure: a status granted after a trial period to a teacher protecting him/her from summary dismissal or being "non-elected" for the purpose of being re-hired. In most California school districts, tenure is achieved when the teacher has successfully passed a two-year probationary period.

Limitations

Initially I envisioned a case study that would trace a group of tenured teachers through the nearly, year long evaluative process, monitoring each participant at key points along the path, gathering data about their feelings and the evaluation/observation outcomes. However, I found through a preliminary inquiry, that many teachers in the survey population had not been systematically evaluated, although the teachers' contract does state that tenured
teachers are to be evaluated every other year. Faced with these circumstances, it was necessary to adjust the study's direction, structure and expectations accordingly. I focused the investigation on the views of those teachers who had been teaching for more than three years. I did not include untenured teachers because their probationary status could affect their views and the degree to which they could express themselves. Furthermore, because only eight teachers were willing to participate, the sampling is small and therefore limits the extent to which the scope of the study could have application.

Summary

The state mandated teacher evaluation system is multi-purposed and is designed to serve the public, the administration, and the teachers. Simply stated, it is intended to provide the public a process to ensure the quality of teaching in its schools by entrusting site supervisors with the task of evaluating and assessing the instructional skills of their teachers. Additionally, the teacher evaluation system is a mechanism to identify, improve and validate effective teaching practice. These are the planned purposes of teacher performance evaluation, supported by state law, district policy and union contract. This study seeks to find out, from teachers' perspectives, how one school district meets its objective of providing professional development through its teacher evaluation practices.
In Chapter Two, literature will be reviewed that begins with a look at material that advocates the value of evaluation and makes the connection between evaluation and professional development. Furthermore, specific methods and styles of evaluation, both the summative and formative models will be reviewed, followed by a study of alternative models currently being used in the teaching world. In Chapter Three the qualitative methodologies and procedures used in this are outlined. In Chapter Four, I will report findings provided by the data collected, which will be analyzed as to common themes or strands of thought that emerge from the data. Lastly, Chapter Five offers a discussion of results and relevant recommendations to be made by the district that could make teacher evaluation a more meaningful avenue for professional development.
Chapter II

Review of Literature

The literature review is organized under headings which reflect the guiding thoughts on which the project is based: that teacher performance can be enhanced by professional development and growth; that summative or traditional forms of teacher evaluation can function as a tool for promoting growth and improvement in performance, but there may be factors that can determine its efficacy as a means of professional development; and lastly, alternative forms of evaluation may further strengthen the connection between evaluation and professional development.

Professional Development

If the only constant in teaching and the learning process is change...then the following implication is clear: if you plan on becoming a teacher, you definitely should plan on remaining a learner for life (Jensen & Kiley, 2000, p. 471).

Good teachers realize that they are on a journey of inquiry and analysis, building upon a knowledge base by exposing themselves to new ideas, reading, experimenting, getting feedback, and reflecting on their practice. Teachers who are engaged in the learning process are modeling an important quality for their students -- that we all must be life long learners in our quest to be the best we can be.
The findings of researchers Waxman and Huang (1997) demonstrated that teaching performance affects student learning outcomes when they studied the differences between effective and ineffective schools attended by African-American students in urban settings. Using two different types of measures, a classroom observation system and two separate student and teacher questionnaires, they cited such teacher controlled variables as academic focus, student-centered learning, and teacher-student contact as being present in significantly greater degrees in effective schools. They also found that teachers in the more effective schools were more likely to be fully credentialed, have advanced degrees, and have more teaching experience. The positive teacher behaviors cited by the researchers -- greater academic focus, student-directed learning and teacher-student contact—are the kind of qualities that are manifested when teachers are confident enough in their skills and knowledge that they then feel they can afford to let go of the power in the classroom. Several authors are in agreement that these findings clarify the need for professional development, whether it be reading professional journals, taking courses or attending workshops (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hobbs & Bullough, 1998; Allender, 1999; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1991; and Barringer, 1993). Further training may have helped the teachers in the ineffective schools change their practices to more productive active, learner-centered approaches.
In a similar study performed by Wasley, Hampel and Clark (1997), the researchers tried to determine whether changes that teachers make in their classroom have a significant effect on their students. To find out whether students were actually benefitting from new teaching strategies, the researchers followed a group of high school students for three years. They discovered there was a significant relationship between students' interest and investment in their work at school and their teachers' repertoire of techniques for engaging them. The studies by Waxman and Huang and Wasley et al. are fundamental to the discussion of professional development in that they make the point that what a teacher knows and does directly impacts student learning outcomes.

In an article written by Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), a strong case is made for the need for and value in improving professional development programs for teachers. The author cites her own previous work when she includes a list of professional development strategies. Professional development strategies that succeed in improving teaching performance share several features. They tend to be:

- experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation;
- grounded in teachers' questions, inquiry, experimentation and professional research;
- collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators;
• connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students, subject matter and teaching methods;
• sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, and coaching;
• connected to other aspects of school change (p. 11).

In related articles by O'Brien (1992) and Korinek, McAdams and Schmid (1985), there is much to be gleaned about improving the effectiveness of professional development by understanding successful strategies for teaching adult learners. For teachers involved in professional development, meaningful learning increases the possibility of improved teacher performance which could later result in improved student academic achievement. O'Brien posits that "adults learn best when they understand why they need to know or be able to do something, have a need to be self-directed and may resist being taught unless they are involved in setting objectives, and are motivated by enhanced self-esteem and job satisfaction as much as external factors" (p. 422).

In essence, a teacher's performance, comprised of what she/he knows and does in the classroom, directly impacts student learning. Professional development is a way for teachers to garner the skills that will help them to become more confident, knowledgeable and skillful in their practice. What we know about adult learners can help us understand and design more meaningful professional development experiences and thus maximize effectiveness as it directly relates to teacher performance.
Teacher Evaluation

Before exploring how teacher evaluation can serve as professional development, we must first review the purposes of teacher evaluation. According to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988), successful evaluation systems should achieve the following goals:

- screen out unqualified persons from certification and selection processes;
- provide constructive feedback to educators;
- recognize and reinforce outstanding service;
- provide direction for staff development;
- provide evidence that will withstand professional and judicial scrutiny;
- aid institutions in terminating incompetent or unproductive personnel; and
- unifying teachers and administrators in their collective efforts to educate students.

The purposes and types of teacher evaluation fall into two basic categories: summative and formative. The former, summative evaluation, is designed to rate teachers and make decisions about their status; for example, to fire incompetent teachers, to grant tenure to a competent teachers, and to award merit pay to superior teachers. Formative evaluation is designed to help teachers develop professionally and improve their performance and is on-going throughout the process (Educational Research Services, 1998).
The categorical type of evaluation most commonly used by school districts to evaluate its teachers is summative evaluation. Most summative evaluation systems are characterized by top down communication, in which the only evidence of teacher performance is that which is collected by an administrator during classroom observation (Bloom and Goldstein, 2000, p. 21). Typically, a principal or other supervisor conducts an observation, takes notes, writes up the observation, and provides feedback to the teacher on her performance. In the absence of clear evaluative criteria or benchmarks, the feedback is likely to be of little help to the teacher. And depending upon the nature of the relationship between the administration and the teachers of the district, the process may be perceived as negative and just one more opportunity to find fault (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Despite the apparent shortcomings of current practices in the area of evaluation, it is a necessary exercise that is mandated by California State Law. There are several studies that illuminate the concept of evaluation as professional development (Waxman & Huang, 1997; Peace & Sprinthall, 1998; Urbansky, 1998; Warren, 1982). The issues they raise range from training of evaluators, to attitude of the evaluator, to frequency of evaluation, to goal-setting and teacher "buy-in". Thematically, they are all factors or variables that can affect the effectiveness of the evaluation process as a tool for professional development.
Determining Factors of Evaluation

The first of these factor studies was provided by Peace and Sprinthall (1998, p. 5), as it addresses the issue of training experienced staff for the specific task of supervising, observing and evaluating new staff members. Although this study involved school counselors, the connections to the teaching profession seems applicable. Researchers took eleven volunteers, both experienced and tenured counselors, and offered extensive professional development training at a nearby college institution in preparation for the function of supervising new school counselors. Researchers used cognitive developmental and supervisor skill measures to determine changes, growth and improvement. Their results convinced them that the counselors trained in evaluation were now better suited for the assignment of supervising novice counselors. In addition to the training's direct benefit, there were also important ancillary benefits. The experienced counselors felt that the systematic training improved their own counseling skills (p. 5).

In another example, Bryant and Currin (1995) offer a case study provides evidence which demonstrates how valuable prior experience is in the job of evaluating a teacher. Looking at six expert and six novice evaluators, researchers found distinct differences in the manner in which the job of evaluation/assessment was completed. The predominant style of the experts was to share with the teacher the job of analyzing and interpreting the classroom experience. The implication is that this shared
constructivist method could impact on teachers more positively than the prescriptive style characterized by novice evaluators (p. 250). If the researchers' hypothesis is true, then the next step could possibly be that expert evaluators do a better job because they are more positively received by the teachers they evaluate. Taking this position a step further, this more positive standing would then make the evaluation process more collaborative and constructive than threatening. Ultimately one might say that expert evaluators might produce more positive growth and development in the teachers they evaluate.

Another piece in the role of evaluator segment is a study that focuses on the attitude the evaluator brings to the process and how it can affect the outcome. This inquiry (Gordon, Meadows & Dyal, 1995), focuses on the attitude principals have of teacher observations-evaluations. Researchers sent 100 questionnaires to principals in three states. Sixty percent of the respondents expressed that they felt the process was useful. However, thirty percent were either neutral or negative about the value of the process. The ramifications of these neutral/negative perceptions are significant. If a principal views the job of completing an evaluation as having little or no value, then the manner and the spirit in which the observation is done could be compromised (Gordon et al., 1995, p. 9).

Another major factor is the need for systematic and on-going observation, evaluation and feedback. A study by Ulrich Reitzug (1997) in which he reviewed text books intended to prepare
administrators for the job of supervising teachers, offers findings
which could explain why the evaluation process is what it is today.
The themes that emerged from the study of the texts were as
follows: the principal is expert and superior, teachers are
deficient and voiceless, teaching is a fixed entity, and
supervision is a discrete intervention (p. 336). Although several
of the findings have application to my inquiry, I would like to
focus on the latter point: supervision as a discrete intervention.
Reitzug found the texts to treat observation and evaluation as if
they were an intervention limited to a specific beginning and end
time, rather than on-going or continuous in nature. Judith Warren
(1982) writes, as cited in the Reitzug study, that "high success"
schools were characterized by the norm of continuous improvement,
emcompassing an expectation of analysis, evaluation and
experimentation. High success teachers engage in frequent and
mutual observation and critique of teaching according to Warren.

Similarly in support to the argument for on-going, frequent,
and systematic evaluation and feedback, Waxman and Huang (1997)
found that effective schools demonstrated improved classroom
instruction by using feedback from systematic classroom
observations and learning environment measures to help teachers to
understand their current instructional strengths and weaknesses.

A doctoral dissertation by Contreras (1997) explored ways to
improve teachers' attitudes toward the evaluation process through
explicit training and goal-setting. Contreras found positive, yet
modest, evidence that teachers are more likely to perceive teacher
evaluation as effective when they are actively involved in their evaluations. The research illuminates the strong connection between knowledge of the evaluation process and involvement in the process and the teacher's perception of the effectiveness of the experience.

The results suggest there is a kind of chain reaction that goes into effect beginning with training, that leads to greater participation, which ultimately leads to empowerment and more positive views by teachers of the evaluative process. When teachers have a more positive view, through what may colloquially be called "buy-in," there is a greater likelihood that the process will be interpreted by the teacher as a constructive use of time and effort. Ultimately, the goal of any evaluation should be that the information revealed in the evaluation be used by the teacher to develop a more enlightened practice (Urbansky, 1998).

For clarification, it may be necessary to reiterate that if the variables or factors were to be addressed and rectified, they would serve to make evaluation more effective as professional development. However, for the sake of organization, I have viewed these factors more as points within the traditional structure of teacher evaluation. In the next section, alternative measures are explored that generally fall outside the boundaries of the more summative style of teacher evaluation, measures that could further strengthen the connection between evaluation and professional development and make the performance evaluation experience a more useful tool for strengthening and improving teacher practice.
Improving the Connection

The most pervasive theme which develops from the literature reviewed for this thesis is the peer or collaborative model; it is specified extensively as an effective agent for both professional development and evaluation. The Russian writer, researcher, educator, and psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) recognized the profound strength of the collaborative experience within the learning environment.

Emphasizing the social aspects of learning, Vygotsky theorized that social interaction facilitated intellectual development and the construction of new ideas. In explaining what he termed the zone of proximal development (ZPD), Vygotsky suggested in *Mind and Society* (1978) that learners have two different levels of development: actual development and potential development. Actual development refers to students' current intellectual functioning and ability to learn something on their own. Potential development refers to the level where learners can function or achieve with assistance from others, such as teachers, parents, or peers. The areas between actual and potential development Vygotsky labeled the zone of proximal development (Arends, 1998).

If we were to apply Vygotsky's theories to the teaching profession, then we could expect to find evidence of the following conditions present in a classroom setting:
that teachers are life-long learners, each with a ZPD that relates to learning the dynamic skills, strategies, and knowledge necessary for effective teaching;
• the presence of a peer teacher or colleague who serves as the more capable peer; and
• that for evaluative purposes, emphasis is placed on development rather than product.

In practice, peer coaching or peer review (evaluation) is a process in which teachers use their own direct knowledge and experience to assess the merit and value of another teacher's practice (Peterson, 1995). Moreover, peer coaching has been described as a clinical partnership. Teachers plan lessons, observe one another, and discuss the effects of teaching strategies in the peer coaching model. Teachers choose their clinical partners; trust and respect may be as important as interests, styles, and personalities. The clinical partnership encourages reflection, is nonthreatening, and provides opportunities for assistance and support. Furthermore, peer coaching can reduce teacher isolation, promote collegiality, and encourage professional behavior (Sweeney, 1994).

In a study by Colbert and Wolff (1992) linking new teachers with a seasoned peer provides strong evidence that peer support can have a significant impact on new teacher retention rates. Especially persuasive was the impact on new teachers from under-represented ethnic groups. "No longer should veteran teachers
remain isolated in their classrooms. All teachers need to be collaborative" (p. 193).

An article written by Larry Mann (1999) provides the framework of a three-part evaluation process that looks more like clinical supervision than traditional evaluation. In this model, teachers set their own agenda for evaluation and choose an area of instructional practice on which they want to gather more information. Teachers take on the responsibility for defining the observation process and decide exactly what they want their peer evaluators to look for in their own teaching. The process is monitored by the principal, who ensures that there are substitute teachers so the peer teachers can observe one another and make sure the process contributes to the teacher's professional growth.

The process consists of a pre-observation meeting, observation, and a post-observation meeting. The emphasis in the post-observation meeting is on self-reflection. It is the observed teacher's responsibility to reflect on practice, identify strengths, and areas of improvement. The process takes more time than traditional evaluation, and according to Mann, is said to help a staff build coaching and supervision partnerships and thus contributes to creating a more collegial atmosphere within a school.

In addition to the peer or collaborative model, there is another form of evaluation that could serve as a stand alone format or be integrated into just about any of the types of evaluation discussed so far, and that is portfolio or self-evaluation. In a
review of literature on the subject, Taylor (1994) looks at several types of teacher evaluation models with a focus on self-evaluation. By using performance checklists, logs and video tapes, teachers proceed through a phase of reflection on practice and a process of self-discovery: a teacher will improve only if he goes through the experience of bringing his talents, strengths and weaknesses to the surface.

Teacher portfolios used as a tool for assessment and evaluation are an important professional development strategy that is grounded in the belief that teaching is developmental. The portfolio is an evolving collection of work selected by the teacher that shows evidence of both the teacher and students' work. Its most significant feature is how the portfolio serves as centerpiece of reflective practice. According to Evans (1995) portfolios represent "who you are, where you want to go, and how you plan on getting there" (p. 11). Since it typically contains lesson plans, student work samples, video clips, and anecdotal records, it is an accurate picture over time of the teaching the teacher wants to examine, and because portfolios are authentic products, they are used more for self-analysis and reflection (Bullock & Hawk, 2001). Most profoundly, portfolios provide a vehicle for assessing the relationship between teacher choices or actions and their student learning outcomes.

The obvious positive nature of portfolio evaluation treats teachers not as employees needing supervision and inspection, but as professionals who can provide their own self-assessment,
teaching improvement, and growth. The process of creating a portfolio can rejuvenate teachers and give them autonomy to help themselves grow professionally (Bullock & Hawk, 2001, p. 108). The use of teaching portfolios as an alternative form of teacher evaluation is becoming an acceptable method in school districts across the nation (p. 91). Some states have mandated teaching portfolios as part of their teacher induction programs, as well as many universities have included it as a central element in their teacher education programs. Furthermore, in an effort toward the professionalization of teaching, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education have integrated the teacher portfolio into its framework of advanced master's degree programs at universities. Furthermore, because of the portfolio's developmental nature, it targets the salient points put forward by Vygotsky, mentioned previously. Teachers as learners are always learning, building upon a base of knowledge to improve practice. In addition, the portfolio format also encourages dialogue among teachers and thus creates opportunities for teachers to learn from each other.

Summary

Professional development is vital to the success of teaching and student learning outcomes. Teacher evaluation is a mandatory exercise that has as its legislated intent, among other things, to provide professional development for the teacher being evaluated. There are several factors that can affect the effectiveness of the
evaluation process, such as evaluator training, evaluator/evaluatee attitude toward the process and frequency of evaluation and feedback. The peer or collaborative model is a natural tool that can be effectively integrated into professional development and evaluation practices. Self evaluation or portfolio is a positive form of evaluation that could increase teacher buy-in and improve professional practice (Cushman, 1999).
Chapter III
Methodology and Research Design

This qualitative study is based on the perceptions of experienced teachers and examines the connection between teacher evaluation and the goals of professional development.

Setting

The research took place in the Sheltonville Union School District, located in the town of Sheltonville situated toward the southern end of the Salinas Valley in Central California. The city has a population of approximately 10,000 residents who are primarily employed in agriculture and agriculture related businesses. A plethora of crops that include broccoli and premium wine grapes color the surrounding farm landscape.

The Sheltonville Union School District is a four school district, serving 2,500 children in pre-kindergarten through eighth grades. As stated previously, the four schools are comprised of a primary school (K-2), an intermediate school (grades 3-5), an elementary school, (grades K-5) and a middle school (grades 6-8). Many of the students are Spanish speaking; the population is approximately 96% Latino, with 67% designated as Limited English
Proficient students, of which 400 students are from migrant families.

The district employs a staff of 315 people of which 136 are teachers. The teacher population is comprised of 70% female, 30% male; 64% are Caucasian, 29% are Latino and the rest are non-Latino minorities. According to 1998 statistics, over 30% of the district's teachers are non-certificated. Typically, nearly half of each school's staff is comprised of teachers who live more than ten miles away from Sheltonville. The district manages an annual budget that exceeds 10 million dollars.

Background

In seeking to study teachers' perceptions of professional development and the effectiveness of evaluation, I met with the Sheltonville superintendent and asked permission to conduct the study in the district. During this meeting, it became clear that the project could not proceed exactly as originally planned. Initially, I envisioned a case study that would trace a group of tenured teachers through the nearly, year long evaluative process, monitoring each participant at key points along the path, gathering data about his/her feelings related to observation and evaluation outcomes. It was at this point that the superintendent raised the legal concern of actually reviewing the teachers' written observations and evaluations because the privacy of the district's employee-evaluators could not be protected. It was agreed that the
project could continue with only the observation and interview components.

I was prepared to proceed as planned, but encountered another challenge to the original project design when through preliminary inquiry. I discovered that many teachers in the survey population were not being systematically evaluated every other year according to contract. Faced with both of these sets of circumstances, it became necessary to adjust the study's direction, structure and expectations in order to fit the situation.

Participants

Through the school mailing system, I passed out flyers to all 130 teacher mailboxes giving a brief description of the study which I was planning to conduct. I provided a phone number and asked for those who might be interested to contact me. I also sought the permission and cooperation from the local teachers' association which provided me the opportunity to give briefings at the district's four school sites for the purpose of recruiting participants for the project. I went to three of the school site association meetings and made short presentations of what my study was going to entail and approximately 10-12 teachers were present at each meeting. At one of the other two remaining sites, I briefed the executive board of the teachers' association with the assumption that they, as representatives of others at their site, would pass the word and promote interest in the project. I was not able to meet face to face with the faculty of one of the school
sites because leadership canceled the monthly meeting and did not reschedule a meeting that would fit into the time frame for this study.

I established two criteria as pre-requisites for participants to be accepted into the study sample: each had to be in tenured status and all of the district's four schools in the district needed to be represented. I spent time actively recruiting until I had tenured representation from each of the sites. It was difficult getting participants to volunteer; teachers did not appear to be eager to step forward, for the project could be viewed as time consuming. Eight teacher-subjects were eventually identified for this qualitative study. Seven of the eight teachers completed both phases of the data gathering process, with one participant completing only the first phase (writing survey) due to illness.

Upon identifying those who wished to volunteer, I followed up by calling each participant and arranging individual meetings where I went over the Institutional Review Board's Human Subjects form and briefed each participant as to procedures, systems in place to protect confidentiality, risks, and benefits of the study (See appendix for sample of consent form).

The study group consisted of eight teachers, all of whom volunteered to participate in my study after explanation to the purpose and significance of the project. Among the eight volunteers, their years of teaching experience ranged from six years to as many as 25 plus years. There were two males and six
females; all Caucasian. The following is a list of the participants and pertinent information about each. Initials have been assigned to protect their anonymity. Teachers will be identified for the purpose of this study as:

1. "W" is a Caucasian female, teaches grade six, 13 years experience;
2. "I" is a Caucasian male, teaches grade seven, 28 years experience;
3. "J" is a Caucasian female, teaches grades six-eight, 12 years experience;
4. "N" is a Caucasian female, teaches grade seven, 12 years experience;
5. "K" is a Caucasian male, teaches grade two, 17 years experience;
6. "Z" is a resource specialist, 9 years experience;
7. "C" is a Caucasian female, teaches grade five, 11 years experience;
8. "B" is a Caucasian female, teaches first grade, 12 years experience;

Data Collection Procedures

After each individual briefing, participants began the first phase of the study which consisted of a survey of eight open-ended questions relevant to the project topic. More specifically, the following questions were distributed to each participant:

• How are you involved in your own professional development?
• How important is professional development to you as a teacher?
• What methods of evaluation have you experienced?
• How do these methods of evaluation address your professional development needs?
• Which method of evaluation do you feel is the most effective and in what way?
• In what ways are your personally set professional development goals reflected in the teacher evaluation process?

Each participant was given all of the questions at once and was allowed to develop the answers over a one month time period. Each was also given the choice of responding to the questions by writing manually in a composition book, composing on a computer word processor, or delivering his/her responses via e-mail. Each participant was instructed to respond on his/her own, without my supervision. Time lines were mutually agreed upon so that participants could have adequate opportunity to reflect on their responses. The total time required to complete the writing phase ranged from one to two hours, based on participants' comments.

As teacher subjects completed the writing phase of the study, I gathered their responses, read and reviewed the writing, and developed the second phase of the study which consisted of individual interviews with seven of the original participants. At this point, I was not seeking the answers to new questions, but reviewing the subjects' responses, asking for clarification and elaboration of their written responses. All interviews were
conducted after school, scheduled in a staggered pattern and completed over several months. Each was audio taped and later transcribed; each interview took from 30-60 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Each participant's written response and transcribed interview were read and sorted by simply matching all the same or similar questions with corresponding answers. In analyzing the data, I employed a system of color coding the responses as prominent themes began to emerge, using yellow, orange and green to identify and code the themes. Using the review of literature as a framework and vocabulary, I further studied the data within the designated categories so that I might better understand the more subtle similarities and differences among the responses.
Chapter IV
Analysis of Data

This research examines the connection between professional development and teacher evaluation practices and is intended to contribute to the argument that the teacher evaluation process should be transformed into a more meaningful opportunity for professional development.

As will be expanded upon, general themes that have emerged from analysis of the research data fall into three broad areas. The first centers around professional development, or more specifically, practicing teachers' perspectives on the importance and function of professional development. A second important theme has to do with teacher evaluation. In this section I will analyze: what the experts say teacher evaluation should be; California State Law pertinent to teacher evaluation; Sheltonville Union School District policy on teacher evaluation; Sheltonville Teachers' Association-Sheltonville Union School District Contract wording pertinent to teacher evaluation; and actual accounts of practicing teachers and what they say about teacher evaluation. Finally, the last theme centers on the need to improve the connection between professional development and teacher evaluation.
Professional Development

Professional development is very important to me as a teacher. If teachers are to be respected as professionals, we need to voluntarily update our skills as educators. K.

Teaching is a dynamic and complex activity that requires the practitioner to possess and synthesize many different skills, strategies and kinds of knowledge. Because of the dynamics of the job, teachers must have a repertoire that can be updated and revamped nearly every year. This is how Z. wrote about the importance of continual development: "It is important for me to add to my professional growth. I hate the feeling of stagnation. Plus, I feel with teaching you can never challenge yourself enough. There is always a way to improve." Good teachers are always learning, from their students, their colleagues, from books, journals, workshops and advanced academic training. Teachers realize that they will never be finished learning how to teach, that they must be lifelong learners in their quest to be better teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998; and Wasley, 1999). J. explained how professional development impacts her teaching this way: "I think it (professional development) is important because it keeps your curriculum fresh or it keeps you fresh, so that you're not starting to sound like a record that you just set on play. You need to know what's going on outside of your classroom."
In addition, to this point, a secondary theme emerged from the broader topic described just previously and that was the significance teachers placed on being able to make their own choices regarding their professional development and goal setting. This theme was echoed by N., "Professional development is important to my own set of standards to be the best I can be at this career." This subordinate theme is supported by the writing of Obrien (1992) and Schmid (1985) in articles on best practices for in-services (i.e., professional development). Namely, in-services should be voluntary and participants should help plan the goals and the activities of the in-service training. The voices of the teachers at Sheltonville reflected this theme.

I feel fortunate at my school site. When a workshop or conference that interests me comes my way, I request a day to attend. K.

I decide what my professional development will be based on what are my areas of interest. I.

The question/prompt that produced the data included above was:

How are you involved in your own professional development? However, there was one perspective expressed that did not mirror the rest, and it needs to be included in this discussion.

I am involved in my own professional development, thus far in my career, only to the point of determining when I receive the development, as opposed to what development pursued. M.

It is critical to emphasize this teacher's account of her experience, not only because it contrasts with the others, but more importantly, because it demonstrates what happens when teachers
don't feel that they have choices in their development. Teachers, as adult learners, need to feel a sense of ownership or "buy-in." Adult learners have a need to be self-directed and may resist being taught unless they are involved in setting objectives (Obrien, 1992). Furthermore, there is an undertone of disappointment expressed in this participant's response. If nothing else, this practitioner's perceived lack of choice in determining her own professional development goals is a strong example of a missed opportunity for supporting and improving the skills of one of the district's teachers. Furthermore, what if there are others out there who feel the same? The problem may multiply exponentially if one considers how lack of choice affects what skills do or do not get developed, and lack of development can in turn directly affect student learning outcomes.

It is worth mentioning that not even one participant included teacher evaluation practices as a way of being involved in one's own professional development. Yet when you examine the literature in regards to what evaluation should or can do, professional development is cited as one of its intended end products (Urbansky, 1998; Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1998; Education Research Services, 1998).

**Teacher Evaluation**

The literature supports the position that meaningful evaluation can help teachers to strengthen their skills and improve their performance by giving teachers insight into their pedagogic
abilities and efficacy and stimulating critical reflection that could lead the teacher to more a "more enlightened practice" (Patton, 1996; Cady, Distad & Germundsen, 1998).

In light of the importance of teacher evaluation, perhaps it should not be surprising that California State Law requires districts to establish a uniform system of evaluation. More specifically, school districts must include the advice of teachers when developing and adopting guidelines and procedures for evaluation. Furthermore, standards of expected achievement by grade level must be established and teachers should be evaluated and assessed on pupil progress, instructional techniques and strategies, adherence to curriculum objectives, and establishment and maintenance of a suitable learning environment. It should be noted that districts can develop and adopt additional evaluation and assessment guidelines or criteria. However, all evaluations and assessments shall be in writing and transmitted not later than 30 days before the last school day of the school calendar year. Furthermore, evaluations and assessments shall be made on a continuing basis. For example, tenured teachers should be evaluated every other year. Lastly, the law states that the evaluation shall include recommendations, if necessary, as to areas of improvement. The expressed underlying intention of the Education Code, in regards to this section, is that the evaluation process is to be instructive, with its focus on helping teachers become better at their jobs.
With regard to the Sheltonville Union School District, the official policy is published in the Teacher Evaluation Guidelines 1999-2000 pamphlet. The superintendent, by way of an introduction to the publication, presents the school district's view of the evaluation process. It's purpose is "to communicate and provide guidance to the Sheltonville District Staff (teachers), give recognition of a job well done and an opportunity for improvement."

In addition to its purpose, it is expected that the evaluative process "gives teachers a better awareness and an understanding of the challenges of their job." It is also the district's position that observation/evaluations "allow teachers and administrators to form relationships" as well as give administrators information that they may need in order to be able to answer questions from those groups the school district serves. Lastly, it is the school district's hope that the process is "a positive and meaningful way to insure (educational) success for students."

The publication is clearly written and offers specific and practical examples of what evaluators will be looking for in a teacher's performance. For instance, under the heading "instructional techniques and strategies" some of the things an evaluator would be looking for would include, but not be limited to: "teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject matter, plans for student learning; provides review in lessons and the purpose of the lesson when appropriate, teaches to an objective, models new learning, and monitors and corrects student performance."
The district hand-out also includes a re-print of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession; however, no guidelines or instructions are included, so it is not clear if these assessment tools are recommended for use and, or how they are to be used. They are merely included in the hand-out.

Further insight into teacher evaluation can be obtained by examining the union contract. The contract is quite succinct. It prescribes that teachers be evaluated in writing and in accordance with the Education Code. Tenured teachers are to be evaluated at least once every other year, the final evaluation conference to take place no later than six (6) weeks prior to end of the school year. The evaluator shall be the teacher’s immediate supervisor, the Superintendent, Principal or Vice-principal. Teachers who are to be evaluated during the school year shall meet with their evaluator for a pre-evaluation conference by end of the eighth week of school. The Pre-evaluation conference will cover: an explanation of the evaluation procedures, the evaluatee’s suggestions of areas he/she considers to be priority areas; evaluator will agree with the priority areas or suggest other priority areas.

Factors of Evaluation

I have just provided a consideration of how teacher evaluation is "officially" described. However, it is constructive to consider the stories of teachers and their experience with the teacher evaluation practices in Sheltonville. The method of evaluation utilized by most teachers in the population studied was the
traditional evaluation format. Consistent with the literature, "The teacher is observed teaching for brief periods, generally no more than 30-45 minutes, on a predetermined day at a pre-announced time, by the principal or other administrator. Observation results are recorded on a form often organized as a kind of checklist" (Koppich, 2000).

The general sentiment was that such formal (summative) evaluation is highly ineffective as a means of professional development. As K. pointed out:

Some evaluators gave me useful information that did improve my teaching skills, but at other times I received feedback that was so short and generic that it could have applied to most any teacher.

Several variables were cited by the participants that could further explain why the evaluation system is not perceived as an effective means of professional development. As referenced in Chapter Two, teachers are learners and they too need frequent, ongoing assessment or feedback. This view was similarly expressed by several participants. The lack of feedback which the evaluation process can provide, was a frequently voiced concern. One teacher, Z., wrote that:

Although I had volunteered to participate in the peer style evaluation system, I had forgotten to turn in forms to execute the procedure. No one in administration ever said or asked anything about the form, and I wasn't evaluated that year.

The lack of systematic evaluation, reflected in the teachers' own stories and the difficulty encountered finding participants
for this study who were being evaluated according to schedule, is most palpable when teachers describe the benefits they perceive they can reap from frequent feedback. This point resonated when C. wrote:

I went a year or so in a long term sub position without getting an evaluation at all. I didn't actually get an evaluation until I was at (blank), and I was teaching for three years. I know definitely that I would have been more confident, beginning each year, if I had been evaluated. If I had some advice, input, recommendations, suggestions to go on, it would have helped. It would have made for less stress.

Another variable cited that can diminish the value of the evaluation process is the evaluator's lack of training. One participant provided detailed data regarding the teaching experience her administrator/evaluators had prior to their taking on the job of evaluating her teaching. Of the six administrators who had observed and evaluated her over the years, four had been teachers and had been "promoted" out of the field; two administrators/evaluators had never taught. This is problematic, because as explained by Urbanski (1998):

Pedagogical decisions are often made by non-practitioners. The farther one works from the classroom, it seems, the more authority one has to dictate to those left behind (in the classroom). Teachers are expected to be evaluated and assisted by administrators who have little time and who cannot have expertise in all of the subject areas in which teachers teach (p. 449).

Improving the connection

The last major theme that emerged from the data is the positive effects of peer or collaborative experiences among
teachers. Participants expressed that they felt the dynamics of this experience was often the single most powerful tool for creating change in their performance. Six of the eight participants described how both the formal and informal interaction they had had with their colleagues directly affected changes they made in instructional delivery, curriculum decisions, and other professional practices. What's good for our students learning is also good for teacher's learning. That is, teachers seem to learn better when they can learn from their peers (Colbert and Wolff, 1992). K. explains the benefits of peer feedback this way:

After a teacher has tenure and has settled into his or her career, I think the help from peers becomes more important. Once you know what it is you are expected to teach and how to teach it, what is left is basically fine tuning from year to year and adapting to particular needs of your individual students. Peers become a great resource while doing this.

Perhaps, peer evaluators can provide more useful assistance than principals, who may not have the time necessary to effectively assist either novice or veteran teachers (Kelly, 2000). The more formative style of the peer coaching/evaluation model has at its core a feeling of equity between the key players. The two parties are more fairly matched, although one may take on the role of teacher for the sake of the coach/evaluatee structure. The structure is comparable to Vygotsky's model for the zone of proximal development -- with the focus on what a learner is able to do in the company of a more knowing peer. The requisite trust is there. The learner is more eager to take chances in his learning, and thus the potential for learning achievement goes up
proportionately as well. These points are reflected in K.'s comments that:

The best part about peer coaching is that everything is done from the teacher's perspective, and it's been positive. You can be honest with the peer coaches because it's not going to come back and haunt you. With an administrator you hope it doesn't, but you don't know. You can be totally honest with a peer and that's helpful.

The peer coach/collaborative model creates a win-win situation for both the evaluatee and peer coach. Studies have indicated that those who served as peer coaches found their own teaching skills increased as a result of their coaching experience (Peace and Sprinthall, 1998; and Koppich, 2000). This concept is demonstrated by one of the Sheltonville teachers regarding collaborative teaching:

It made me explain my objectives, methods and outcomes more clearly because the other teacher had to know what I was planning and how I was going to implement it. Doing everything by yourself can make you very lazy about communicating goals and means of evaluation. Secondly, it was validating. Thirdly, it was exciting because I had the benefit of someone else's perceptions, observations, views on instruction and how it works. When we were problem solving afterward, talking about 'this didn't work or this did' it helped me think more clearly about outcomes and to be more realistic. And I think it worked better for the students (C).

Summary

Teacher surveys supported the view that professional development is an important and necessary activity for teachers that helps them improve their performance and the learning outcomes of their students. Teachers enjoy and are buoyed by having a choice
in determining the direction of their professional development which enhances the meaningfulness of the activity.

The documentary data, to include State Law and district policy, indicate that one of the intended purposes of the teacher evaluation process is to provide teachers with the information needed to improve their performance. The evaluation exercise is to be a professional development experience. Yet, teacher surveys expressed that traditional, summative, evaluation rarely provides the kind of information that is helpful so that it can be used effectively as a tool for improvement. Teachers also cited several factors that can affect the value of the traditional evaluation practice, to include frequency of evaluation, attitude and training of the evaluator, and preparing and involving teachers in the evaluation process.

The peer/collaborative evaluation model is preferred by teachers, especially when used between experienced teachers. It is viewed as a more effective instrument than the summative model because it often provides teachers with the material they can actually use to help them improve upon their performance.

In Chapter 5, I will offer a consideration of what these results imply and offer some recommendations that could improve teacher evaluation practices and further strengthen the connection between evaluation and professional development.
Chapter V
Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

Overview

Perhaps it would be helpful to put this project's generalized topic -- the need for effective performance evaluation -- in perspective. For the sake of discussion, let us place: teacher evaluation as professional development—out in the larger arena of the working world. Researchers have found that a basic quality that most workers seem to have in common is that they want to feel like their work is worthwhile, that they're being productive. It is a trait we seem to all share, from teachers, to video repairmen, to engineers, to nurses, to taxi drivers (Terkel, 1974). And most workers satisfy this need with feedback that tells them how they are doing on the job. In our day-to-day life, the feedback might be as casual as a customer's smile or a "thank you" from a grateful student. In formalized structures, employers provide programs which are set up with the explicit objective of providing performance feedback that could help maintain or improve performance and help the worker establish personalized goals and an action plan for improvement or career development (Sherman, Bohlander & Snell, 1998; National Education Association, 2002).

Viewing performance evaluation from this larger perspective may help others see the issue as I came to see it upon choosing the topic as a result of the emotionally shattering loss of a colleague
due to suicide. Our jobs, that is, what we do, are often fundamental to how we define and see ourselves. When we struggle in our careers, so we struggle with our identity. As the staff at our school tried to put the pieces back together after our co-worker's death, I found I could not stop thinking about how the job of teaching may have played a part in what had happened. I particularly began to focus on the performance evaluation system, to include administrative observation, support and feedback, and its formidable force in a beginning teacher's career. Could the role of performance evaluation affected this teacher's view of the choices she had available to her?

This study attempted to give insight into the connection between teacher evaluation and the goals of professional development by using the perceptions of experienced teachers. It looked at the role of professional development and the effectiveness of evaluation as a tool for growth, and offers alternatives that could improve the evaluation-professional development connection.

Discussion and Implications

In this final chapter, I have organized this discussion so that we will first look at what has been learned from the review of literature and then proceed to draw our conclusions from the qualitative and documentary data. It will be helpful to review the guiding questions presented in my study were:

1. What is the connection between professional development and evaluation?
2. What are teacher's perceptions of the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation practices in a rural school district?

3. How might the procedures be improved to make evaluation a more meaningful form of professional development?

Professional Development

The literature revealed many salient points that provide insight to the answers to these questions. Beginning with the first of the guiding questions -- many studies show that professional development is critical to successful teaching and student learning outcomes (Waxman-Huang, 1997; Jensen & Kelly, 2000; Wasley, Hampel & Clark, 1997). Professional development works best when teachers feel that they are setting their own goals and making their own choices as to what skills they want to improve or areas of study they choose to pursue (Obrien, 1992; Schmid, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1995).

Conclusions to be drawn from the teacher surveys indicate that professional development is a priority for teachers. It prepares, energizes, and improves upon the dynamic list of skills and knowledge required of teachers in order to meet the many challenges in education. Professional development is an important part of what defines teachers as professionals.

Teachers expressed a clear expectation that their professional development plans and the substance of their goals be voluntarily set. Generally, they articulated they feel they have a choice, and that this freedom of choice is held in high regard, although there
was a minority opinion expressed that there was a perceived lack of choice. Whether this lone perception is correct or incorrect matters little because the result is the same. If a teacher believes he/she doesn't have a choice and makes decisions based on that perception, the district has missed an opportunity to support the continued learning of one of its teachers. The problem is compounded if this voice speaks for others in the district who may also perceive that they are not able to choose or design their own professional development plans, and this can directly affect improvement of teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

Professional development can be an extremely effective medium for improving teacher performance; both teachers and the district seem to be in harmony on this point. However, there appears to be little or no tracking of professional development within the evaluation process. In fact, teachers viewed their professional development experiences and the evaluation process as separate entities. They clearly do not see the link between the two. And because the link is imperceptible to teachers, the evaluation process is unavoidably surrendered as a unique opportunity for professional growth.

**Teacher Evaluation**

Conclusions to be drawn from the documentary evidence includes the relevant California State Law, district policy and applicable parts of the teacher's union contract. On face value, the three in combination cover the basics of teacher evaluation. The State
requires each permanent status teacher is to be evaluated on a continuing basis, at least every other year, and that the evaluation include recommendations, if necessary, as to areas of improvement. It also stipulates that districts establish a uniform policy and that teachers be included in the dialogue when developing and adopting guidelines and procedures. In addition, the law specifies the areas on which teachers should be assessed and evaluated: student learning progress (by grade level), instructional techniques, strategies, curriculum objectives, and classroom environment.

Specifically, the contract requires evaluations to be done and delivered once every other year, no later than six weeks prior to end of the school year. Additionally, it prescribes that there will be a pre-evaluation meeting wherein the evaluatee will outline priority areas of assessment, a type of goal-setting.

The district's position, based on its official Teacher Evaluation Booklet and Superintendent's printed message therein, states that it adheres to the prescribed requirements laid out by the State and the current teacher's contract. The observation and evaluation process is a communication tool intended to help teachers by giving feedback for areas of improvement and recognizing achievement. In addition, the process is also intended to encourage a relationship between teacher and administrator (evaluator), while at the same time providing administrators data on what is going on in the classroom. The expressed hope is that
the whole process is positive and meaningful so as to insure successful student learning.

**Determining Factors of Evaluation**

Training, experience, attitude and frequency of evaluation were found to be factors that can influence the effectiveness of the evaluation process as a means of professional development. Studies have shown that how well the evaluator has been trained for the task and his or her prior experience in the field can affect the value of the evaluative practice (Peace & Sprinthall, 1998; Bryant & Currin, 1995). In addition, the evaluator and, or, the evaluatee's attitude toward the exercise can influence the integrity of the process positively or negatively (Gordon, Meadows, & Dyal, 1995). Furthermore, specific training in the evaluative procedures and goal setting can improve the evaluatee's perception of the process making it seem more positive (Contreras, 1997). The need for on-going and frequent evaluation and feedback was cited with great occurrence, from Vygotsky's theories on learning, to studies on what makes an effective school, to a review of textbooks for administrators (Waxman & Huang, 1997; Reitzug, 1997).

Very definite themes emerged from the survey population that focus on factors that can affect the efficacy of the evaluative process: frequency of evaluations and evaluator training. Teachers felt that they were not being evaluated on a systematic basis, at least every other year, as required by law. A strong pattern also emerged regarding the impression that administrators conducting
evaluations were not prepared for completing the task, so that the process and product, the evaluation, did not seem helpful as a means of improving teacher skills and performance.

Additionally, it is noteworthy to recall that it was a general lack of interest among teachers that limited this study with a small teacher sampling. Based on some of the more negative findings having to do with evaluation, one might speculate that teacher indifference to the project might be associated with this negative view of the evaluation process. Furthermore, this same indifference may be even more pronounced among teachers of color who are completely absent from the survey population. An inquiry that would investigate these views, especially from this population of teachers, could shed valuable and additional light on the problem.

The district in this study did not comply with its own policy, the state law, and union contract in providing systematic, ongoing evaluation of its teachers, despite its imperative function. The failure of not meeting this need has a rippling effect with regard to the big picture of teacher performance. It not only withholds from teachers feedback necessary to formulate professional development plans and actions that could improve practice, it also fails to acknowledge teacher achievements. More profoundly, the absence of systematic, on-going evaluation and feedback, sends a silent message directly to teachers that their performance, good, bad or mediocre, doesn't really matter.
Improving the Connection

The peer or collaborative model is a practical tool that can be effectively integrated into professional development programs and evaluation practices (Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Mann, 2000). Vygotsky's theories which explain how we learn and the role that a more knowing peer plays in the learner's zone of proximal development help support the utilization of the peer/collaborative model for teachers. The peer/collaborative evaluation model is preferred by teachers because it is viewed as more effective as a means of professional development than the formal summative style of evaluation (Lucid, 1997; Callison, 1997). Self-evaluation or teacher portfolios is a positive form of evaluation that could improve teachers' attitude toward the evaluative process and thus could make the experience a more effective exercise in professional development (Taylor, 1994).

Most teachers in the study population had extensive experience with the traditional summative evaluation model. Their general sentiment was that summative evaluation was ineffective as a means of helping teachers improve their practice because the information generated by the evaluation was not specific or practical enough that it could be used for their personal, professional development.

Another major theme that emerged from the data points to the positive effects of peer or collaborative experiences among teachers -- calling it the single most powerful tool for creating change in their performance in the classroom. For those who had
evaluation model in earnest, they had found it to be highly effective in their teaching and success with students.

While teachers, based on past experience, feel that the summative model for evaluation is ineffective as an agent of improving performance, they prefer a more formative model, perhaps one that incorporates a peer or collaborative structure that is ongoing and developmental. Participants expressed that they felt the dynamics of this experience was often the single most powerful tool in creating change in their performance as an effective teacher. As expressed in the literature, teachers feel that peer evaluators are able to provide much more useful assistance than principals, as they often do not have the time necessary to effectively do the job.

Recommendations

Teacher evaluation practices need to improve so that evaluation and professional development are more strongly linked. The first step toward this improvement would be to make evaluation a priority, philosophically by incorporating it into its stated mission and financially by providing adequate resources so that teacher evaluation can be honed into a productive exercise that supports teacher growth.

Teacher evaluation should be on-going and continual. If administrators are to continue being chiefly responsible for monitoring the process, it needs to be a task that gets done and done well. Observations and supervisions need to be completed in
a timely manner. Administrators need to be around more than the few minutes customarily allotted for observations. Meetings, tasking, and conferences that take administrators away from the school site should be scaled back, so that they can take an active role in instructional leadership.

There is clearly a need to improve the teacher evaluation training for administrators and other would-be evaluators. Although classroom teaching experience is beneficial, it does not seem reasonable to require evaluators to have classroom teaching experience before taking on the task of evaluating a teacher. However, evaluators should receive intensive training for the job for which they are expected to perform. Administrator evaluators need to be able and willing to try and view the classroom experience from the teacher's perspective, and assume a more constructivist approach in the evaluative process. More background, training and experience is needed by evaluators so they may be better prepared to provide the kind of keenly articulated evaluations that can lead to teacher growth and improved practice. Plainly, the aforementioned recommendations are based on the assumptions that the traditional evaluation system would continue and supervisors or other administrators would be conducting the observations and writing up the evaluations. But alternative methods such as peer or collaborative evaluation could easily play a role in the configuration of evaluation. Using peer or the collaborative model could ease the burden of site administrators, and at the same
time, mentors or peer coaches would be better prepared to help their fellow teachers assess their skills and progress.

There are three possible proposals that could be adopted: one is an all-out peer-collaborative evaluation structure, another is a blend of the summative and formative evaluation, and the last is teacher portfolio which could serve as a stand-alone format or be introduced into and work in tandem with the other two recommendations. The first, as described earlier in the review of literature (Mann, 2000), is a three-part process. Teachers set their own agenda for evaluation and choose an areas of instructional practice on which they want to gather more information. Additionally, they take on the responsibility for defining the observation process and deciding exactly what they want peer evaluators to look for in their own teaching. The process is monitored by the principal, who ensures that there are substitute teachers so the peer teachers can observe one another and make sure the process contributes to the teacher's professional growth.

The process consists of a pre-observation meeting, observation and a post-observation meeting. The emphasis in the post-observation meeting is on self-reflection. It is the observed teacher's responsibility to reflect on practice, identify strengths and areas of improvement. The process takes more time than traditional evaluation, but does help a staff build coaching and supervision partnerships and thus contributes to creating a more collegial atmosphere within a school.
Besides this model, there is also the option of choosing a blended system (Howard & McClolskey, 2001) that incorporates formal summative and formative styles of evaluation. This blended system has been adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education. The hallmark of this blended system is that it does many things at once: it provides accountability, which satisfies the state, district and community, sets high performance expectations, supports professional dialogue among teachers and administrators, and encourages teacher ownership in the process, "buy-in."

Within the North Carolina model, teachers cycle through both professional growth evaluation and traditional evaluation phases that work in tandem to support each other. Districts decide on the length of the cycle, usually three to five years. Principals determine when teachers are ready for formative evaluation on the basis of how they perform on the summative evaluation. Teachers do not participate in formative evaluations indefinitely; rather they cycle through a summative evaluative year according to the length of the cycle that their district has chosen.

The last alternative proposed is teacher portfolio. This format has an intrinsically positive quality because it treats teachers not as employees needing supervision and inspection, but as professionals who can provide their own self-assessment, teaching improvement, and growth. Since the portfolio typically contains lesson plans, student work samples, video clips, it serves as a centerpiece of reflective practice. The experience and process of collecting and analyzing the material contained in the
portfolio, helps the teacher bring his/her talents, strengths and weaknesses to the surface; it is a process of self-discovery and reflection. Portfolio evaluation could help promote a greater degree of teacher buy-in, and the evaluation process would become less judgmental and more developmental in approach, specifically in the area of professional growth.

Conclusion

The essence of the message of this thesis is simple: teacher performance is critical to successful student learning. The more the teacher knows in terms of having developed a broad repertoire of strategies and approaches, the more the students are likely to learn. Professional development is a means toward improved performance. Teacher evaluation is an exercise required by law to provide the public a process to ensure quality instruction in its schools, site administrators a means to assess the teachers' skills, and teachers' support and on-going professional development. To work best, the evaluative process and the link to professional development needs to be strong and girded by evaluative formats and practices that encourage teachers' meaningful growth. The recommendations brought forth in this thesis should help schools improve their evaluative system so that teachers can fulfill their teaching potential and provide the best instruction for their students.


Appendix A

Journal Response and Interview Questions

Teachers: you are being asked to respond to these questions in the journal provided. After your responses are analyzed, interviews will be conducted for the purpose of following up with questions that will clarify and/or expand upon your written responses.

1. How are you involved in your own professional development?
2. How important is professional development to you as a teacher?
3. What methods of evaluation have you experienced?
4. How do these methods of evaluation address your professional needs?
5. Which method of evaluation do you feel is the most effective and in what way?
6. In what way, are your personally set professional development goals reflected in the teacher evaluation process.
Appendix B

California State University of Monterey Bay

Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Teacher Evaluation as Professional Development
Researcher: Cynthia Suverkrop
Advisor: Dr. Kani Blackwell
(831) 582-3301

Project Description/Nature and purpose of the project: The purpose of this thesis is to identify and describe the types of teacher evaluation practices used in the Greenfield Union School District and teachers' perceived effectiveness of these evaluation practices. A case study approach will be utilized to gather the data regarding teachers' perceptions. The research will be to follow several teachers through the evaluation process by way of journal-responses and interview. This thesis will conclude with an in-depth analysis and recommendation of alternative methods of evaluation that could be appropriately integrated into the school system.

This project will seek answers to the following questions: What are the evaluation practices in place? How do the evaluation
practices meet the professional development needs and goals of the teachers?

Permission: I ___________________________.

(Name of Participant) state that I am eighteen (18) years old and I wish to participate in a research project conducted by Cynthia Suverkrop. I acknowledge that Ms. Suverkrop has fully explained to me the risks involved and the need for the research; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice; has offered to answer any inquiries which I may make concerning the procedures to be followed; and has informed me that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

In case I may have any questions or concerns resulting in my participation in this study, I may contact Dr. Christine Sleeter (831) 583-3641, Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies and Coordinator of the M.A. in Education Program at CSUMB.

Signature of the participant ___________________________ Date _____________

Signature of the researcher conducting the study ___________________________ Date _____________