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Teacher appraisal and student feedback on teacher professional development and practices

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to identify whether teachers develop profession and accordingly assist English teachers in realising how appraisal and learner feedback affect teachers' feeling and professionalism. Teacher appraisal is viewed as an appropriate way to an improved relationship between remuneration, responsibilities and performance (Bartlett, 2000: 26; Haynes et al., 2003:75). Also, Brennan and Williams (2004) assumed that feedback from students is an integral part of the educational process. Murdock (2000:55) pointed out that a modern system of evaluation should encourage teachers to become reflective practitioners, but in some cases, it creates an invisible barrier for teachers as a result of their subjective thought. Likewise, feedback from students proved to be positive occasionally affects teachers in negative manners. With a view to addressing this problem, a study in this field was conducted with mixed methods of research, which were employed to give answers to the mentioned question, namely questionnaires and interviews. These instruments were delivered to seven high school teachers, 18 English teachers and 100 students at an English language center in Can Tho. The findings from the interviews illustrate that 100% of teachers desires to gain appraisal because it plays an important role of encouragement to the teachers, yet 83 % teacher will have self-evaluation and then try to improve teaching in order to gain appraisal once. More than 90% of the students and teachers alike agreed that the student's feedback is an effective tool for the faculty development. Majority of the teachers were satisfied with the present format of the feedback system how to adjust their practices in the real settings exposed to learner feedback.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Great teachers help create great students. In fact, research shows that an inspiration and informed teacher is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement, so it is critical to

pay closer attention to how teachers are trained and supported (Analoui and Fell, 2002). Great induction programs create opportunities for novice teachers to learn from best practices and analyse and reflect on

their teaching. It is important for novice and experienced teachers to have on-going and regular opportunities to learn from each other. On-going professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how students learn, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and more. The best professional development is on-going, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. Just as a teacher has to create conditions that support and encourage student success; schools have to support teachers' professional development. Today, professional development runs the gamut from one-shot workshops to more intensive job-embedded professional development, which has teachers learn in the day-to-day environment in which they work rather than getting pulled out to attend an outside training. However, Smylie (2014) noted that most professional development today is problematic and ineffective because it neither changes teaching practices nor improves student learning. Professional development for teachers can fall short in numerous ways, including too many conflicting goals and priorities competing for teachers' time, energy, and attention, unrealistic expectations of how much time it will take schools and teachers to implement goals, professional development training events are inappropriate in size, scope, or structure to support learning new ideas or skills. Gathering many teachers into one room for training will never give them the time they need to reflect on the material, ask questions, listen to their peers, or go through activities to enhance their comprehension, lack of support for teachers' implementation of new instructional practices. Research shows that there is an implementation gap in teachers' professional development. They may learn, understand, and agree with a new idea or technique presented in a workshop, but it is tough for them to implement that idea without ongoing support, and failure to train teachers about how implementing new skills impacts student learning. To back teachers with professional development, appraisal is often employed to create encouragement, and feedback is collected from students to bridge the gap between the real teaching context and theory.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher appraisal

It is obvious that the importance of appraisal in any organisation cannot be overlooked. The literature on staff appraisal, covering a wide spectrum of fields, identifies three purposes of appraisal. First, it is to serve as a basis for modifying behaviors to realize

more effective working habits. Second, it is to provide adequate feedback to each employee on his performance. Finally, it is to provide managers with data with which future assignments and determine compensation is evaluated (Kermally, 1997; Mullins, 2007). Although it is similar in terms of appraisal purposes among organisations, the type of system of appraisal is dictated as follows: teacher appraisal can be very complicated, involving a number of factors that can either impede or support teacher effectiveness, so teacher appraisal is receiving attention worldwide as governments become aware of the need to examine educational provision critically to ensure that it is relevant and appropriate to the needs of the youth (Motswakae, 1990). Therefore, teacher appraisal is proved greatly important since its main objective is to improve individual performance and motivation (Bartlett, 2000; Donaldson and Stobbe, 2000; Danielson, 2001; Lam, 2001; Painter, 2001; Wanzare, 2002). If employees are to perform effectively, they must be well motivated, understand what is expected from them and have the ability and skills to fulfil their responsibility. In Can Tho, very little research has been carried out to determine whether it serves the purposes as introduced. Evaluating the effectiveness of the system encompasses a wide scope, including the perceptions of those appraised. The study seeks the answer to the research question: What are teachers' perceptions of teacher appraisal as practised in Can Tho?

Appraisal for professional development has, therefore, gained a good deal of popularity for both teachers and their organisations, including School Boards as a result of various factors. Murdock (2000) pointed out that modern systems of evaluation would encourage teachers to become reflective practitioners and participation by initiating and contributing to the instruments and procedures used to evaluate their performance result in increasing motivation and empowerment as teachers develop a full understanding of the whole programme, identifying the teacher's potential for career development.

Analoui and Fell (2002) in their description of appraisal in organisations stated that it constituted a continual cyclical process of determining performance expectations, supporting performance, reviewing and appraising performance and finally, managing performance standards. Sharing this sentiment is Fisher's (1995) definition that appraisal is a process of management that entails improving the organization's performance through the enhanced performance of individuals. Furthermore, appraisal is viewed as an appropriate way to an improved relationship between remuneration, responsibilities and performance (Bartlett, 2000; Haynes *et al.*,

2003). Hence, teacher appraisal should be viewed as one of those interventions, including professional development and career planning, aiming at developing the teacher's knowledge, skills and confidence for the sake of improved performance. As such, appraisal is used as a technique to influence and control employee behavior in order to increase productivity and effectiveness (Smylie, 2014). However, the question that arises is whether staff really view appraisal in a compatible way or not.

2.2 Student feedback

The question whether student feedback is negative or positive has aroused much public concerns among advocates, which is debatable and its effectiveness is being investigated. Does feedback from students lead to the improvement of teaching and teacher professional development? An early study by McKeachie (1975) found that they did, but he also found that the improvement was dependent on specific influences. First, it depended on whether the ratings revealed something new to the teacher. Second, it relied on whether the teacher was motivated to improve. Third, it was also dependent on whether the teacher knew how to improve. It seems clear that ratings will be more likely to produce a salutary effect when discussed with the teacher by a sympathetic, knowledgeable faculty member or teaching improvement specialist who can reassure the teacher that other problems are not insurmountable and offers appropriate counsel on ways to improve instruction. For example, low ratings on items like moving while lecturing or maintaining eye contact with students provide the instructor with clear signals as to what action to take. The University of California at Berkeley has developed an inexpensive yet effective approach tailored to the needs of individual faculty members, based on a twenty-four-item student rating forms which probe particular teaching behaviors as a starting point. The guides include very specific descriptions of successful teaching practices, matched to the instructor's lowest-rated items. Thus, faculty members were provided with simple, proved and practical suggestions that can be used immediately to improve their teaching (Wilson and Western, 2001). Using online feedback from students has not been examined yet. Brennan and Williams (2004) assumed that feedback from students is an integral part of the educational process. All teachers use it even if it is nothing more than noting the bored expressions in the eyes of students in front of the teacher. Nevertheless, the contexts of learning within higher education are changing radically with the role that student feedback performs.

2.3 Teachers' perceptions of teacher appraisal and student feedback on their professional development and practices

Many schools are attempting to improve teacher quality or develop their staff *with* implementing a system for student feedback and teacher appraisal, which were considered one of the most powerful and effective tools available to boost teachers' professionalism. However, how to be professional is hard to grasp. There is still significant gap between what works *in theory*, and what happens *in classrooms*. Undeniably, if we want to drive improvement in our outcomes, behavior change is our challenge. *Student* feedback is perhaps the most valuable part of the equation. Since Hattie's (2002) comprehensive meta-analysis of 'what works' in driving student outcomes, feedback has been empirically established as the single biggest driver of improvement. Given the persistent recurrence of feedback as a vital component of successful learning and development across fields, there is little cause to question whether or not the value of feedback would translate to be as valuable for teachers as it is for their students, and in fact evidence shows that to be true.

Turning to teacher appraisal, there are many emerging contributions to the professional development of a teacher. It is widely accepted to be helpful to identify and discuss the purposes of teacher appraisal as practised in schools with a view of establishing its relevance and effectiveness. Furthermore, it helps assess the effectiveness of appraisal in addressing the professional needs of teachers in respect to staff development, in-service training, and career development. Last but not least, it gives assistance to establishing teachers' perceptions and opinions about the current system of appraisal with a view to contribute to the development of a model for effective teacher appraisal in different schools. As has been highlighted in this paper, teaching that leads to improved student outcomes requires various methodologies and is best developed through a range of associated strategies including personal development, professional learning, and performance appraisal (Goe, 2013). To meet these commitments, teachers need to know how well they are doing and what they would like to see to be done better.

Student feedback is an important part of this process. The feedback also provides teachers with ideas and incentives to make further improvements. From what has been discussed, a need for doing a study in realizing teachers' perceptions of teacher appraisal and student feedback could be executed to investigate whether it works in accelerating teacher professional development and practices, which is feasible

in the current context. It has been argued in this paper that the key to effective appraisal is getting the balance right between assessing performance and assisting personal development with the complexity of evaluating performance appraisal and its impact on teacher effectiveness and acknowledges a need for further research in this area. Bearing in mind that performance appraisal, teacher standards and professional learning are difficult to implement, these influences need to be considered as part of a wider, more complex web of factors that impact in significant ways upon the work of teachers, and the learning that happens in schools (Tuinamuana, 2011, p.79). As a result, it is necessary that student feedback should be investigated to answer the question whether it can be feasible to develop teacher profession.

3 METHODS

In this study, questionnaires were used to gather the satisfaction of students about being asked to give feedback to teachers and interviews were also used for both teachers in person and students via telephones to collect data about whether appraisal and feedback help teachers develop professionally. This part is concerned with the methodology in which research was conducted. To begin with, the research question: How do teacher appraisal and student feedback impact on teacher professional development?

3.1 Research design

This is a descriptive study conducted to investigate the impact of teacher appraisal and student feedback on teacher professional development and practices. The current study was designed as a qualitative study.

3.2 Participants

The participants for teacher appraisal research were ten teachers at diverse schools and two principals. They were five male teachers and five female ones at high schools and foreign language centers. Samples were randomly selected in different schools, so there were a variety of contexts, which increased the reliability and validity of the samples.

The data for student feedback would be gathered in a Foreign Language Center in Can Tho, Vietnam. Quantitative research design is used. The study further uses random sampling to choose a sample of 100 respondents including participants in five different courses such as IELTS, B1 classes, and 10 English teachers as it provides equal opportunity for all students in the population to be chosen and participate in the sample.

3.3 Instruments

The questionnaire used in the study was constructed for students in order to gather the data of student feedback. In addition to the questionnaires, individual interviews would be designed for the study. Each interview lasted for about 10 minutes. The researcher met the teacher interviewees in person and students via telephones to collect data and recorded the data.

In-depth interviews were utilized to investigate teachers' perception about appraisal and its influence on their professional development. This was very helpful to collect more information and explore the complex in-depth data. The interviews could allow the researchers to investigate phenomena that were not directly observable, such as student' self-report perception or attitude (Gass and Mackey, 2000). By interviewing, the interviewer could clear up a misunderstanding about the questions and keep the respondents on track of providing only essential information. Kumar and Phrommathed (2005) points out that interviews help to settle some kinds of information which would be impossible to be obtained by another means, such as information about a person's past experience or people' perception. Each interview with the teacher lasted for 15 minutes either via phones or in person.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The study was carried out by applying Excel tool for data processing. The data would be analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis of the questionnaire and interview data was computerized. As data were collected from teachers in the schools, variations in the responses to questions were carefully examined. The questionnaire was verified and piloted to 3 teachers and 10 students before used officially, so it was reliable with Cronbach's alpha 0.72. For the analysis of qualitative data, tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed. Data were then coded by reading through the field notes and making comments. From the themes identified initially, patterns and categories were also identified and described. In terms of validity, it was ensured through triangulation whereby survey data were verified by interview data. Respondents were representative of different post levels. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes made during the interviews were used to verify the data collected during interviews.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Teacher appraisal

There are many positive aspects when the teachers gain the appraisal from the school master or merit

certificates from school departments of education and training. Teachers usually expect to be handed the rewards and promoted with somehow higher salary. Therefore, they have never stopped to make excessive efforts as inner and outer drives. The findings from the interviews illustrate that 100% of teacher desire is to gain appraisal because it plays an important role of teachers' motivation and encouragement. This is depicted as the fact that 100% of participants considered appraisal as a great prestige in professional development. Although the participants were selected in different contexts such as high school, college and university, they have the same ideas that the appraisal for teachers is very important. *"It motivates teachers to strive to teach well"* interviewee one claimed. She also emphasized *"Of course, I would like to be rewarded for being very proud and I will strive for and actively participate in competitions held by the educational organization"*. The principles revealed that *"There should be more compensation for the teaching staff so that they can be wholehearted with the teaching career"*.

In terms of teachers who had not been offered appraisal yet, 83% of teachers would have semester self-evaluation and then tried to improve teaching in order to gain appraisal once in a year. The 10th interviewee stated:

"First of all, it must be affirmed that the reward will definitely come to those who have been struggling for. Previously, if a teacher did not receive the award, he or she still admired his or her colleagues for their achievements. He constantly asked himself what good things he had to accomplish. He was not jealous or wants to quit, but he always tried to improve himself. As a young teacher, he had good health, time and enough enthusiasm to try to fulfill his duties excellently. From the perspective of his job, he thought he could not accomplish the same work as other senior teachers could do with his senior years of work, but in another aspect, he could do the work on his own. Learning from those who were ahead was probably the most important things for success, because they taught me the most necessary knowledge and experience to improve my specialty. The important thing to learn from others was to use it flexibly".

As can be seen, 27% teacher said that if they were not awarded since they did not know the appraisal system. It was normal because it did not impact on their lives. However, they would be happy if they received appraisal at least once a year. They would try their best to be awarded in the future. In general, teacher appraisal had a great contribution of teacher professional development because it boosted teach-

ers' material life, spirit and educational career missions. All of participants, after being interviewed, agreed that appraisal was very important for their job because it promoted their enthusiasm in teaching. The interviews also demonstrated that there was a variety of methods to compliment such as non-monetary rewards, training qualification, compliment certificates, and bonus.

Teacher appraisal focused upon relatively direct outcomes including monetary rewards and career advancement, teachers' development needs, and a variety of non-monetary rewards. Up to 78% of the teachers surveyed told about the training to polish their technical knowledge and field-related affairs as they were aware of documents assigned by the superior levels. Direct monetary impacts such as bonuses, may be coupled with longer-term monetary outcomes through career advancement. Additional aspects discussed were the actions taken by school principals when specific weaknesses were identified. Seven specific outcomes that rewarded and/or affected teachers and their work were identified from teacher appraisal: a change in salary, a financial bonus or another kind of monetary reward, opportunities for professional advancement, a change in the likelihood; public recognition from the school principal and other colleagues, changes in work responsibilities that make teachers' jobs more attractive, and a role in school development initiatives (Smylie, 2014). These are presented in the interviews which show the perception of teachers reporting changes in these outcomes following appraisal. In interpreting the data, it should be kept in mind that the percentages only represent teachers who received appraisal in their schools.

4.2 Student feedback

More than 90% of the students and teachers alike agreed that the student's feedback is an effective tool for the faculty development. Majority of the teachers were satisfied with the present format of the feedback system and agreed that it sensitized them toward the students' need. Among 15 teachers having participated in the interviews, only 1 of them regarded feedback that they received from their students not as a development tool for their profession while 93.3% agreed that it was good to receive feedback compared to 98% of students admitting it was acceptable to give feedback. Of all, only 3 teachers (20%) admitted that they feel uncomfortable, hurt or totally disappointed of their students' feedback, especially negative feedback.

Noticeably, 100% said they would change their teaching method if the feedback was not good. They claimed that it was not all their faults, but accounted

for other factors. The others said that they had to look back to their teaching methods and tried to have more conversations to understand and integrate into their students. Only one teacher stated that he would adjust his teaching method and showed more care for his students. For the teachers with unproductive feedback, it was time for them to adapt and adjust their teaching method to fit the context.

In general, student feedback helped teachers grow as they can know their students' reactions to their teaching practices and had solutions to make it better. Once the feedback was not satisfactory, the underlying causes could be found, and adjustment was going to be applied to mitigate the gap, boosting the teaching quality. If the feedback was good enough, this would create intrinsic motivation for teachers to become more professional.

The majority of the students (88%) agreed that their teacher affected their performance positively. Eighty percent of the students thought that teachers' motivation had strong influences on their skills, especially speaking ability. When the students were asked which factors satisfied them the most among the factors listed, more than half of them (67%) viewed classroom atmosphere created by their teacher made them excited. Of 40% claimed that they like their teacher both teaching and personal style.

Up to 70% revealed that they liked the way their teacher showed them how to recognize and correct their mistakes that bring them away from a feeling of losing face. Only a small number of the students (27%) thought that their confidence could affect their speaking ability. Last but not least, the students reported that their performance was also affected by teacher's feedback during speaking activities and the pressure to perform well. Thirty-five percent of the students stated that they were not more worried about making mistakes when speaking English.

Nearly a half of students who were asked attributed their professional teachers to the technical knowledge as they expected their teachers to be the one helping them to unveil any mystery. Punctuality or appropriate behaviors were also mentioned to help teachers to be professional in students' view. If the teacher was able to implement fun activities in their classroom, it would be great practices as their students preferred to laugh and join in more activities while studying, which occupied 15% in total (humor).

5 DISCUSSION

From the analysis and interpretation of the findings of this study, it was clear that teacher perceptions

about the current teacher appraisal and student feedback as practised in Can Tho schools were varied with a tendency towards positive views, but only marginally. Many respondents seemed to be ill-informed about the gist of the appraisal process, as was evident from the unexpectedly substantial percentages which the option 'no opinion' attracted in most of the questionnaire items. It is, therefore, evident that major tasks still lie ahead in establishing the general professional commitment of teachers to the appraisal process, with due acknowledgment of the good work already done, which is in line with Murdock (2000:55) encouraging teachers to become reflective practitioners and participation. However, as indicated below, particular aspects of the appraisal should be addressed. Firstly, the findings have indicated that clarity of purpose plays a crucial role in appraising teachers. However, in the current system, there is a need to enhance the clarity through training and collaboration. This understanding helps make the teacher aware of personal benefits as well as those benefits that accrue to the school as an organisation. If the teachers know and understand the purposes of teacher appraisal, they are bound to be committed and this may improve their performance of day-to-day duties. In other words, an effective teacher appraisal system should enable teachers to gain more knowledge and skills so that they may be empowered and thus confident in their delivery. The interview findings clearly suggested that there is a need to inform teacher with the appraisal system. There will always be a need for measures to determine whether or not teachers are doing their job well. Importantly, these measures should reflect and respect the prestige of teachers. Regarding student feedback, there are still some teachers who are unwilling to receive feedback from students although they think that student feedback is crucial in teacher professional development. Measures should be come up with to tackle the existing problems. More interestingly, several teachers did not accept that they had to change their teaching method and denied all student feedback, which had to be corrected for better education, benefiting both teachers and students.

The feedback from students was practical and helpful for the teachers to adapt. Whether the feedback from students is good or bad is equally important as it gives suggestions for teachers to look back their teaching context to advance their professionalism (McKeachie, 1975). If there is something wrong happening during the teaching time, it can be fixed to create a perfect learning environments for students. If it is going on the right way, teachers continue to develop themselves.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The following points are the conclusions derived from the study. First, through the appraisal as practised in Can Tho schools, teachers can gain increased knowledge and skills, which ultimately enhance their performance in their daily duties in the schools. Most importantly, the appraisal creates chances for the teachers to positively move towards the teaching profession. Second, many teachers do not understand the purposes or practices of the current teacher appraisal due to lack of orientation and training, and then they could be aware to develop it further. This constitutes an important and urgent avenue for in-service teacher training. Lastly, those without appraisal may struggle for better teaching profession, being a key factor to the overall educational development in which appraisal is viewed as an appropriate way to an improved relationship between remuneration, responsibilities and performance (Bartlett, 2000; Haynes *et al.*, 2003). However, the teacher appraisal system should be periodically reviewed to keep it in line with changes that may have taken place in the education system.

Student feedback on teaching can heighten instructional effectiveness and thereby improving the quality of education. There is enough evidence to indicate that student feedback provides reliable and valid information to assist teachers in ladder up. There is also enough empirical evidence to indicate that the likelihood of improvement increases when teachers can turn to the expertise of a consultant to interpret the student feedback, to discuss specific teaching behaviors open to improvement, and to recommend specific behavioral change strategies (Tuinamuana, 2011). Student feedback on teaching falls far short of a complete assessment of a teacher's teaching contribution. But if teaching is to be improved, a systematic measure of student views can hardly be to improve the academy. To put it another way, the opinion of those who eat the dinner should be considered if we want to know how it tastes, which is similar to getting feedback in academic settings. To monitor and make improvements, the school needs feedback on student experiences committed to providing students with an outstanding learning and teaching experience, programs of study that are challenging and of international caliber, and opportunities and support to achieve your academic and personal potential

By doing this, teachers may get more information about their students and come up with appropriate solutions for more successful lessons although there is a problem that some teachers subjectively assume that they are qualified enough and refuse to improve their teaching practices in other regions in Vietnam

due to some personal reasons. Consequently, further research is needed to have more profound investigation into teacher appraisal and student feedback to facilitate teacher professional development.

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