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THE NEW PROVISIONS OF THE ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND THEIR IMPACTS ON TEACHER’S MORAL, INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

Abstract

Classroom evaluation is a controversial topic. The new version of the Annual Professional Performance Review ties teacher’s effectiveness to their students’ scores on high stake tests. Teachers think that this provision and many others in the new Annual Professional Performance Review are unfair and serve no rational purpose. This study evaluates the impact of this new evaluation system on school climate and on teachers according to gender and tenure status. Previous studies have not considered these variables, and this study will add new light to the literature.

Introduction/ Background/ Problem

In 2010, the legislators passed section 3012-c of Education Law. It changes the existing Annual Professional Performance Review. This new law requires, school districts and BOCES to conduct an APPR on each teacher which will result in a single composite effectiveness score and a rating of “*Highly Effective”, “Effective”, “Developing*”, or *“Ineffective”*. In addition, 40% of the composite score of effectiveness will be based on student achievement measures. The new evaluation system also includes a Teacher Improvement Plan for “*developing”* and “*ineffective”* teachers. After 2 consecutive annual *“Ineffective”* ratings, school officials will begin procedure to dismiss the teacher. This new system holds teachers accountable for the failure of their students. It is supported by both parents and politicians. Nonetheless, teachers are scared of it. In their estimation, it aims essentially at finding fault with them and possibly dismissing them.

Purpose

This study will examine the impact of the new Annual Professional Performance Review on teacher’s instructional practices, on test design, test difficulty level and teacher’s flexibility on scores. In addition, it will examine their daily disposition which encompasses their moral, preparedness, and emotional state. These factors will impact school climate, which we will also consider in this study.

Importance of this Study

Existing literature on evaluation of professionals in the teaching profession are legion. None of them examines the impact of the new mandates of the Education Law passed in 2010 on teachers and school climate. Not only we will do that in this study, we will also look for correlation between and among the variables. Therefore, it will create more research based knowledge for future researchers, policy makers, school administrators and teachers.

Research Design

This study will take place in a large suburban high school on Long Island, New York. Our sample includes one hundred eighty teachers. Sixty five percent of them are females and thirty five percent are males. They are of different experience levels. Eighty two percent are tenured, eighteen percent are not. They are members of the local union, which is a chapter of the New York State Union Teacher. To find out the effects of the new Annual Professional Performance Review on teachers, we will examine teachers’ perception concerning APPR as it relates to the following 4 variables:

* Instructional practices (teaching method, lessons plans, extra help)
* Testing and scoring practices
* Teacher’s disposition
* School Climate.

Each participant will fill out a questionnaire during a scheduled monthly faculty meeting. We will use the quantitative method to analyze the data. We will calculate the mean scores and standard deviations for the responses. Independent t- test will be performed to analyze the results. If the mean values differ significantly on the four variables by gender and tenure status. We will perform a correlation analysis to find out if there is any relationship between and among the variables.

Expected Results

We expect this new evaluation system to have significant impact on teachers. In faculty meetings, school board meetings and union meetings teachers express openly that the new evaluation system is retaliatory and punitive and is not a necessary tool for grades improvement. Under the new system teachers are responsible for their students’ failure and consequently may face dismissal in case of 2 consecutive “*ineffective”* evaluations. Teachers are, therefore, expected to take precautionary measures to defend their career and their livelihood. They may modify their instructional practices. They may decrease the level of difficulty of assessments and be more lenient in scoring to improve scores. We anticipate teachers to no longer enjoy reporting to work, since they are under constant pressure to improve grades as if grade improvement is their sole responsibility. Perhaps, they will no longer enjoy some of the inherent benefits of having tenure, such as: stability, peace of mind and guaranty of employment. Finally, a shift in school climate will probably be the corollary of these numerous simultaneous changes.

Literature Review

The scarcity of literature on the Annual Professional Performance Review is by no means an indication of the lack of interest that it generates. As an evaluation tool of teachers and administrators, APPR has been in effect for years. The new provisions of its 2010 amended version however, made it one of the most contested issue in education in recent years.

Dossett, D., and Munoz, M. A. (2003) in a study titled “*Classroom Accountability* “ identifies effective and ineffective elementary school classrooms based on student and teacher characteristics. Teacher's effectiveness in reading and mathematics was associated with exceptional measured performance above or below that which would be expected from students across the district. The findings of the multiple regressions indicate that previous test scores was the strongest predictor of student achievement.

In an article titled “*The High Stakes of Teacher Evaluation*” Jack Schneider (2012) reflects on the use of student achievement data as part of teacher effectiveness ratings and evaluations in the U.S. The author looks at arguments relating to the impact of this controversial measure on teachers' job security and the high stakes involved.

Tying teacher’s effectiveness to student’s success is not a new idea. It was introduced 1912, administrators responded enthusiastically to it. Walter, F. B (1975). In a study titled “*Mandate for Evaluation”* the authorexamined an evaluation system that would be able to measure teacher's effectiveness. “An evaluation system” he said, “should be compatible with the mutual job expectations of both administrators and teachers. “

Politicians for reason unrelated to students’ success want to tie teacher’s effectiveness to student’s achievement on high stake tests. However, an exhaustive review of literature suggests that most reformers in the field do not share the same view on how to measure teacher’s effectiveness and how to use those measurements to boost learning. To increase achievement, policymakers must join with educators to first create solid, objective and rational ways to measure teacher's effectiveness. With a reliable and fair tool to measure it, complemented by targeted professional development, high-quality evaluations, and smart accountability, educators and policymakers can indeed lay the foundations for pragmatic reforms that will improve both teaching and learning.

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