


2014

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Recommended Citation

Nix, Susan J. and Bigham, Gary (2014) "Impacts on Teacher Evaluations: The Importance of Building Capacity through Excellence in the Application of the Teacher Evaluation Process," *School Leadership Review*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol9/iss2/8>

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Impacts on Teacher Evaluations: The Importance of Building Capacity through Excellence in the Application of the Teacher Evaluation Process

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Introduction

Significant student learning and school improvement are dependent upon the teacher being the centerpiece (Tucker, Stronge, Gareis, & Beers, 2003; National Council of Teacher Quality, 2011). In maintaining the high standards associated with teaching responsibilities, educators are held accountable through performance evaluations. In the United States, teacher evaluations have long been a standard of practice largely determined by individual states and school districts. Additionally, teacher effectiveness has been guided by at least three pieces of national legislation, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009), also referred to as the Stimulus or Recovery Act. With the expectation that the nation's universities produce higher quality teachers and school districts hire "highly qualified" teachers, the profession finds itself under constant, critical scrutiny, most recently concerning the evaluation of teachers.

Additionally, since education is a function of the states pursuant to the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, teacher evaluation is primarily considered a state responsibility. Consequently, to accomplish the objectives of this study, a single state's teacher evaluation process was selected for purposes of analysis in relation to current national teacher evaluation criticisms. Because the home state of this study's researchers is Texas, and due to the researchers' familiarity with the state's system, the Texas teacher evaluation system, called the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS), was selected for examination.

Purpose of this Study and Research Question

In 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) created "the Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup (TEW) to combine the expertise of TEA, the Texas Comprehensive Center, Educate Texas, and the Region 13 Education Service Center (ESC) to guide the

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development of a new [teacher evaluation] model” (TASB, 2012). The purpose of this study was to research the criticisms of PDAS and associated reasons for the upcoming changes to the teacher evaluation system. All criticisms of the Texas system of teacher appraisals included in this study are of the PDAS system. These researchers wanted to know why the changes were being considered to a system they had used as practicing school administrators and had considered sound and effective. To answer this question, the PDAS must be examined within the context of the changes considered across the nation.

Assuming the importance of teacher evaluation both to the school system, primarily to the impact on student learning, and to the individual teacher, if teachers do not teach effectively, they potentially impact the futures of decades of young people in the state and across the nation. The catalyst for this research was a concern for the interaction between a system of appraisal and the impact of the social system of a school on the outcome or result of a formal teacher evaluation.

Theoretical Framework

The focal point of social theories includes group behavior and cultural institutions (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xviii). “The school is a system of social interaction: it is an organized whole comprising interacting personalities bound together in an organic relationship.” (Waller, 1932 as cited in Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p.22). When considering the teacher evaluation component of the social system found in a school, Getzels’ and Guba’s (1957) Social Systems Theory serves as an excellent theoretical framework, whereby the observed behavior is inclusive of the multi-faceted and year-long evaluation process in Texas.

The Getzels and Guba model describes nomothetic (institutional) and idiographic (personal) dimensions of an organization and provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of the social system. Furthermore, the model assists in understanding observed behaviors within the organization. The nomothetic dimension describes the institution, the roles defined by the institution, and the expectations created as a result of the roles, thus culminating in the degree of effectiveness of the organization in terms of observed behavior. The idiographic dimension describes the individual, the personality of the individual, and the needs-disposition of the individual as a result of his/her personality, thus demonstrating the efficiency of that person in terms of observed behavior. The model also provides a framework for studying institution/individual conflict, role/personality conflict, and expectation/needs disposition conflict. To be both effective and efficient, the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the model must be at optimal levels (Webb, Greer, Montello, & Norton, 1987).

Literature Review

Under the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS), teachers have been evaluated four times a year; twice a semester). This changed in 1997 when the state adopted the PDAS (ESC, 2013), which is comprised of eight Domains with 52 critical attributes based on the proficiencies for teachers as outlined in the *Learner-Centered Schools for Texas: A Vision of Texas Educators* (SBEC, 1997). This document was collaboratively written by Texas teachers, administrators and college professors who trained educators. As it was written, it contained five proficiencies and an idealistic expectation of teacher perfection.

The PDAS originally required two teacher evaluations a year, but since 2010 that has changed to an annual evaluation with an additional provision allowing teachers to opt out of the yearly formal evaluation once they have demonstrated teaching proficiency with no deficiencies (19 TAC §150.1003). When reading the proficiencies expected of Texas educators (see Table 1), the source of the foundation upon which the PDAS system was built becomes obvious. The two columns in the table represent the five *Proficiencies for the Learner-Centered Schools* that evolved into the eight PDAS Domains encompassing student learning and teacher knowledge and behaviors.

At the time PDAS was mandated as the state teacher appraisal system, 19 TAC § 150 required districts to adopt the PDAS unless a locally created system was developed as a replacement. As a result, most districts adopted the state system and the statewide system of twenty education service centers trained teachers and administrators in the process of conducting appraisals according to the design of the PDAS. This continues today, which is how a variety of persons were trained as PDAS trainers of teacher appraisers. Consulting with service centers was one way an individual could train aspiring school administrators. Others used their PDAS trainer certification to conduct training from the university level.

Since September, 2010, the Region XIII Education Service Center in Austin, Texas, has been collecting and analyzing teacher appraisal data from school districts across the state, including how many are using the PDAS or their own locally developed system (TEA, 2010). These data of teacher evaluations have been reported to the state legislature.

An expanded examination of the history of teacher appraisals across the nation includes the most recent impact of federal statutes. The increased scrutiny of teachers' evaluations stems from federal policy encouraged by two United States Presidents: George W. Bush and Barack Obama. States have been motivated by the Teacher Incentive Fund (Bush) and Race to the Top funds of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Obama), to make changes to teacher evaluation systems that reward identified teachers for their impact on student success without "imposing a uniform evaluation system" (Glazerman, Goldhaber, Loeb, Raudenbush, Staiger, & Whitehurst, 2011, p.2) on school districts. In other words, the federal government wished to reward school teachers financially for demonstrating their excellence based on student success, a value-added criteria.

Table 1
Comparison of Proficiencies to Domains

<i>Proficiencies for Teachers Learner-Centered Schools</i>	<i>Domains for the Professional Development Appraisal System</i>
Proficiency I: Learner-centered knowledge	Domain I: Active, successful student participation in the learning process
Proficiency II: Learner-centered instruction	Domain II: Learner-centered instruction
Proficiency III: Equity in excellence for all learners	Domain III: Evaluation and feedback on student progress
	Domain IV: Management of student discipline, instructional strategies, time and materials
Proficiency IV: Learner-centered communication	Domain V: Professional communication
Proficiency V: Learner-centered professional development	Domain VI: Professional development
	Domain VII: Compliance with policies, operating procedures and requirements
	Domain VIII: Improvement of academic performance of all students on campus

Central to the incentive-based system, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), altered education primarily by requiring students to be tested in grades 3 through 8 and 10 in reading and math and by increasing teacher certification expectations. Outcomes of NCLB were intended to positively impact student success at national and local levels by requiring a system of standardized testing holding schools accountable for student learning in a demonstrably objective manner. All school districts were required to hire the most highly qualified candidates for openings, but depending on the size of the school districts, this had the adverse effect of decreasing the applicant pool. Teacher applicants could not be considered for a position if they did not meet the criteria for categorization as “highly qualified,” meaning that teachers had to be certified in the academic discipline for which they were being considered. Typically, if a teacher has a minimum number of university hours in a content area, and a state level certification test has been passed, that

teacher has the prerequisite content knowledge and is considered highly qualified for the corresponding position. Once hired, evaluations must be conducted to monitor teaching effectiveness. Accountability testing in all states of multiple grade levels made it possible to use student progress data as an additional indicator of teacher effectiveness; the value-added component.

A study conducted by the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution (Glazerman et.al., 2011) explained that across the nation, teachers were being evaluated and all of them were receiving the same “uniformly high ratings” (p.1). Numerous other research reports found this same situation and included the connection between teacher effectiveness and student learning (Doyle & Han, 2012; Goe, Holdheide, & Miller, 2011; Osborne, 2012; Springer, Podgursky, Lewis, Guthrie, Ehlert, Springer, Lopez, Patterson, Gardner, & Taylor, 2007). With the documented lack of differentiation, teacher evaluation results become useless in distinguishing categories of teachers and even more importantly, student gains in learning. The Brookings Brown Center Task Group on Teacher Quality (Glazerman et.al., 2011) introduced the concept of “value-added” as an option to identify the impact of individual educators directly on the academic success of students. “Future teacher abilities to raise student scores” (p.1) are said to be statistically and reliably enhanced by the value-added dimension of evaluations. The Brookings Task Group (Glazerman, et al., 2011) found that if all teachers were considered excellent, dispersing funds to all teachers would be difficult because of the lack of meaningful differentiation. Data from various states demonstrated multiple methods currently used to evaluate teachers, including: classroom observations, student ratings of teachers, direct assessments of teacher knowledge, student state assessment gains, community involvement, and even teacher absences and late arrivals (Glazerman, et al., 2011).

The Brookings group (Glazerman, et al., 2011) further identified several problems with changing teacher evaluation systems, beginning with teacher buy-in to a system that monetarily compensates and rewards only a percentage of teachers meeting identified criteria. The group identified “teacher performance measures” (pp.7-8) to evaluate teacher performance using past performance as a predictor of future effectiveness because of the belief that effective teachers are stable over time. These measures included direct teacher observation, measures of student learning, student evaluation of teachers, and parent evaluation of teachers. A state is also required to differentiate effectiveness between teachers to demonstrate the reliability of an evaluation system. Additionally, this group proposed a complicated formulaic process to identify those teachers that would be categorized as truly exceptional resulting in eligibility for reward.

Simultaneously, the National Council for Teacher Quality reported grades in five areas (see Table 2). The report explained the five year history of tracking teacher policies in the United States, specifically; teacher preparation, licensure, evaluation, career advancement, tenure, compensation, pensions, and dismissal. Table 2 compares the grading of teacher policy scores from the corresponding years listed in Texas.

Table 2
Texas NCTQ Ranking

Area Grades (Overall Grade)	2009 (C-)	2011 (C-)
Area 1: Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C	C+
Area 2: Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-	C+
Area 3: Identifying Effective Teachers	D	D-
Area 4: Retaining Effective Teachers	C-	C
Area 5: Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D	C-
Overall Progress		
Progress ranking among states: 36 th		
Amount of progress compared to other states: Low		

Policy strengths and weaknesses are identified for each area listed in the table and in this report. Of interest to this study is the topic of evaluation. No policy strengths are listed for teacher's evaluations in Texas. However, six policy weaknesses were identified: (a) no capacity of the state data system to "provide evidence of teacher effectiveness, (b) lack of use of objective evidence of student learning as the preponderant criterion of teacher evaluations, (c) annual evaluations for all teachers not required, (d) tenure decisions not connected to evidence of teacher effectiveness, (e) licensure advancement and renewal not based on teacher effectiveness, (f) and lack of school-level data to support equitable distribution of teacher talent.

Further examination of this report revealed that these six criteria were rated on a scale (see Table 3) using best practice (as the highest indicator), fully meets, nearly meets, partially meets, only meets a small part, and does not meet (as the lowest indicator). The criteria measured and reported included: A-state data systems, B-evaluation of effectiveness, C-frequency of evaluations, D-tenure, E-licensure agreement, and F-equitable distribution. Of these criteria, Texas failed to meet C, D or E; Texas only met a small part of B and F; and partially met criterion A. The NCTQ 2011 yearbook stressed the importance of policies to "maximize teacher effectiveness" (p. 5) and noted that the critical relationship between teacher quality and student achievement is well established (p. 17). The reporting of the state's results by comparing the state with itself in a previous year is intentional to provide a context for more meaningful measurement of progress within Texas. The NCTQ provided suggestions for improvement in alignment with the identified criteria and published a response from ESC 13 for each of the findings and suggestions.

Of particular interest to this study were the analyses and suggestions for Area 3-B: in particular, to require the use of a common evaluation instrument that identifies student learning as the most significant criterion; to require "classroom observations" focusing on the effectiveness of instruction; the inclusion of objective evidence of student learning,

such as “standardized test scores” and “classroom-based artifacts” and finally, a system that differentiates the “various levels of teacher performance” (p.83).

Table 3
NCTQ Suggestions for Improvement

Area 3-A: State Data Systems	The state should have a data system that contributes some of the evidence needed to assess teacher effectiveness.
Area 3-B: Evaluation of Effectiveness	The state should require instructional effectiveness to be the preponderant criterion of any teacher evaluation.
Area 3-C: Frequency of Evaluations	The state should require annual evaluations of teachers.
Area 3-D: Tenure	The state should require that tenure decisions are based on evidence of teacher effectiveness.
Area 3-E: Licensure Advancement	The state should base licensure advancement on evidence of teacher effectiveness.
Area 3-F: Equitable Distribution	The state should publicly report districts’ distribution of teacher talent among schools to identify inequities in schools serving disadvantaged children.

Further research conducted in 2010 and 2011 by the National Center for Education Evaluation (Osborn, 2012) and the Regional Assistance Institute of Education Sciences (Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, & Brett, 2012) examined performance-based teacher evaluation systems of five states in the northeastern United States, in particular, information gleaned from all state agency websites and public documents. Measurement criteria focused on a teacher evaluation system that: (a) was required for practicing general educators; (b) was operational on a statewide basis in 2010/2011 school year; (c) included multiple rating categories; (d) used multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, such as observations, self-assessments, and professional growth plans (p.iii). Only five states met these criteria, one of which was Texas. Additionally, Texas met all ten standards falling under the four teaching domains examined by this study: (a) the learner and learning; (b) content knowledge; (c) instructional practice, and (d) professional responsibility.

Donaldson and Papay’s (2012) study acknowledged the trend in the United States for continued scrutiny of the teacher evaluation systems impacted by “Race to the Top, Teacher Incentive Fund grants, and the No Child Left Behind Act” (p.1). Their case study of a collaborative approach to the development of a teacher evaluation system in one school district identified four observations (pp.2-3): (a) economic, political, and policy

factors have facilitated the teacher evaluation program's development and acceptance; (b) collaboration has been at the heart of the teacher evaluation program's creation and development; (c) the teacher evaluation program represents both a process and a product; and (d) the teacher evaluation program's progress reflects strong leadership coupled with broad input. Notably, this school district's administrators worked with teachers and union leaders in this endeavor.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2013) published a report based on three years of work by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project in partnership with academics, teachers, and education organizations (p.2). This report began with the idea that teachers needed support to teach and when asked, did not feel they had that necessary support to accomplish more effective teaching. The traditional means of evaluations were felt inadequate because not enough information was given to guide the growth process. As a result, a framework was created (See Figure 1). This collaboratively crafted framework included three key principles: (a) Measure Effective Teaching; (b) Ensure High-Quality Data; and (c) Invest in Improvement, arranged cyclically, demonstrating the dynamic movement between the three principles. The report explains the three additional areas under each principle that provide the foundation of support for teachers in the evaluation process. This system accomplished the differentiation requested for in other studies and the support for teaching improvement, which ultimately, results in student academic success. Additionally, the entire MET project ultimately validated the idea that "Teachers previously identified as more effective caused students to learn more. Groups of teachers who had been identified as less effective caused students to learn less" (Gates, 2013, p.6) in their publication of the culminating findings of the project.

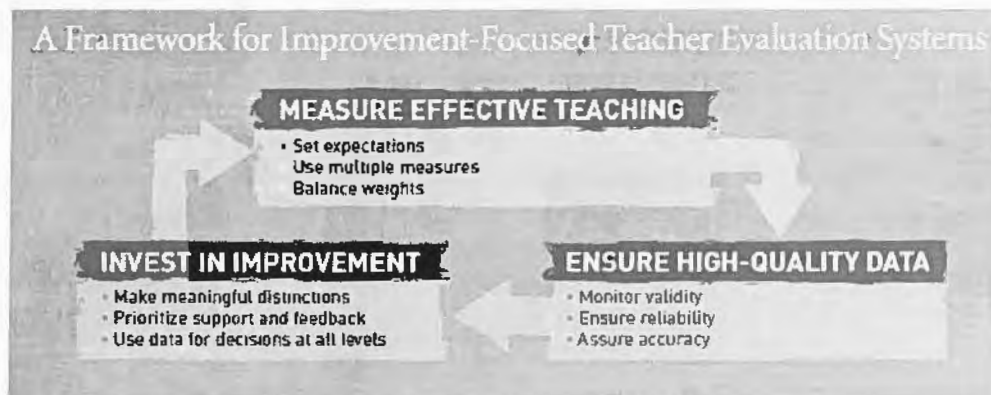


Figure 1: A Framework for Improvement-Focused Teacher Evaluation Systems (Gates, 2013)

During this time the consensus was for a need to improve teacher evaluations, at least in part to differentiate teacher performance in order to positively impact student performance and to make it possible to reward those highly successful teachers, based on a preponderance of evidence of student success.

Methods

Considering the historical nature of the evolving teacher evaluation process in Texas public schools and across the nation, the historic research methodology was employed. Gall, Gall, Gall & Borg (2003, p.514) define historical research as “a process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a past phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices, trends and issues in education.” More specifically, qualitative content analysis was used to organize the historical data into categories enabling a clear understanding of criticisms of the PDAS in relation to that data.

The content analysis utilized historical data obtained from state and national governmental studies and reports, private foundation studies and reports, state-level statute and administrative law, teacher evaluation literature, PDAS documents, materials, and associated literature, and teacher evaluation-related information as posted on national, state, and regional ESC websites. The information gleaned from this process was organized in a concise, logically flowing manner in the discussion section, primarily by major report reviewed. Then, the information was compiled into a comparative analysis table whereby the PDAS could be examined in comparison with the criteria of effective teacher evaluation systems as described by multiple studies and associated reports.

Discussion and Limitations

A limitation to the study may be that both researchers have implemented the PDAS when serving as school administrators prior to becoming faculty in higher education, calling into question a certain bias. However, we prefer to think of it as a strength because of the familiarity with the PDAS instrument, which we think allowed us to consider all criticisms more thoroughly. That said, this fact needed to be acknowledged.

Analysis of the actual PDAS used to evaluate most teachers in Texas provides the connection between what is happening across the nation to teacher evaluation in Texas. The Getzels-Guba Social Systems Theory was instrumental since this theoretical framework facilitates an understanding of the interaction between teachers, their evaluations and the school district, as well as the state. Since education is a state function in the United States with school districts serving as extensions of the states, the nomothetic dimension may be viewed from either a state or a school perspective. Likewise, regardless of the nomothetic perspective, in the case of teacher evaluations, the teacher is at the heart of the idiographic dimension. The universal goal of education from either the state or school perspective is maximization of student learning. With student learning so dependent on effective teaching, the teacher must remain the centerpiece. So in the teacher evaluation process, on the nomothetic dimension of the model, the institution (defined as either the state or the individual school, or some combination thereof), must define the roles and expectations of teachers, as assessed via the teacher

evaluation process, to maximize student learning. On the idiographic dimension, the teachers, as individuals, are critical components of the educational process, each of whom comes to the table with individual personalities and sets of needs. When reciprocity is optimized between (a) the institution and individual, (b) the organizationally defined roles and individual personalities, and (c) system expectations and personal need-dispositions, the end result, or observed behavior should be enhanced student learning. For these reasons, major emphasis should always be placed on the teacher evaluation process as it is the only measurable way of maintaining high accountability standards in the pedagogical process of student learning.

The literature clearly articulates the impact of federal legislature on the drive for changing teacher evaluations (ESEA, 1965; NCLB, 2001; ARRA, 2009; Commissioners Rules Concerning Educator Appraisal, 2009). Using money as the incentive, once a system is configured which differentiates teacher effectiveness so that all teachers are no longer excellent based on the results of their evaluations, monetary rewards can be provided. Simultaneously, research supported the positive connection between teacher effectiveness and student learning (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; NCTQ, 2011). It should also be noted that the articulated studies in this research examining the Texas teacher appraisal system were all conducted when the PDAS was the primary system of teacher evaluation, therefore, the criticisms of these studies, reports, etc., are of the PDAS.

The National Council for Teacher Quality (2010 & 2011) specifically analyzed all the states' teacher evaluation systems from particular areas stated as goals, graded the states, and published the findings. One area was evaluation of effectiveness, with the suggestion that the state should require instructional effectiveness as the preponderant criterion of any teacher evaluation. The Brookings Institute researchers (Glazerman, et al, 2011) suggested that a value-added component was needed, particularly, that of student progress in learning as recorded by standardized testing. The Donaldson and Papay (2012) study was not included in Table 4 because it reported the process of development versus the requirements of the teacher evaluation system created by a variety of stakeholders, however, they did acknowledge the impact of federal legislation on the teacher evaluation changes collaborated upon by stakeholders.

Table 4 illustrates the results of the comparative analysis between the PDAS and the other studies examined, which resulted in 24 Points of Emphasis made by the various researchers presented in the literature review. When the various studies or researchers shared the same points, a pattern emerged based on the dots placed on the table. Shading was used to indicate when at least three of the six sources shared similar points. Seven Points of Emphasis are shared by at least three or more entities: (a) multiple assessment methods; (b) differentiated teacher evaluations; (c) annual evaluations required; (d) teacher self-assessment; (e) professional growth emphasis; (f) impact of federal legislation, and (g) connection between teacher effectiveness and student learning.

Table 4
Comparative Analysis between PDAS and the Literature Review

Points of Emphasis	PDAS	Brookings Institute	NCTQ	NCEE	Regional Assistance Institute...	Gates Foundation
1. Multiple assessment methods	•	•	•	•	•	
2. Student and parent ratings of teacher		•			•	
3. Evidence of teacher/community involvement		•				
4. Teacher punctuality/attendance	•	•				
5. Differentiated teacher evaluations		•	•	•		•
6. Evidence of teacher effectiveness	•		•			•
7. Inclusion of preponderance of evidence in successful student learning			•			
8. Annual evaluations required	•		•		•	
9. Use of evaluations for contract renewal	•		•			
10. Tenure connected to teacher effectiveness			•			
11. Lack of equitable distribution of teacher talent			•			
12. Use of common evaluation instrument			•			
13. Evaluations required of all teachers				•		
14. Teacher Self-Assessment	•			•	•	
15. Four Teacher domains	+			•		
16. Ensure high data quality	•					•
17. Invest in teacher improvement through professional growth	•				•	•
18. Consists of 8 Domains with 52 Critical Attributes	•					
19. Districts can create own evaluation system	•					
20. Consistently good evaluations results in no evaluations	•					
21. Evaluations used statewide	•				•	
22. Past performance used as a predictor of future effectiveness		•				
23. Connection between teacher effectiveness and student learning	•		•	•		
24. Identified impact of federal laws on education	•	•	•			

The PDAS consists of eight domains containing 52 critical attributes and are scored after the formal evaluation process of a typical 45 minute evaluation. Each spring district school boards recommend contracts based on cumulative teacher evaluations. This final reviewed document is called the Summative Annual Appraisal. Teachers understand that data can be collected about them and recorded on the PDAS instrument for the length of their annual teaching contract. Not only is there a 45 minute formal evaluation (in most

cases) but there are other methods of data collection; walk-through observations, parent conversations, lesson plans, behavior on campus (verbal and non-verbal) and multiple other sources of data collection. Based on the information displayed in Table 4, multiple methods of evaluation are a preferred component of teacher evaluation specifically stated by five of the six studies. Trainers of the PDAS purposely include the various ways teachers are continually assessed in the appraiser training and teachers are also informed of the multiple strategies used to evaluate them over the course of a contract year in their PDAS training.

Differentiated teacher evaluation is another idea preferred by multiple studies. The PDAS instrument has four ratings categories in each of the eight domains: Exceeds Expectations, Proficient, Below Expectations and Unsatisfactory. Reflective scoring based on collected data from multiple sources should differentiate between the individual teachers. Additionally, the PDAS is scored based on quality and quantity indicators provided to teachers and to administrators. For example; if a teacher demonstrates a particular behavior 90-100% of the contract year, that could result in a score of Exceeds Expectations. Trainers point out that maintaining all the critical attributes to that degree would be impossible. Certain professional behaviors are dominant to teaching styles. Some teachers may pace their instruction every day in every class as a natural part of their personality. Those teachers should expect a mark of Exceeds Expectations if that is the case. By this definition, when scoring is marked correctly, there should be a differentiation between teacher's ratings. Also important to note is that there is no overall score for the PDAS. Each of the eight domains is a separate, stand-alone score. Again, this should have the outcome of score differentiation between teachers.

Annual evaluations are important to three of the five research entities. Texas state law (19 TAC §150.1003) requires teacher evaluations except in the following situation:

A teacher may be appraised less frequently if the teacher agrees in writing and the teacher's most recent appraisal rated the teacher as at least proficient, or the equivalent, and did not identify any area of deficiency. A teacher who is appraised less frequently than annually must be appraised at least once during each period of five school years. (TEA, 2010)

The teacher categorized in this way may be exempt from the 45 minute formal observation, but other information is collected upon which the administrator can make a continuing contract recommendation to the school board. Typically, a principal new to a campus would evaluate all teachers, experienced and otherwise regardless of this status in order to have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of teachers under his/her supervision. There are multiple benefits in this situation. Not having to evaluate all teachers every year partially relieves the school supervisor of one aspect of the job; and not having to be evaluated each year could be viewed by the teacher as a reward for work well done.

Teacher self-assessment is reported as important to three of five research entities in Table 4. The PDAS includes an additional document required of all teachers. The Teacher Self-Report (TSR) form contains three parts: Part I is due to the school administrator within the first three weeks of school and indicates the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) or, school curriculum, for which each teacher is responsible for teaching; Parts II and III are due to the school administrator at least two weeks prior to the annual summative conference. Part II contains four sections requiring the teacher to reflect over instructional practices and report them for use on the final annual evaluation document. Part III asks the teacher to list professional development participated in for the year and the impact of that training on student learning. Additionally, this section requires the teacher to set three goals for continued professional growth for the following year. This is an extensive, multi-level self-assessment completed annually and used for the completion of the teacher evaluation process.

Professional growth is emphasized by three of the five research entities. The PDAS requires each teacher to relate professional development on the TSR. Also, Domain VI on the PDAS Observation Summary is labeled Professional Development and contains four critical attributes, all of which are required for teachers and are directly connected to student performance.

Connections between teacher effectiveness and student learning must occur according to three of the research studies examined. The PDAS includes an entire domain to that end. Domain VIII is entitled: Improvement of Academic Performance of all Students on the Campus. This domain includes 10 critical attributes. The tenth includes the actual Campus Performance Rating based on state assessment scores and the Annual Yearly Performance (AYP) rating. Initially, when this rating was shown to teachers they reacted with some trepidation based on the population of students with whom they worked. However, this document was created by a large group of educators from across the state who believed this was a necessary criterion for the PDAS instrument. Student attendance, at-risk students, and modifications for students are all included in the final domain. And, since scores do not arrive before the school year is over, Domain VIII includes the previous year's assessment results. Clearly, the PDAS connects teacher effectiveness to student learning.

The impact of federal legislation is reported specifically by two of the five research entities. Politics and the federal government have demonstrated a somewhat heavy hand in an effort to equalize education opportunities for all children in the United States of school age. The state of Texas legislators evaluated the NCLB and interpreted what they thought it meant at the time. Since its implementation, teacher certification has been impacted in an effort to make sure that graduates from education programs are highly qualified.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to research the criticisms of the PDAS, the Texas teacher appraisal instrument, primarily because it has become known that the Texas teacher evaluation system is in a process of major change. As professors in educational leadership preparing aspiring administrators to assume positions of leadership in school districts, we felt the need for a full understanding of the situation. Based on our findings using qualitative research methods and the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Theory as a theoretical framework, the literature review facilitated the comparative analysis of teacher evaluation research to the components of the Texas teacher evaluation system, PDAS. Additionally, it would seem that nationwide, teacher evaluations are not showing enough differentiation between the effective teachers and the less effective teachers as was indicated by the desire for adding a preponderance of evidence of student success—a sought after value-added dynamic to the process of evaluation. Most all teachers are being reported as excellent, but the lack of student success to the same degree indicated this impossibility. If the connection between teaching effectiveness and student success is accepted, then something is not working. Simultaneously, coupled with this finding comes the incentivization of education provided by two United States Presidents and at least three laws aimed at improving education across the nation, in part by changing teacher evaluation processes.

Multiple assessments are favored predominantly as evidenced by this literature review. The PDAS encourages the multiple methods of assessment in addition to the 45 minute formal observation. We agree with the merit of multiple assessments. Teachers, like anyone, can make mistakes or have an “off” day and should not be held hostage for a small incident observed in isolation. Rather, decisions made for contract continuation should be based on consistent data collected over time with support and intervention to remedy the situation.

Research often results in the occurrence of more questions. We know what has driven the changes in the teacher evaluation systems, but we still do not know why so many teachers' evaluation scores result in a lack of differentiation between teachers. Is the reason more social or psychological in nature? Is it that difficult to evaluate a teacher and reflect effectiveness levels? Or, could the evaluation process be more political in nature? The Texas PDAS requires an annual appraisal of most teachers and allows for a differentiation in the way that principals are instructed to score the document. Certified appraiser trainers of PDAS explain the parameters clearly based on the scoring criteria guide provided to all school administrators receiving this training, so does this mean that school principals using PDAS across the state are not using the evaluation system appropriately for some reason? Further research is needed even if the teacher evaluation system in Texas changes as is expected. There are no guarantees that the next iteration of teacher evaluation will not follow this same change process without an understanding of the reason for its failure. We conclude, based on our findings, that further research is needed to uncover the real reasons for the perceived failure of a teacher evaluation

system. As professors of educational leadership we owe this to our students in order to prepare them for the teacher evaluation process as school administrators, particularly because of the repeatedly stated impact of teaching effectiveness on student success (Doyle & Han, 2012; Goe, Holdheide, & Miller, 2011; Osborne, 2012; Springer, Podgursky, Lewis, Guthrie, Ehlert, Springer, Lopez, Patterson, Gardner, & Taylor, 2007). Additionally, professors in higher education across the nation who are directly involved in training aspiring administrators need to be more directly involved in this analysis of the upcoming changes to teacher evaluation instruments. The implications for this could be that change is being made for the wrong reasons, causing additional demands on administrators and teachers unnecessarily, possibly impacting student learning negatively. This would not be an acceptable outcome of an evaluation system.

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School Leadership Review

*The international, peer-reviewed journal of the Texas
Council of Professors of Educational Administration*

ISSN: 1559-4998

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