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**STRESSFUL, HECTIC, DAUNTING:  
A CRITICAL POLICY STUDY OF THE ONTARIO TEACHER  
PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM**

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Teacher performance appraisal policies are a part of a global complex of accountability based teacher policies. This paper is a study of the Ontario teacher performance appraisal (TPA) system. First, the paper describes the education reform contexts associated with the origins and adoption of the TPA policy. Then the paper reports on the results of a mixed methods study that aimed to understand the effects and implications of the TPA policy from the perspective of the teacher. The study, based on a survey and interviews with 125 teachers focused on the implementation stage of the policy and demonstrates the disparate ways the policy has been taken up across the province.

### **Introduction**

Over the past two decades, evaluation and assessment have been fundamental to education reform efforts to create a high-quality teaching profession. To this end, reliance on the assessment of teachers has gained favour with policy makers across a wide range of countries. Various forms of teacher evaluation policies and processes have been implemented in a number of English speaking countries, including the U.S., England, and parts of Australia and New Zealand. In addition, throughout Europe, Asia and Latin America, teacher assessment has been implemented and, in some cases, imposed as part of the wider global education accountability

and quality assurance reform movement (Alvarez & Ruiz-Casares, 1998 ; Delannoy, 2004; Inter-American Development Bank, 2000).

This paper is a case study of one teacher assessment policy, the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) system, which was phased into schools in the province of Ontario, Canada in 2002. The official purposes of the TPA system, as outlined in the *Quality in the Classroom Act* (Ontario Government, 2001) are:

- to ensure that pupils receive the benefit of an education system staffed by teachers who are performing their duties satisfactorily;
- to provide for fair, effective and consistent teacher evaluation in every school; and
- to promote professional growth.

In this paper, I first outline a stage model of policy analysis, which forms the conceptual framework for this paper. The paper is then divided into two main sections. In the first I provide an overview of the local and global educational policy contexts within which to understand the origins and adoption of the Ontario TPA policy. In the second part, I turn attention to the implementation policy stage. I outline the research methods of my study and then report on the findings. The study set out to answer the question: “What can we learn from teachers’ experiences about the effects, intended and unintended, of the Ontario teacher performance appraisal system?” I review the ways that each stage of the policy was implemented, and then outline the unintended consequences of the policy, at both the individual and organizational level. In the final section, I present some recommendations for policy reform and my conclusions.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study affirms the centrality of the teacher in educational research (Goodson, 1992). Other educational researchers have noted the need for research that examines closely teachers’

perceptions and experiences of evaluation systems embedded within their professional working lives (Middlewood & Cardno, 2001). In response to this, I set out to analyze the effects of the TPA policy by surveying and interviewing teachers about their experiences with, and attitudes towards, the policy. By listening to the voices of teachers, this study provides insights into the experiences of those most impacted by the TPA system and contributes to our theoretical knowledge about the impact of education policies on teachers' work.

Understanding teachers' perspectives and attitudes about policy can help policy makers and school administrators develop and implement teacher policies that are not only successful in meeting their goals, but are also supported by teachers. As Fullan (1991) explains, "We need to first focus on how teachers make sense of the mandates and policies because there will be no educational reform until after teachers interpret the policies and make decisions based on their beliefs about the new demands" (p. 12).<sup>1</sup>

The overall finding of this study is that the TPA system is being implemented in diverse ways across the province and that there have been some unintended, negative consequences associated with the TPA in terms of teachers' relations with their vice/principals, other teaching colleagues and students. The study found that for a minority of teachers, appraisals were a positive experience and enhanced their professionalism. However, for the majority of respondents, the TPA system contributed to enhancing their levels of stress, self-doubt and anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup>Focusing on teachers' perspectives and attitudes does not preclude the need for further research on performance appraisals from the perspective of vice/principals. This, however, was beyond the scope of my initial study. More research is clearly needed in this area given the key role that vice/principals play in TPAs and current shifts to implement performance appraisals for principals and vice principals in Ontario.

## **Conceptual Approach**

One popular way of studying public policy has been to separate out the stages of the policy making process. Levin (2001a, 2001b), building on earlier policy research, developed a four-stage model to study educational policies. The stages include origins, adoption, implementation and outcomes. The stage model approach simplifies complex processes of policy making and implementation, as each stage can be studied separately before a whole picture emerges of the policy making process. The stage model allows for wide applicability in the study of education policy making at various levels. Furthermore, it can be used towards theory building through the generalization of findings about education policy at various levels.

In the first part of this paper, I focus on the origins and adoption stages of the TPA policy. The origins stage involves understanding the background to policy making, where particular reform proposals have come from and how they became a part of the government agenda. Adoption is the process of moving from a policy proposal to an approved piece of legislation, regulation, or policy. The origins stage, which is also known as agenda setting, first necessitates the recognition of a problem by government officials (Levin, 2001a, 2001b).

Out of a wide range of conceivable issues that any government could be concerned about, serious attention is paid to only a few. What makes one issue a part of the government's agenda and another not is a topic that has occupied the attention of critical policy sociologists such as Kenway (1990) and Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997) who have posed questions such as: Why was this policy adopted? Why now? Oh whose terms? And on what grounds have these selections been justified? These questions shift attention from technical issues of policy production to the broader socio-cultural, economic and political contexts within which problems become issues and formulated as policies.

I also focus on the implementation stage in this paper, in which policy objectives are translated into practice. The first wave generation of policy implementation studies adopted a top-down approach. These early (1970s) studies focused on understanding the extent to which the actions of implementing officials and target groups were consistent with policy objectives, the degree to which stated objectives were attained, factors affecting policy outputs and impacts, and the reformulation of policy over time (Delaney, 2002). However, this top-down approach was limited in assuming that policy makers and implementors act in rational ways, that the policy process is hierarchical and linear, and that success in policy implementation would derive from the articulation of clear goals.

As a result, another approach to studying policy implementation developed in the 1980s and it is this bottom-up (street level) approach, which is the focus of my study. This approach involves studying the actions of those affected by and involved in policy implementation. This approach is seen as democratizing policy implementation research given the focus on broader number of participants in the policy process, and recognition of the active role of those at ground level (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995). This has necessitated the use of different research methods such as interviewing, surveys, questionnaires of those at ground level; as well as ethnographic/field work such as classroom observation (Delaney, 2002; Fitz, 1994). To this end, I undertook a two-pronged mixed methods study, which involved surveying and then conducting interviews with 125 teachers. Before presenting the results of that study, I turn to describing the reform contexts which serve as the background to the origins and adoption of the TPA policy.

### **TPA Policy: Origins and Adoption – Local and Global Contexts**

In December 2001, the Ontario provincial government amended the Education Act through the *Quality in the Classroom Act*, mandating a uniform system of teacher appraisals. This legislation was a part of a broader set of public sector reforms brought in by the Harris government known as the ‘Common Sense Revolution.’ Central to the platform of the government was the need to “invent a crisis”, in the words of the Minister of Education and Training, to convince the public that the education system was in dire need of change. Newspaper advertisements stated that Ontario’s education system was “broken”, produced “mediocre results” and needed to be fixed immediately. Teachers came under attack and blamed for falling school standards, as well as broader societal economic and moral decline. The government used the media to demonize teachers and their unions, by portraying them as backward, self-serving and greedy, and responsible for their students’ educational failures. In protest, teachers engaged in a two week work stoppage campaign. Court challenges, libel suits, further demonstrations and strikes, teachers’ boycotting extra-curricular activities and school board revolts followed (Bedard & Lawton, 2000; Caplan, 1997; Robertson, 1998).

According to Bedard and Lawton (2000), the Harris government’s stance was driven by a mix of neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideology. Their neo-conservative approach reflected a desire to maintain social order and concern that individual choice and liberty not be allowed to undermine it. Harris' social conservatism, taking its lead from neo-conservatives such as Margaret Thatcher in the U.K., included an embrace of regulation, hierarchy, monopoly and uniformity in the design of public policy.

On the other hand, the neo-liberal emphasis in educational reform involved accountability, deregulation, privatization, competition and choice in the educational market. These values could

be seen in the adoption of policies in other jurisdictions during the 1980s and 1990s, including the introduction of outcomes-based, prescribed curricula; large scale, standardized assessments; and the public reporting of evaluation results. Other related reforms include the introduction of school choice and management systems, the privatization of schools, and cutbacks to educational funding (Ball, 2003; Fallon & Paquette, 2008; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998).

Teacher policies that emphasize managerial values such as accountability, standardization and quality assurance have also been implemented globally. These include the development of professional and ethical standards and establishing more rigorous procedures for certification and licensing. As well, mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring teachers such as inspections, teacher testing, performance-based appraisals, merit pay and capability procedures have been put in place (Delannoy, 2004; Fitzgerald, Youngs, & Grootenboer, 2003; IABD, 2000; Larsen, 2005; Luna, Solsken, & Kutz, 2000; Storey, 2000).

### **Ontario TPA System: Policy Adoption**

It is within this broader context that we see the drafting and adoption of Bill 160, which became the *Quality in the Classroom Act*. Bill 160 was designed to restructure the entire educational system and contained a wide range of reforms. In addition to initiating a TPA system, other teacher policies were introduced, including limiting professional development days and preparation time, expanding the use of non-certified instructors, the initiation of the Professional Learning Program; the implementation of the teacher Annual Learning Plan (ALP); and the testing of new teachers for certification (Ontario Government, 2001).

The *Quality in the Classroom Act* was passed in December 2001, and established the performance appraisal standards and processes for school boards to use in the evaluation of

teachers. The legislation and subsequent regulations established the framework and mandatory requirements of the system. By the fall of 2002, all teachers were to have received the TPA Manual, an 85 page document to aid teachers and vice/principals through the process, and their ALP form. The entire performance appraisal system was phased in from 2002 until 2004, when all schools were to have it fully implemented. Although the policy was revised in late 2007, this paper reports on the details of the policy as it existed when the study was carried out.

According to the amended Education Act, every teacher is to be evaluated with respect to the areas of competency, which are based on the Ontario College of Teachers *Standards of the Teaching Profession*. These include a commitment to pupils and pupil learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004). Either a school principal, vice-principal or other supervisory office acting on the principal's behalf may conduct the appraisal. (In this article, I use the generic term vice/principal to refer to the individual who conducted the appraisal.) For experienced teachers, evaluations are to be carried out once in each three-year period; and for new teachers, twice in each of their first and second years of employment.

During the evaluation year, the teacher must be evaluated at least twice. In addition, each teacher is expected to prepare, in consultation with their vice/principal, an ALP that includes professional growth objectives, rationale, proposed action plan and timelines. Each performance appraisal must begin with a meeting between the vice/principal and the teacher in preparation for the classroom observation and to review the teacher's current learning plan. A post-observation meeting between the principal and the teacher is to take place "as soon as possible" following the classroom observation. At this meeting they can also discuss other information, such as parental



and grade 11/12 student surveys, relevant to the appraisal.<sup>2</sup> At the end of this meeting, a report is completed and the learning plan finalized. The principal is to consider the teacher's response to the report and prepare a summative report containing her/his evaluation of the teacher, overall performance rating and explanation for that rating.

### **Methods**

This study draws on Natriello's (1990) framework for understanding the effects of teacher evaluation in school organizations. He distinguishes between purposes (the reasons for initiating the evaluation process) and effects, which may or may not be related to the initial purposes of the process, but are always related to the activities or practices undertaken as a part of the evaluation process. Natriello classifies evaluation effects in terms of where the impact falls. In particular, I focused on individual-level effects where the evaluation has some impact on the teacher being evaluated; and organizational level effects whereby the evaluation process or practice has an effect on those in the school other than the teacher who is being evaluated.

The survey, which is included as Appendix A, began with questions about the school and teacher's background. Teachers were asked about their experiences with the TPA system, including how the process affected their relationship with their vice/principal, colleagues and students. They then rated their experience on issues such as fairness, productivity, planning and usefulness. In the second section, respondents were asked to rate 23 statements on their personal experiences with the TPA. Attitudes about the official purposes of the TPA system were also

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<sup>2</sup> Each Board is required to develop an annual written parent survey and pupil survey, to address certain aspects of the teacher's performance. The parent survey must ask for input concerning communication between the parent and teacher about the child's learning and progress. The pupil survey must ask for input on teacher-pupil communication and whether the teacher effectively promotes pupil learning.

measured. The survey also included one open-ended question that invited respondents to add any comments about the TPA.

A total of 700 surveys were sent in packages to 40 secondary school and 50 elementary school principals with a request to distribute them to as many beginning teachers as possible. Purposeful sampling was used to select the schools in order to obtain questionnaires from the greatest variety of teachers in different schools. Principals were chosen to distribute the surveys to avoid charges of bias on my part in participant selection and pressure on teachers to participate.<sup>3</sup>

The second part of the study involved interviewing a smaller sample of teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and concerns raised in the survey study. Specifically, the objectives were to better comprehend how teachers experience, interpret and understand teacher performance appraisal; the impact and implications of the TPA system on teachers, their work, and relationships with their teaching colleagues, school principals, and students. An outline of the study with a request for participants was sent out to teachers through their federations. I also used snowball sampling to ask survey participants to recommend others to be involved in the study. Twenty-five teachers from 11 different school boards were interviewed. All interviews, except one by phone, took place face-to-face at a location of the participants' choosing. (See Appendix B for the interview questions.)

In total, input was received from 150 teachers (125 surveys and 25 interviews) from 55 secondary schools and 60 elementary schools across twelve different school boards. Participants taught in a wide variety of schools: urban, suburban and rural; some very small (100-120

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<sup>3</sup> This distribution process might have led to a lower than expected rate of return (18%) for the survey. Principals who had a poor working relationship with their staff may have been reluctant to distribute the surveys for fear that teachers would report problems with the TPA. This may have occurred despite assurances that the surveys were anonymous and that the researcher would not be able to determine the identity of the teacher, school or school board.

students) primary schools and secondary alternative schools, and other large urban secondary schools with student populations over 1200. In some of the schools the student population was ethnically and culturally homogeneous, while other schools were more ethnically diverse. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 64 with an average of 40 years. There were 108 females and 42 males. Participants included both new and experienced teachers, with the majority (almost 80%) being experienced (3 or more years). Years of teaching experience ranged from 1 - 32, with the average being 14. The vast majority (90%) were of white European ethnicity. Results showed that there were no significant correlations between the background of the teachers (e.g. ethnicity, gender, years of teaching) and experiences with the appraisal system.

### **Policy Implementation**

Policy implementation is a key stage in policy making and policy analysis. Here we can see the process within which policy objectives are translated into practice. In this study, I took a bottom-up approach to study policy implementation by studying the actions of those affected by and involved in policy implementation. My aim was to get inside the policy making process by listening to the voices of teachers - those from below - who had been appraised under this legislation. I will now review the different ways that each stage of the policy was implemented in order to show the disparate ways that the policy has been taken up in schools across the province.

Pre-observation meetings were generally held within the first two months of the school year. In a few cases, that meeting was held later in the year and as a consequence very close in time to the classroom observation. Interview data revealed that there were a variety of formats for the pre-observation meeting with some being very short (a few minutes) and others much longer (1 hour). In half of the cases (12), there was a one-to-one meeting between the teacher and

the vice/principal. In a quarter of the cases, teachers had a group meeting, followed by an individual meeting with their vice/principals. In a few schools (3), the vice/principal brought all of the teachers who were being appraised in that year together. Only four teachers (out of 25 who had been interviewed) were provided with the TPA manual at the meeting. The majority (20) said that they had never seen the manual, corresponding to survey findings.

At most pre-observation meetings, teachers were informed of the steps to be taken throughout the process, what they could expect and provided with the required documents. However, ALPs were only reviewed in a handful of cases. Most interview respondents commented on the ‘lax’, ‘laid back’ and informal nature of these meetings. Three of the interviewed teachers spoke positively about the pre-observation meeting, noting how they were reassured about the process by their principal.

Classroom observations ranged from 30 to 120 minutes. In most cases, teachers interviewed stated that they were aware they were being observed and that being conscious that vice/principal’s presence had some impact on their teaching. During the classroom observations, vice/principals generally sat at the back of the classroom or at the teachers’ desk and took notes, a necessary data gathering method for this process. Comments from some teachers demonstrate their surprise about the extent of note-taking: “She wrote copious notes” and “He just wrote out every single thing that happened.” In other cases, the vice/principal spent less time taking notes, and more time circulating in the classroom and interacting with the students. A number of teachers also noted that the vice/principal focused on examining the teachers’ daybooks, anecdotal records, assessment and evaluation binders, student notebooks and portfolios, demonstrating the focus on documentation and written materials as evidence of good practice.

A post-observation meeting is to be held “as soon as possible” after the classroom observation, and the summative report given to the teacher within twenty days of the observation. Of the 25 teachers interviewed, 10 had their post-observation meeting within one week, 7 within two weeks and the rest had to wait more than 3 weeks. In some cases, the post-observation meeting was not held and/or there was virtually no follow up or support once the process was over. Only one in three teachers surveyed claimed that they received their report back in a timely fashion. A number of comments indicated teachers’ irritation with not having received their report back many months after their classroom observation. In two cases, teachers had not received their reports even though they had been appraised many months previously or even in the previous year. Survey comments indicated that many respondents were unaware that the parental and student surveys existed. None of those interviewed indicated any knowledge about these surveys being a part of their appraisals.

### **Unintended Consequences: Organizational Level Effects**

#### *Effects on Teacher-Vice/Principal Relations*

In this section I discuss the school-level organizational effects of the TPA policy, with a focus on the teacher’s relations with their vice/principal, other colleagues and students. The vice/principal plays a key role in all aspects of the TPA, especially the professional growth function. Survey and interview results show that the principal conducted the appraisal for 75% of the respondents and the vice-principal in all other cases, except for one.

The diverse ways that performance appraisals are carried out appears to be highly dependent upon the individual conducting it. Indeed, a number of teachers stated that the performance appraisal is only as useful and meaningful as those people who are conducting it.

Overall, 10 of the 125 respondents (8%) felt that the TPA process had a positive impact on their relationship with their vice/principal. Survey data showed that there was a significant correlation between those teachers who reported a positive overall experience with the TPA, with those who had a positive relationship with their principal and who prepared their ALP in consultation with them. Four interview respondents noted that their vice/principal reassured them, provided support with completing their ALPs, and other forms of mentoring. Indeed, these teachers' experiences reflect other findings that if the vice/principal works with the teacher in a collaborative and supportive way, this may enhance teacher performance (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1998). Moreover, this also substantiates existing research on the significance of supporting learning and professional development in the development of teacher policies (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Little, 1999).

Further, four of the teachers interviewed pointed out the positive benefits of having the vice/principal see them teach. As one teacher explained: "The principal actually came into the room and saw my class in action; me in action. I've never seen an administrator since and I think it's something that's missed too often in the system, where they simply don't see the working at the classroom level often enough." Other research has shown that teachers who are seldom evaluated feel isolated and undervalued; and that some teachers who were infrequently evaluated actually preferred more frequent evaluations even when they produced negative outcomes (Natriello, 1990).

However, for the majority of respondents, the TPA system either reinforced existing poor relations between the teacher and the vice/principal or had a negative impact on their relationship. The vast majority of survey and interview respondents (80%) did not feel that they had the support they expected from their vice/principal. Seventy percent of the teachers surveyed

did not believe that their vice/principal understood them as a teacher and almost eighty percent of survey respondents *disagreed* with the statement: “The person who conducted my TPA was supportive throughout the process.”

While the majority of interview respondents (20/25) claimed that the TPA process had no impact on their relationship with their vice/principal, four spoke specifically about how the process was detrimental to that relationship. One teacher concluded that her principal “was using it as a vehicle to get me... I did not feel supported at all from her and I felt that I had stepped way out to offer support to her in various situations.” Others claimed that the relationship deteriorated as a result of the appraisal, leaving teachers nervous and on-edge in the presence of their supervisors. As one teacher explained: “When you know your worth as an educator and that worth has been recognized in previous years and then all of a sudden, with a new appraisal system, you know, from exemplary to nothing, you feel very discouraged [and]...the relations are strained with the person who has evaluated you.”

A number of teachers expressed their frustration in being evaluated by individuals who had no expertise in their subject matter or division level. Furthermore, some teachers noted that there was little support provided by their vice/principals to assist them in preparing their ALPs and achieving their learning goals. And despite the fact that the ALP is supposed to be an integral part of the TPA system, fewer than one in five teachers thought that it promoted their professional growth. Perhaps, as some critics assert, teachers were feeling a loss of professional and academic freedom to determine their own learning goals with ALPs linked to wider system objectives and school improvement plans (Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, 2004).

These findings demonstrate some of the negative impact that the TPA system has had on relations between the teacher and the vice/principal. Indeed, only ten percent of the total respondents claimed that their performance appraisal had a positive impact on their relationships with the person who conducted it. Some (5 out of 25) teachers even went so far to suggest that the process was a punitive one whereby vice/principals used the TPA to “punish” teachers, and as a threat to force them to improve their performance or get involved in extra-curricular activities. These examples point to the challenges, documented in the research literature, faced by administrators in attempting to balance their roles as supportive instructional leaders and external evaluators (Ovando, 2001; Davis, Pool, & Mits-Cash, 2000).

#### *Effects on Teacher-Colleague and Teacher-Student Relations*

Although the TPA system does not aim to improve teacher-colleague or teacher-student relations there were some unintended consequences. A few teachers (1 surveyed and 2 interviewed) claimed that their TPA had a positive impact on their relations with their colleagues. They noted how teachers supported one another and provided them with opportunities to support one another, share materials, and “show off a little bit.” However, for the majority surveyed and interviewed, the TPA either exacerbated existing poor relations or eroded good collegial relations. Interviews with teachers indicated that most did not talk with one another about their experiences or support one another throughout the process. A ‘hush hush’ atmosphere pervaded most schools, as teachers felt compelled to keep quiet about their appraisal experiences.

While this may have more to do with the culture of contemporary schooling, it would appear that the TPA system also functions to erode existing positive relations amongst teachers.



One teacher relayed evidence of positive collegial relations at her small, rural school. However, since the implementation of the TPA system, teachers had become “distrustful of one another”, speaking behind each other’s back and comparing one to another. Others spoke about how resentment, distrust, and feelings of being threatened began to characterize their schools as a result of the TPA system. These recollections corresponded to survey results, which found that only one teacher claimed that his TPA experience had a positive impact on his relations with his colleagues.

Moreover, there were also some unintended effects on students. Half of the teachers interviewed noted that their students acted differently when the vice/principal was in the room observing the teacher. This was the case even when the teacher explained that the vice/principal would be there to observe the teacher and not the students. Students were described as being more “quiet”, “hesitant to participate” and “subdued”. Some felt “very, very tense” and others “intimidated” and “afraid” by the presence of the vice/principal. Again, as with the negative impact on teacher collegial relations, the TPA system may not have caused this situation, but exacerbated already existing poor relations between students and administrators, the latter whom are generally associated with their disciplinary role.

Some (7) of the teachers interviewed spoke about how the presence of their vice/principal in their classroom negatively affected their teaching. Such findings are already documented in the research literature that show how performance appraisals and other forms of teacher evaluation have negatively influenced their teaching and relations with students, parents, principals and one another (Conley & Glasman, 2008; Larsen, 2005; Storey, 2000; Troman, 2000). Respondents described the impact on their teaching from the feelings of self-doubt and anxiety that arose during the classroom observation, a topic I address in the next section.

## **Unintended Consequences: Individual Level Effects**

### *The Stressed and Nervous Teacher*

Interview and survey data found some positive effects on teachers from the TPA system. Just over one-third (37%) of those surveyed felt that it had enhanced their sense of themselves as professionals, 20 percent found the process to be fair, and 25 percent thought it was well-planned. Interview data revealed that some (8 out of 25) teachers had generally positive experiences with the various stages of the TPA. They were supported by their vice/principals (as noted above) and during the classroom observation, they felt comfortable and confident.

However, almost half of the teachers whom I surveyed (60/125) and interviewed (12/25) noted the stresses associated with being appraised. There was no correlation between gender or years of teaching experience and feelings of nervousness in this respect. Respondents referred to both their own experiences and those of their colleagues, even the most confident of teachers, as being stressful, “even to the point of being sick”. The amount of time spent on preparing for their appraisals contributed to increased levels of stress for teachers. Two-thirds of those interviewed stated that they prepared lesson plans that were much more detailed than usual and updated their daybooks to include learning expectations, as well as other details they felt should be included for appraisal purposes.

The words of five of the teachers interviewed illustrate the degree to which appraisals have created stressful conditions for their work:

The whole process was so painful to me...I wanted to demonstrate to her my competency as a teacher.

For me it was nerve-wracking, because I felt I was being judged, and I thought my children were being judged, and you know it was stressful situation right from the start.

I felt judged. I felt demeaned, you know. And I felt very uncomfortable. For me, I didn't feel like I was going to be evaluated fairly.

I felt a lot of pressure. Obviously, you want to do a good job and the whole evaluation process is shockingly stressful.

Stressful, hectic, and daunting...to be observed for a two hour class...I was sort of sweating inside.

These comments and corresponding survey data reflect the findings of other research on the effects of performance appraisals that demonstrate the stresses and strains teachers are confronting in their attempts to meet accountability demands (Ball, 2003; National Foundation for Educational Research, 2002; Travers & Cooper, 1996).

Many of these stresses are related to the amount of time teachers spent in preparing for their appraisals. Half of the teachers interviewed spent more than six hours, in addition to their regular planning work, preparing for each of their appraisals. One of the greatest frustrations that teachers expressed was that performance appraisals took valuable planning time away from teaching. The TPA process, according to one teacher, "is an excuse in paperwork and ineffective use of time – which could be better spent learning/teaching in the classroom." A couple of teachers considered the process to be a "make work project" and that some teachers "devote their lives to making the paperwork perfect."

Respondents called the process "bloated", "cumbersome", "bogged down in paperwork" and "clumsy". Despite the fact that teachers felt that the process was too time-consuming, there was a simultaneous sentiment that there was not enough time for their appraisals. Hence, over 80% of respondents felt that there was too little time to prepare for their appraisal. Perhaps this explains why only one in three teachers thought that the process was well-planned and that the pre-observation meeting helped them prepare for the classroom observation.

Such findings echo other studies that suggest that teachers' workloads have increased, and that the patterning of teacher's time has been restructured so that they are spending less time in contact with students and more completing paper-work requirements associated with accountability type reforms, such as performance appraisals. Furthermore, the amount of time and energy spent in preparing for performance appraisals has been shown to siphon off scarce resources that could be more productively used to promote professional growth (Brennan, 2000; PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2001; Travers & Cooper, 1996).

### *The Frustrated Teacher*

Many exemplary statements were included [on my evaluation]. I was involved at the board level on committees and writing curriculum. The principal gave the final grade as "good." The two didn't connect. When questioned the principal stated, "I don't give exemplary." Even though, in his eyes, I am an exemplary teacher, I got a "good." The experience made me incredibly bitter and resentful. I should have grieved, but I just don't care anymore. As a result of the experience I have ceased all extra-curricular. It was a hugely negative experience.

In addition to increasing levels of stress and anxiety, teachers also felt a general sense of frustration about the TPA process, especially with respect to the "Look-For" list of 164 performance indicators that is supposed to guide evaluators in the appraisal process. Almost half (10) of the respondents were asked during their pre-observation meetings to indicate the competencies they wanted their vice/principal to focus on during the classroom observation on the checklist form. Some described this lengthy process as being "hellish" and "frustrating." One teacher after having spent a couple of hours working on it one evening gave up in exasperation, saying: "Forget this. This is stupid... And if she doesn't see it, they can fire me. I'm not totally incompetent [just] because I can't provide evidence for a hundred and sixty-four things."

Although the legislation does not require teachers to demonstrate all of the competencies in one lesson, some of the survey and interview comments indicate that respondents felt compelled to try and demonstrate all competencies during their observed lesson. They noted that this was a “grey area”, full of “misunderstandings” for them and how they felt “intimidated” by the “long and daunting” list. Respondents also noted that many of the competencies are redundant, vague and exceed a reasonable number, echoing concerns by others that the Look-For list is too long, time consuming, irrelevant, superficial and implemented inconsistently across the province (Cowans, 2004; Joint Task Force on Teacher Appraisal, 2004).

Furthermore, teachers expressed their frustration with the rating system. Some pointed out the subjective nature of the evaluation with respect to the rating system. As one teacher explained, “I don’t think that it is always a fair evaluation, because different principals have different opinions of what is unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good and exemplary.” Other studies have also described teacher concerns over the fairness, proficiency and effectiveness of evaluators in using assessment tools consistently, objectively and fairly (Davis et al., 2000; Natriello, 1990; Ovando, 2001).

Five of the 25 teachers interviewed commented on the reluctance of their vice/principals to award an exemplary rating, even though the principal’s comments indicated that the teacher was indeed exemplary. As one teacher wrote: “Not even God himself would receive an exemplary. I’m not sure why that category exists. Why would students take courses if they could not get a level 4?” Furthermore, a number of interviewed teachers were frustrated to hear that they had to be “highly consistent” on all competencies all of the time, or “be involved at the Board or Ministry level”, or “do PD workshops for experienced teachers” (even though she was a new teacher) to get an exemplary rating.

Not only is the TPA system supposed to provide a record of those who are performing their duties satisfactorily, but also to identify teachers who are not. Teachers in this study expressed their perception (and frustration) that vice/principals were reluctant to give any teacher an ‘unsatisfactory’ rating. Anecdotal evidence substantiates this claim, given the difficult and lengthy processes involved in dismissing a teacher. One relatively new teacher expressed her annoyance with “ineffective teachers who still “teach” despite any observations, leaving new enthusiastic, dedicated teachers scrambling for sections [of classes to teach] while jaded, stubborn, horrible “teachers” have their security in seniority.” These suspicions have been confirmed by other researchers who doubt the effectiveness of performance appraisal schemes in addressing the issue of incompetent teachers (Lavelly, Berger, & Follmant, 1992).

### *The Self-Doubting Teacher*

Furthermore, a number of teachers interviewed (6 out of 25) spoke about feeling like a “child”, a “student” and in one case a “servant” in a master-servant relationship. These words were used not only by beginner teachers, but also well-experienced teachers who were surprised by these feelings given their overall sense of confidence in themselves. The process also led to feelings of self-doubt. One teacher spoke about the process of “double-thinking” that went on during the classroom observation, as he kept questioning everything he said and did during the class. Such feelings can be understood in relation to the performative nature of teaching while under observation. A number of respondents (5) noted that teachers save or create “special” lessons “full of bells and whistles” and “sparks” for their appraisal day. The process is considered an exercise of “jumping through hoops not always realistic of what is really

happening in the classroom.” These teachers viewed themselves as actors putting on a show that was not reflective of anything except their ability to prepare a “stellar lesson for that one day.”

This speaks to the artificial and contrived nature of performance appraisals, which were described by respondents as a “set-up”, “mechanical hoop-jumping”, “window dressing” and an “artificial situation.” A few even went so far as to do a trial run of their lesson with selected students to ensure that it was “bullet-proof.” One respondent commented that appraisals were akin to a “magician show” full of illusions and tricks. A few teachers (5) referred to themselves as performers putting on a show for their vice/principals. In this respect, this study aligns with conclusions drawn by other researchers who contend that practices such as performance appraisals create performative acts, in which the spectacle of fabrication becomes more important than the act of teaching itself (Ball, 2001).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This paper has drawn upon stage model of policy analysis with the primary aim of understanding the background and effects of the Ontario TPA policy. I focused on the first three stages of policy making: origins, adoption and implementation. The paper began with an overview of the contexts within which to situate the origins and adoption of the TPA policy. The Harris government was not unlike other governments elected during the 1980s and 1990s on platforms to reduce public expenditures through a restructuring of the public sector based on business values such as quality assurance, accountability, privatization, choice and competition. As in a number of other jurisdictions, reform occurred on the heels of well-orchestrated campaigns to discredit the public sector and create in the public’s mind a sense of crisis. This

was the case in Ontario when the government pushed through the omnibus Bill 160 in 2001, which included details about the TPA policy.

When this study was conducted in 2006/2007, there had not been any qualitative studies on the implementation of the TPA policy. I set out to answer the question: “What can we learn from teachers’ experiences about the effects, intended and unintended, of the Ontario teacher performance appraisal system?” In short, I believe the answer is that there is much to learn from listening to the voices of teachers about the impact of evaluation systems such as teacher performance appraisals. I reported here on findings from 125 teachers who were surveyed or interviewed about the TPA system. The aim is not to generalize about the entire Ontario teaching population, but to develop a deeper understanding of one teacher evaluation policy.

Taken as a whole, this study has shown that for a handful of teachers the TPA process was a productive one that promoted their professional growth and facilitated positive relations with their vice/principals and their teaching colleagues. Some found that the process was fair, productive, well-planned and meaningful. Indeed, some of them even thought that there should be more frequent appraisals and unannounced classroom observations to weed the profession of incompetent teachers.

However, for the majority of respondents, this study concludes that the TPA process was disorganized, inconsistently conducted and above all, unfair. Less than one-third considered the appraisal process to be well-planned, flexible and fair, that they had ownership over the process, or that it enhanced their sense of themselves as professionals. The tools established to facilitate the process were either not used, misused or not helpful.

This study also found a number of unintended individual level effects of the TPA policy, including the undue stress and anxiety that many teachers are feeling as they strive to find the



time and energy to prepare for appraisal. Feelings of anxiety and self-doubt can hinder good classroom teaching practices and therefore affect students as well. Moreover, some interview comments point to increased levels of anxiety amongst students while their teacher was being appraised.

Another organizational level effect concerns teachers' relations with their vice/principals. Instead of promoting trusting and supportive relations between and amongst teachers and their vice/principals, what we have is the development of a heightened sense of scepticism and mistrust. I would concur with others who have argued that the tension between the helping and evaluative function of the principal are likely to remain incompatible and therefore should be kept separate (Hazi & Rucinski 2009; Glickman et al., 1998; Peterson, 2000).

Moreover, the various ways that performance appraisals are being carried out in terms of paperwork expectations, post-observation procedures, and use of the rating system suggest that it does not provide for a fair, consistent and consistent teacher evaluation as stated in the policy's objectives. For instance, there is a sense of frustration concerning the inconsistency in how the appraisal process is being conducted and with the fact that some evaluators are taking the ALP, student and parent surveys into account in assessing their teachers while others are not. Further, in a handful of cases there are some unethical practices taking place ranging from teachers being required to complete their own checklists and even write their own summative reports, to teachers being told by their vice/principals to involve themselves in extra-curricular activities because it is their evaluation year.

Natriello (1990) writes about the importance of teachers seeing their colleagues evaluated according to a consistent and fair set of standards and criteria. The more teachers perceive the evaluation system to be consistent, the more likely they will view it as being just, equitable and

fair, and consequently devote more effort in response to their evaluations. However, if this does not happen, as seems to have been the case with a number of my respondents, teachers will come to believe that their evaluations depend more on the evaluator than on their performance. This situation can lead to teachers attempting to transfer to another school or seek other employment, rather than making an effort to improve their performance. Fullan (1991) and Hargreaves (1994) go a step further, arguing that as long as there is little support from teachers, accountability policies such as performance appraisals will be doomed to fail.

Revisions to the TPA policy at the end of 2007 have addressed some of the concerns noted by my respondents in this study. There are now fewer evaluations for experienced teachers (one every five years) and new teachers (two appraisals within their first twelve months of hire); the latter who are now supported through the New Teacher Induction Program. More attention is paid to the annual learning plan, with the recognition that it is teacher authored and directed and developed in a consultative and collaborative manner with the vice/principal. Concerns about the amount of paper-work involved in the process have also been addressed. The Look-For list has been shortened, and the Summative Report Form has been refined to eliminate redundancy and ensure that vice/principals' time is spent working with teachers rather than on paperwork. As noted above, there is now a two-point rating scale: satisfactory and unsatisfactory (Ontario Government, 2008). These are all positive changes and attest to the government's recognition of some of the limitations of the TPA system as it was originally conceived.

However, the idea that good teaching can be measured and supported through the use of any single evaluation tool is fundamentally flawed. This study aligns with other research, which claims that effective teaching cannot be measured, guaranteed or supported through the use of competency-based checklists or schedules or through the use of any single method (Cochrane-

Smith, 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Hayes, 1999; Luna et al., 2000). While the Ontario legislation mandates that “much of the evidence for assessment will be gathered during the observation” (Ontario Government, 2002), it appears that the classroom observation has taken on a heightened status in the appraisal process. Indeed, most of my respondents viewed the classroom observation as the primary or sole method for evaluating teachers, rather than one tool among many.

Concerns about the efficacy of administrator judgements in accurately and reliably capturing the quality of teaching performance through classroom observations have also been noted in the research. Peterson (2000) claims that seventy years of research on principal’s ratings of teachers show that those ratings do not work well:

Findings challenge the assumption that an observer can enter a classroom, use an observation framework of supposedly desirable performances, count or rate the teacher, and draw conclusions about the quality of teaching that can be defended for purposes of teacher evaluation. (p. 22)

In aiming to control or influence how (and if) teachers are performing their duties properly, teacher evaluation systems require a variety of methods to collect information about their performance. Teacher evaluation researchers assert that there is no one source of evidence that can provide a complete picture of what a teacher does and can do. In fact, any single method is most useful in combination with others that complement that data it can provide (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Peterson, 2000; Stodolsky, 1990).

Furthermore, although my study found no differences in attitudes and experiences based on teachers’ personal (e.g. gender, teaching experience) characteristics, other research has demonstrated the need to develop different tools to evaluate teachers at different stages of their careers and teaching across different contexts (Davis et al., 2000; Fitzgerald et al., 2003; Middlewood & Cardno, 2001). A few respondents echoed this sentiment, stating that there

should be a different evaluation system for new and experienced teachers; and for those who bring different strengths to the teaching profession, strengths such as humour, caring and creativity that are not easily measured through a competency checklist.

However, I wonder whether or not we should be spending time and energy attempting to rework the tools we use to evaluate teachers' work? What would be worth considering is a completely different set of ideas for ensuring that our students are taught by good teachers and that those teachers are supported in the work that they do. Perhaps we need to shift our thinking from the pragmatics of how to refine the tools associated with evaluating teachers to acknowledging the fact that good teaching cannot be broken down into a set of measurable competencies.

What are the alternatives then? First, we need to work to improve our pre-service teacher education programs to prepare our teachers for the complex demands of teaching in Ontario schools. The new mentoring system is a welcome development to support the specific needs and challenges that new teachers face. I agree with others on the need to separate out teacher evaluation from teacher professional growth. The latter can be supported through the development of new, sustainable programs for professional development that honour teachers and their work. Finally, we need to develop better strategies for addressing the issue of ineffective teachers. To conclude, this study has shown that there are some significant limitations with the implementation of the TPA policy. If our aim is to ensure that students are taught by good teachers, then we need to design and implement a complex array of policies that truly nurture and support teacher quality in fair, flexible, and consistent ways.

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## **APPENDIX A - TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM (TPAS) SURVEY**

Please circle as appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Gender 

<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
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2. Ethnicity

<b>White European</b>	<b>Black African</b>	<b>Hispanic Latino/a</b>	<b>East Asian</b>	<b>South Asian</b>	<b>First Nations</b>	<b>Other</b>
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3. Age \_\_\_\_\_

4. Years of teaching experience (end of school year) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Years of teaching experience with Current Board of Education

<b>New Teacher (2 years or less experience)</b>	<b>Experienced Teacher (3 or more years experience)</b>
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6. How many times since 2001 have you undergone the TPAS?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3 or more</b>
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**Answer the remaining questions for the school in which you  
underwent your last TPA.**

**SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

7. School Level

Elementary	Secondary
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8. School Type

Public	Catholic
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9. School Size

Less than 250 students	Over 250 students
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**TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL EXPERIENCES**

**Circle**

*your answers based on your most recent TPA.*

10 Who conducted your TPA?

Principal	Vice-Principal	Supervisory Officer	Combination of above
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11. Gender of the above individual.

Female	Male
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12. According to your knowledge, how many years experience does the person who conducted your TPA have in a supervisory position in the school system?

Less than 2 years	3-5 years	More than 5 years
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13. Did you receive the TPA Manual?

Yes	No
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14. Did you read through it prior to the start of the process?

<b>Yes, completely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
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15. Did you prepare your Annual Learning Plan in consultation with your Principal, Vice-Principal or other Supervisory Officer?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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16. Throughout the TPA process, did you have sufficient time and resources to prepare the materials required?

<b>Yes, completely</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
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17. How, if at all, did the TPA affect your professional relationship with the following individuals or groups?

	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<b>Mixed Impact</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Detrimental Impact</b>
Principal, VP or Other Supervisory Officer	5	4	3	2	1
Teaching Colleagues in your School	5	4	3	2	1
Students	5	4	3	2	1

18. Thinking back to your last TPA, how would you rate the overall experience?

Fair	4	3	2	1	Unfair
Productive	4	3	2	1	Unproductive
Well Planned	4	3	2	1	Disorganized
Useful Not Meaningful	4	3	2	1	useful Not meaningful

**TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

19. Based on your experience, circle the number corresponding to the descriptor that best describes your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
a) The TPA enhanced my sense of myself as a professional.	5	4	3	2	1
b) My TPA was conducted in a fair and consistent manner.	5	4	3	2	1
c) I felt I had ownership over the TPA process.	5	4	3	2	1
d) The pre-observation meeting helped me to prepare for the classroom observation.	5	4	3	2	1
e) The TPA is a primarily an exercise in public relations and accountability.	5	4	3	2	1
f) Flexibility is built into the TPAS.	5	4	3	2	1
g) The 'look-for' list is a manageable list of appropriate length.	5	4	3	2	1
h) The Annual Learning Plan promoted my professional growth.	5	4	3	2	1
i) The TPAS promotes creativity in teaching.	5	4	3	2	1
j) The TPAS facilitated my growth as a reflective practitioner.	5	4	3	2	1
k) I was given sufficient time to prepare for the TPAS.	5	4	3	2	1
l) The pre-observation meeting developed a collegial atmosphere in advance of the classroom observation.	5	4	3	2	1
m) The TPAS requires too much paperwork.	5	4	3	2	1
n) The person who conducted my TPA (Principal/VP) understands me as a teacher.	5	4	3	2	1
o) A two-point rating scale (satisfactory and unsatisfactory) would be an improvement on the existing four-point rating scale.	5	4	3	2	1

p) I felt nervous during the classroom observation.	5	4	3	2	1
q) I felt affirmed as a professional during the TPAS.	5	4	3	2	1
r) The person who conducted my TPA was supportive throughout the process.	5	4	3	2	1
s) The student survey helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.	5	4	3	2	1
t) The parent survey helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher	5	4	3	2	1
u) The rating I received on my last TPAS was a fair representation of my ability to use my skills and knowledge effectively in the classroom	5	4	3	2	1
v) I received my final report back in a timely fashion.	5	4	3	2	1
w) The TPA was a meaningful process for me.	5	4	3	2	1

20. Please circle the number corresponding to the descriptor which best describes how useful you consider each of following TPA tools?

	<b>VERY USEFUL</b>	<b>USEFUL</b>	<b>UNDECIDED</b>	<b>NOT USEFUL</b>	<b>COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE</b>
a) TPA Manual	5	4	3	2	1
b) Pre-observation Form	5	4	3	2	1
c) TPA Competencies: Worksheet for Teachers	5	4	3	2	1
d) "Look-For" List	5	4	3	2	1
e) Student Survey	5	4	3	2	1
f) Parental Survey	5	4	3	2	1
g) Annual Learning Plan	5	4		2	1
h) Post-Observation Meeting Form	5	4	3	2	1
i) Summative Report	5	4	3	2	1

**ATTITUDES ABOUT THE TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM**

21. Listed below are the official purposes of the TPAS. Based on your experience, circle the number corresponding to the descriptor that best describes your opinion.

<b>OFFICIAL PURPOSES</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
a) The TPAS ensures that students receive the benefit of an education system staffed by teachers who are performing their duties satisfactorily.	5	4	3	2	1
b) The TPAS provides for fair, effective, and consistent teacher evaluation in every school.	5	4	3	2	1
c) The TPAS promotes professional growth.	5	4	3	2	1

**COMMENTS:**

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY RESEARCH ON THE TPAS.**

***Please return your survey in the enclosed stamped envelope.***

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Introduce myself and review the aims of the study.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1) What is your name?
  
- 2) How many years have you been teaching? (full-time/part-time) Which Board of Education?  
How many years have you been teaching with this Board of Education?
  
- 3) How many times since 2004 have you undergone the TPAS? When did these appraisals take place? (dates)

#### **SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

I am now going to ask you questions about the school where you underwent your last performance appraisal

- 4) What grade(s) were you teaching when you underwent your last performance appraisal?
  
- 5) Can you describe your school in terms of its size and any other interesting or defining features (e.g. alternative school, school located on First Nations reserve, Catholic)

#### **TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL EXPERIENCES**

I am now going to ask you questions about the TPA process and would like you to focus on your most recent experience.

6) Who conducted your most recent TPA? (principal, VP, supervisory officer)

7) Have you undergone more than 1 TPA? If so, were these conducted by different individuals? Would you say that the process was carried out consistently or that each Principal/VP has their own way of administering the TPA? Please explain.

I would now like you to describe the process of your most recent performance appraisal, step by step, for me.

### STAGE I. PRE-OBSERVATION

8) Let's start with the pre-observation process (everything leading up to the classroom observation). First, when were you first informed that the TPA would be taking place? When did you have your pre-observation meeting? Can you describe that meeting for me? (e.g. Was it helpful in assisting you to prepare for the classroom observation?)

9) Did you receive the TPA Manual? If so, did you read through it prior to the start of the process? How helpful was it in preparing you for the classroom observation? Did you review the pre-observation form and TPA Competencies: Worksheet for Teachers with your Principal/VP? How useful were these in helping you prepare for the classroom observation?

10) Now could you describe for me what happened and how you felt during that initial stage of the process?

Prompts - Did you feel that you were provided with sufficient time to prepare for the TPAS? Did you feel that the pre-observation meeting developed a collegial atmosphere in advance of the classroom observation?



STAGE 2 - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

11) First, I'd like you to give me three words to describe the classroom observation part of your performance appraisal.

12) Now I would like you to describe the classroom observation part of the TPA? Please describe for me what you did to prepare for teaching the lesson? Was this any different from what you usually do to prepare a lesson?

13) Next, describe what the Principal/VP did during your lesson? Did s/he move around the classroom or remain in one area? Did s/he use the Look-For List during the observation? Was the 'Look-For' list a useful tool in helping you prepare for the classroom observation and improve your teaching?

14) Comment on how you felt during the classroom observation. Were you constantly aware of the fact that you were being assessed during this lesson?

15) Would you have taught this lesson any differently if the Principal/VP were not in your classroom? If so how?

STAGE 3 - POST-CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

15) I'd now like to ask you about the post-observation part of the TPAS. How long did you have to wait after the classroom observation before your post-observation meeting took place?

16) Can you describe for me what occurred during that meeting and how you felt?

17) Did your principal discuss the results of the parent and student (grade 11/12) surveys with you? Did you receive your summative report prior to or during that meeting? Did you receive your final report back in a timely fashion?

- 18) How much time would you estimate you spent on the entire process, from the pre-observation meeting through to the end of the post-observation meeting?
- 19) Did you think that the rating you received on your last TPAS was a fair representation of your classroom teaching abilities? Why or why not?
- 20) Some claim that some Principals/VP never give an Exemplary rating, even if the individual is an exemplary teacher. Based on your experiences, what is your opinion about this?

### ANNUAL LEARNING PLAN

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about your Annual Learning Plan.

- 21) During your appraisal year, did you prepare your ALP in consultation with your Principal/VP? Was this helpful or not?
- 22) What were your learning plan goals/objectives? Why did you choose these?
- 23) Did you meet these goals? Do you think the Annual Learning Plan help to promote your professional growth? If so, how? If not, why?
- 24) Overall, do you think that the teacher performance appraisal system promotes teacher professional growth? Why or why not?

### TPA and Professional Relationships

- 25) How, if at all, did the TPA affect your professional relationship with the following individuals or groups?
- a) Principal, VP or Other Supervisory Officer who carried out your TPAS.

(prompts - Do you feel that the Principal/VP understands you as a teacher? Did you feel that this person was supportive throughout the process?)

b) Teaching Colleagues in your School

(Prompts - How did the TPA process affect your relationship with other teachers in the school? Did you draw upon the support from your colleagues during the process? If so, how? If not, why? Do you think the TPA promotes a culture of competitiveness or collegiality in your school?)

c) Students (How, if at all, did your experience with the TPAS affect your relationship with your students? their parents/guardians?)

26) Some people claim that performance appraisals cause undue stress and anxiety for teachers. Would you agree or disagree with this claim?

**CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

27) Would you say that the TPA ensures that students receive the benefit of an education system staffed by teachers who are performing their duties satisfactorily?

28) Overall, was your performance appraisal conducted in a fair and consistent manner?

29) Did you feel that the process was a meaningful one that you had ownership over?

30) If you could change any aspect of the TPAS, what would you recommend?

(Alternatively, if I was the Minister of Education, what would you have to say to me about the TPAS?)

31) Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about concerning your experiences with the TPAS that has not been addressed in this interview?

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. [Review plans for follow up of transcriptions with participant.]