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Performance Appraisals of School Administrators in One Canadian School District: A Contemporary Model

Research indicates that a sound performance appraisal process for school administrators contains key mechanisms that manifest themselves through dimensions of effective planning, assessment, and evaluation; effective use of resources; and communicating clear expectations. This article documents the development of a contemporary model of performance appraisal of school administrators in a Canadian school district. It is clearly presented as a guideline for individual educators who are committed to ongoing professional development. It may well serve as a guideline for other school districts where performance appraisal processes are being revisited and revamped for purposes of accountability and school administrators' performance effectiveness.

Selon les recherches, un processus valide visant l'évaluation de la performance des administrateurs scolaires implique des mécanismes clés qui se manifestent par le biais d'une planification et d'une évaluation efficaces, d'un emploi judicieux des ressources, et de la transmission d'attentes claires et précises. Cet article trace le développement d'un modèle contemporain portant sur l'évaluation de la performance des administrateurs scolaires dans un district scolaire au Canada. Ce modèle se veut un ensemble de principes directeurs pour les enseignants soucieux de parfaire leur développement professionnel. Il pourrait également servir de lignes directrices aux autres districts scolaires qui réévaluent leur processus d'évaluation de la performance dans le but d'accroître la responsabilisation et d'augmenter l'efficacité de la performance des administrateurs scolaires.

Introduction

In education today concern is ongoing that the evaluation strategies used to evaluate education personnel are insufficient and inadequate. The discussions tend to focus on the level of effectiveness and suitability of the performance appraisals process. School districts are revisiting their policies and procedures in order to revamp and define their goals and objectives more concisely. Although there is substantial literature on teacher evaluation (Brandt, 1996; Cruikshank & Haefele, 2001; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Iwanicki, 1990; Nolan

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& Hoover, 2004; Peterson, 2000; Scriven 1994; Seyfarth, 2002), quality discussion and further analysis of school administrator evaluation are needed.

The purpose of this article is to explore and describe the school administrator appraisal process currently implemented in one northeastern Canadian school district. School district X (a pseudonym) was selected due to: (a) its unique geographical spread covering a 200-mile radius that frequently requires commuting by air as well as by land, and (b) accessibility by the author. There are approximately 20 schools in the district, all geographically dispersed within this radius. The district has undergone many changes over the course of 10 years due to restructuring and reculturing to meet the educational demands in an ongoing era of change and accountability. One of the more recent changes was the development of a new performance appraisal system for school administrators to increase effectiveness.

Throughout this article, the terms *performance appraisal* and *evaluation* are used interchangeably. The organization of the article begins with some theoretical groundwork for developing administrative evaluation systems for administrators. Evaluation is the process of judging the worth of information collected for a specific purpose such as determining effectiveness (Glasman & Heck, 1996). This is followed by a discussion on the development of the performance appraisal process of school administrators in district X, as well as the composition and role of the participants in its development. A brief description of the process of evaluating administrators is presented, as well as the expectations derived from its implementation in this particular school district. Throughout the discussion, a presentation of the criteria for assessment, description of the performance appraisal component, professional growth component (tenured administrators), and performance improvement components are provided. This is followed by a brief outline of initial reactions to the policy implementation in its first year based on informal and personal communication with various stakeholders in the school district.

Although this article focuses only on the performance appraisal document for the development of the administration rather than on other components, all are used to ensure professional growth and development as an integral component of the district's human resource strategy. For purposes of comparing evaluation policies, a brief overview of another appraisal model commonly known as Duties-Based Teaching Evaluation Model (DBTE) is introduced. Finally, some conclusions, implications, and reflections are presented on the development of institutional evaluation systems for school administrators.

Professional Growth and Development for School Administrators
Increasing Demands and Changing Expectations
Few of us need to be persuaded about the contribution that leaders must make. In education, people are continually shifting collaborations of individuals who make performance and change happen. According to Seyfarth (2002), the successful administrator is one who has personal habits, values, traits, and competences to engender trust and commitment in those who take their direction where the focus is on improved practices that lead to improved results. Begley (2001) asserts that school administrators must be personally credible and organizationally capable.

Currently, school administrators are conscious of the pressure of changing social, political, and professional expectations. They perceive a push to adopt new and expanded administrative roles in a context of many increased demands for professional accountability (Normore, 2004). This is experienced within a general educational reform movement that seems to influence all areas of the educational enterprise (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). The challenge for school and district office administrators is meeting these changing social and professional demands without losing sight of the need to meet the needs of children and protect their best interests. Due to these increasing demands and changing expectations for school administrators, the image of the school administrator's role is in continual transition as the diversity of student populations flourish, a reconceptualization of leadership emerges, high accountability demands and public scrutiny increase, and ongoing reform agendas descend on schools (Begley, 1999; Drucker, 1996). In school administration roles, performance appraisals have become an increasingly important mechanism for purposes of accountability.

Increasing Role of Performance Appraisals of School Administrators
According to Heck, Johnsrud, and Rosser (2000), the focus of personnel performance appraisal systems is to provide information for decisions about performance in a specific role. A performance appraisal is not, however, "as rational and straightforward as such a definition suggests; it is rooted in politics" (p. 664). Heck et al. assert "especially since the early 1980s, reform-related public educational policies have included requirements for evaluating educational practices" (p. 664). The mandates of evaluation, consequently, have often been forces of organizational change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). The Reform Act of the 1980s has led to measures of accountability and the standards movement (e.g., benchmarks, performance standards) in the 1990s. According to Kennedy (1998), as a result of public scrutiny and dissatisfaction with public education, many states and provinces across North America have passed policies that mandate public reporting of institutional outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, retention and attrition rates, student learning)—the public now wants to be informed about how the processes develop and evolve (cited in Heck et al., 2000). Considering the motivation for evaluating performance in public education and the potential effect on individual school administrators, it is crucial that "the procedures be feasible, fair, and accurate; that is, the process must rise above its political motivation" (p. 665).

Approaches to Performance Appraisal of School Administrators
A comprehensive examination of the relevant literature indicates that the predominant approaches to administrator appraisal are based on: (a) results, (b) valid job description, (c) personal qualities, and (d) research findings related to the role behaviors that improve school academic performance (Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000). These authors assert that "results-based appraisals focus primarily on desired outcomes and the degree of achievement to which administrators are able to do so" (p. 218). As cited in Thomas et al., Heck and Marcoulides (1996) assert

> that results-based appraisals are often confined to outcomes such as test scores, which are easily measured … and further that school administrators should

not be held accountable for the achievement of many of these outcomes because they have little or no control over the variables on which these outcomes depend. (p. 218)

Furthermore, Heck and Marcoulides (1996) assert that the most enduring influences are those associated with the school such as teaching quality, over which the administrator should have some influence. These authors favor "best practices, which is based on research findings about important effects of administrator's activities upon improvements in school effectiveness and performance" (p. 219). The Joint Committee on Standards of Educational Evaluation (1988) recommended that valid job descriptions focus on the expectations of administrators in their roles, whereas Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) stated that generic descriptions of administrator roles are inadequate in administrative appraisals and that context and individual school priorities need to be taken into account.

In response to personal qualities of school administrators, Louden and Wildy (1996, cited in Thomas et al., 2000) found that "new performance frameworks in the U.S., England and Wales, and Australia were most likely not lead to improvement in academic quality or overall effectiveness of the school" (p. 221). Instead these authors recommended the use of "probabilistic standards to measure descriptions of what can be normally be expected of people with a particular level of performance rather than determine whether a school administrator has achieved a mastery of a particular competency" (p. 6). As reported by Thomas et al., (2000), Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, and Thurston (1999) asserted that there are several critical responsibility arenas that must be considered for appraisal of the effectiveness of both school administrators and schools: (a) maintaining cultural patterns; (b) attaining goals, standards, and purposes; (c) maintaining internal integration; and (d) adapting to the external environment.

Objects, Standards, and Purposes of Performance Appraisals
Diverse role expectations that create conflicting demands on an administrator (i.e., one who provides support and one who evaluates) and varied school contextual settings present obstacles to developing administrator evaluation systems (Cangelosi, 1991a; 1991b; Davis & Hensley, 1999; Normore, 2004; Thomas et al., 2000). Administrators need strategies that have the capacity to motivate and inspire, providing a sense of purpose and meaning that unites people in a common cause. They should be aware of the key factors for effective schools. It is generally agreed that effective administrators must be well-organized managers and artistic, passionate leaders. They have two roles: leader and manager. As leader they nurture the vision that expresses the school's core values; as manager they develop structures and policies that institutionalize that vision (Begley, 2001; Seyfarth, 2002). It would seem appropriate that in order for school administrators to manage and lead schools effectively, the need for understanding their own performance appraisal systems is critical.

In the current wave of accountability, it is evident that performance appraisals have become an important policy lever. One of the necessary steps in developing an evaluation system is to clarify the objects, purposes, and stan-

dards that will be used. According to Glasman and Heck (1996) "as educational goals and evaluation purposes can change over time with changing political demands, so can objects of evaluation, the purposes, and the evaluation standards that are adopted" (p. 374). With respect to school administrators in public education, the objects of evaluation could include attitudes, behavior, decision-making, performance, or effectiveness. As Glasman and Heck (1996) note, it is possible to adopt several evaluation perspectives toward administrators (e.g., role-based, outcomes-based, standards-based, structure-based). At best, "administrators indirectly influence learning outcomes; therefore role-based administrator assessment should focus primarily on social interactions including an administrator's own role as evaluator of teachers and others in school and how well that role is fulfilled" (Heck et al., 2000, p. 665).

According to Heck and Marcoulides (1992, 1996), it would seem appropriate, like teacher evaluation, that performance appraisal standards are needed for selecting criteria used for judging the quality of performance of school administrators. The Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation (1988) established four types of standards for evaluating purposes: utility, propriety, feasibility, and accuracy. According to Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993, cited in Heck et al., 2000), *utility standards* are meant to guide appraisals so they will be informative, timely, and influential. *Propriety standards* protect the rights of those affected by the appraisal. *Feasibility standards* focus on the efficiency of the evaluation system (i.e., easy to use, adequately funded, and politically viable). *Accuracy standards* focus on producing credible information based on reliable and valid data collection and analysis procedures.

The purposes of performance appraisals concern questions that focus on whose work is to be evaluated, the purposes of evaluation to be conducted, the focus of the evaluation, who will use the data being collected, and the decisions to be made (Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993). Administrators should continally evaluate their effectiveness. According to Olivia (1989), evaluation supervisors (i.e., principals) serve as models to teachers, demonstrating a personal need for continual evaluation of their performance. Feedback on performance is necessary for all professionals if they are to grow and develop. Conscientious administrators regularly engage in self-evaluation and seek evaluation of their performance by the teachers being served. According to Heck et al., (2000), evaluations in the past have not been made clear. Although there are typical purposes of evaluations including determining competence, improving performance, establishing accountability, and making decisions about salary increase, promotion, reassignment, and dismissal, the evaluation of administrators, like that of teachers, has two distinct purposes (Davis & Hensley, 1999; Normore, 2004). The first is formative, the process that occurs to improve the professional performance of the administrator. The second is summative, whereby decisions are made relating to employment. Both have the primary purpose of increasing the effectiveness of individuals in their professional environment by assisting them in their professional growth and reaffirming their competence in their profession (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Davis & Hensley, 1999; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Seyfarth, 2002).

Formative Appraisal

Anderson (1991) emphasized that formal evaluation essentially is concerned with helping the appraisee to develop and grow professionally. According to Manatt (1988), formative evaluation is ongoing, descriptive, nonjudgmental, and performed to help those who are being evaluated. Matthews and Crow (2003) state that this type of evaluation is not evaluation in the usual sense, but rather for purposes of professional growth. There is no attempt to provide a summative judgment. Formative evaluation is ongoing assessment of administrator performance.

Summative Appraisal

Summative evaluation is done on an annual basis, not only for the purpose of improvement, but also and primarily for making decisions on tenure; advancement to leadership positions; and in those situations that have it, merit pay or entry and advancement on the career ladder. This type of evaluation culminates in a comprehensive appraisal either annually or as otherwise required by the state or locality (Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Olivia, 1989; Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1979). Manatt (1988) stated that summative evaluation at the end of the formative cycle is comparative and judgmental, and if the evaluatee is a subpar performer, may become adjudicative.

Progress in the Arena of Performance Appraisals of School Administrators

Much progress has been made in upgrading the quality of teacher evaluation over the last three decades (Murphy, Hallinger, & Peterson, 1985; Nolan & Hoover, 2004). Whereas teacher evaluation has evolved from a ceremonial process (Murphy et al.) to an in-depth, meaningful vehicle for instructional improvement (Nolan & Hoover), administrator evaluation has remained substantially unchanged (Davis & Hensley, 1999; Thomas et al., 2000). In a 1985 study on principal evaluation in 12 school districts in the United States, Murphy et al. (1985) reported that prior to their study, little attention was devoted to district-level processes generally and to the role of superintendent specifically in promoting effectiveness. They found that all but two superintendents were personally responsible for supervising and evaluating principals. Whereas superintendents relied on impromptu and planned visits, more often than not site administrators were unaware of their visits. During the frequent visits to schools, discussions and meetings among superintendents and principals centered on specific problems and reviews of superintendents observations (i.e., facilities, curriculum and instruction, perception checking, communication, and team building). They also relied on group meetings of principals, checked progress on school and district goals, and communicated important norms and goals and used specific procedures and criteria for assessing principal performance.

Although the findings from the study by Murphy et al. (1985) hold positive ground, one year later Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) identified problems associated with principal evaluation: (a) policies lacked detail regarding processes; (b) standards of performance were not always well publicized; and (c) practices outlined in policies were not always followed (cited in Thomas et al., 2000). Davis and Hensley (1999) emphasized "in complex organizations like schools, political behavior thrives on conflict, disorder, ambiguity, and a lack of

common purposes or goals" (p. 384). Anderson (1991) noted that "evaluations of principals are not designed to enhance principal performance, but to satisfy accountability requirements that make principal evaluation mandatory" (p. 77). Twenty years later Thomas et al. (2000) found in their study that although the overall purpose for evaluation was clear, practices did not necessarily match the intent of principal evaluation. The US Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) is worth noting here. Of more than 40 states, "a variety of professional associations, and a number of universities ... reexamine, conceptualize, and redefine the meaning of school leadership" (Ellett, 1999, cited in Thomas et al., 2000, p. 219).

The following section discusses the performance appraisal policy in district X and links it to the literature. The focus is on how this policy was developed and how it supported school administrators with their various responsibilities and how the administrators were expected to maintain standards of performance.

Discussion: Policy Development for Performance Appraisal in District X
Developing the Performance Appraisal Model

The Performance Appraisal Process was developed over one year. Although performance appraisal policies for school administrators were written in the past, rarely were any used to appraise administrators. Because the school board had recently been reestablished as a result of amalgamation (three school boards combined into one) and a nondenominational infrastructure (Catholic and Protestant combined) in the province the local school administrators in this newly formed school district were depending on their former appraisal policies. There was no discussion or consultation about any changes in policy at this point. As supported in the research (Cangelosi, 1991a, 1999b; Glasman & Heck, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Murphy et al., 1985; Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999; Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993; Thomas et al., 2000), lack of input and consultation led to fragmentation and inconsistency among administrators and teachers in the board due to unclear procedures and inconsistent expectations. Consequently, a new and revised policy was necessary.

After approximately one year of reviewing the pertinent research on evaluation models, the human resources management, an external facilitator, and other constituents (i.e., representative parents, teachers, administrators, school council chairs, and board members) adopted components from the literature and other local district policies in the province to create an appraisal system that was considered appropriate to their context. After much discussion with the schools for input and revisions made accordingly, this revised policy was sent to each school in the district for implementation the following September 1999. The policy was not piloted in any school prior to its implementation.

Role of the Key Players

The policy clearly defined the roles of the various players involved in the appraisal process. The revised policy for performance appraisal of school administrators took approximately one year to develop. The development process included a number of regularly scheduled monthly principals' meetings

and two school board meetings. The external facilitator (from another province) and the central office supervisors generally facilitated the principals' meetings when the performance appraisal development was on the agenda for discussion. These meetings were regularly attended by a number of parent representatives, school council chairs, and five school board representatives, all representing the areas in the school district depending on where the meeting was held. Because the district covered a large land mass and air was the primary means of travel, the representatives were from the town where the meeting was held (sometimes a coastal community, other times in the local twin towns). The final version of the performance appraisal policy was disseminated in June 1999 and implemented in September of that year.

From informal discussions with school administrators, there were ample opportunities to engage and stay informed about the final product. Reaching a total consensus on the final product was not possible. Although all participants agreed on the purpose and usefulness of the performance appraisals, other variables needed to be taken into consideration for consensus building. Schools varied in size and context (i.e., culture, ethnicity in coastal schools). School administrators who led schools in the coastal regions were dealing with different circumstances and behaviors than the local school administrators. Some were working in Native coastal communities where culture and language played a heavy role. Others were leading schools where the spiritual atmospheres (Catholic, Protestant) were still conflicting as a result of amalgamation. From personal conversations with school based administrators, teachers, and central office administrators the final version was not fully agreed on, but was considered an improvement from "what used to be."

The appraisal package contained a survey for administrator self-evaluation and a survey for teachers and parents to complete on their administrators. These were designed with input from all the constituents in the meetings, as were staff and parent surveys and, where appropriate, student surveys. As supported in the literature (Davis & Hensley, 1999; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Murphy et al., 1985; Thomas et al., 2000), these questionnaires were specific in focus and encompassed all areas that appraised an administrator's performance, organizational capabilities, and personal/professional credibility. The document (*Professional growth and appraisal*, 1999) explicitly stated that the Director and Assistant Directors were responsible for administering the performance appraisals by conducting informal discussions with the administrator, teachers, parents, and in some cases the students (Murphy et al., 1985; Thomas et al., 2000).

The plan was meant to monitor carefully the policy and to modify it periodically if and when necessary. All supervisory personnel and those who were appraised were aware of the process in advance to eliminate any surprises. It kept to the general principles of Hickcox (1990) policy checklist.

Professional Appraisal, Growth, and Improvement Component for Administrators
This component incorporated three distinct subcomponents. As supported in the research (Anderson, 1991; Davis & Hensley, 1999; Manatt, 1988; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Olivia, 1989; Sergiovanni et al., 1999), each of these was defined in the policy and identified as Appraisal (formative), Growth (formative), and Improvement (summative). The latter was used to

work with an administrator to improve performance if a significant weakness had been identified. The following is a synopsis of the contents for each component as it applied to probationary and/or tenured administrators. A set of criteria is outlined in the policy (*Professional growth and appraisal*, 1999)

Description of the Performance Appraisal Component (Probationary Administrators)
The Director or designate initiated with the administrator the development of a growth plan with an explanation of expectations and specific timelines that encompassed:
- Self-assessment (end of September);
- First conference (October);
- Implementation of professional growth plan (October-May);
- Second conference (January-May);
- Mid-year report (January);
- Summary (March);
- Recommendation (April);
- Appeal Process (April).

Professional Growth Component (Tenured Administrators)
The process was set in the context of each school's improvement plan and the district's strategic plan. As the research indicates (Anderson, 1991; Davis & Hensley, 1999; Heck et al., 2000; Murphy et al., 1985), it permitted the administrator to establish personal and professional growth objectives. In this component, tenured administrators in the district could form a support group (elements of a team/support growth plan are outlined in the document and include network opportunities, peer evaluation, and coaching activities) to carry out this stage in a collegial manner (*Professional growth and appraisal*, 1999).

Performance Improvement Component (Tenured and Probationary Administrators)
The main objective in this component was to ensure acceptable standards of performance and to foster professional growth. For the majority of administrators, after the probationary period, the growth and development process can continue in a less formal mode. However, there may be administrators whose performance may be considered less than satisfactory and may require significant improvement. As supported by Anderson (1991) and Seyfarth (2002), district X's performance improvement component involved two phases (*Professional growth and appraisal*, 1999).

Phase 1. Significant improvement required (when major deficiencies appear either during the regular professional growth cycle, or at any time)
- Notification from the Director in writing;
- Criteria for improvement;
- Conference;
- Improvement plan;
- Implementation plan
- Evaluation of progress (due process);
- Decision.

Phase 2. Unsatisfactory performance (initiated after major deficiencies have been addressed in Phase 1 and performance continues to require major improvement)
- Notification from Director and Assistant Director in writing;
- Criteria for improvement;
- Improvement plan;
- Implementation plan;
- Evaluation of progress (due progress);
- Decision;
- Director's evaluation/recommendation.

Policy Implementation: A Synopsis of the First Year

Once the policy was implemented there was a mix of reactions from stakeholders in the first year (i.e., parents, administrators, school councils, teachers). Parents were happy that they were invited to participate in the process; school council chairs saw their current roles as being more than simply a fundraising role; administrators had a mix of fear and excitement; and teachers felt that their voices finally mattered. In one of the secondary schools, however, when teachers were asked to complete the teacher survey for their principal's evaluation, some felt honored to be randomly selected to give input, whereas others felt they were excluded on purpose to avoid a bad evaluation of the principal. Two other principals (middle school and elementary school) were apprehensive that parents and teachers would rate them unfairly due to recent student discipline incidents they had dealt with. They felt that their evaluations could be skewed and affected by a few disgruntled and discontented parents and teachers. It was a little disconcerting for another administrator that informal information could be gained from internal and external sources behind the scenes. During a retreat several administrators indicated that a few opinionated or influential parents or teachers could negatively affect their appraisals (informal conversations).

Central office supervisors agreed that they would evaluate administrators accordingly over three years (personal communication). The district superintendent took responsibility for coastal schools in the first three years; the assistant superintendent of human resources took responsibility to evaluate the local administrators; and the assistant superintendent of programs was responsible for evaluating the administrators in the local twin town. "Time" and "lack of personnel" were issues considered by central office supervisors that hindered them from adequately completing the appraisal process in the first year. Consequently, two of the assigned performance appraisals for the selected school administrators were not completed.

In years two and three, more changes occurred in district X. The district superintendent retired, one assistant superintendent retired, and the other assistant superintendent transferred to another school district in the province. However, all three central office positions have since been filled. From informal discussions with local school administrators, parents, and teachers, the appraisal process continues to be implemented by the new supervisors. This holds promise for the district (personal communication) despite the mass exodus of the former supervisory officers.

Comparing Models: Duties-Based Approach to Evaluation

According to Scriven (1994), the scope of duties for which administrators are responsible varies. Principals and superintendents are responsible for all areas. Administrators are evaluated by their immediate supervisors. In small districts administrators are evaluated by the superintendent. In large districts they may be evaluated by an assistant or an associate superintendent. Some administrator evaluation plans provide for input from subordinates or others who work with the individual. For example, teachers may be asked to evaluate the principal's instructional leadership or community relations skills. In some systems administrators design their own evaluation form to collect information from subordinates, and they are encouraged to construct items that will be of use to them in planning professional development activities. Such performance criteria for administrators may include instructional management, school/organizational improvement, school/organizational climate, personnel management, facilities and fiscal operations, student management, and school-community relations.

Scriven (1994) asserts that the Duties-Based Teaching Evaluation (DBTE) model is a comprehensive policy that certainly provided some breakthrough in evaluation. Although it is an alternative form of teacher evaluation, it can be easily translated into a form for administrator evaluation. The focus is on the administrative duties that require pondering on two significant questions: (a) what is a school administrator hired to do? and (b) how can we decide whether it has been done adequately or with excellence? According to Scriven, "in order for a school system to show responsible use of its resources it must evaluate its use of each of the various components"(p. 112). Scriven alludes to administrator accountability by reiterating that "it is difficult to enforce accountability on one subsystem if you can't tell how much of what happens there is due to deficiencies in some other subsystem that is not being checked" (p. 112). Specifically, there can be no full accountability of teachers without accountability of administrators. This is partly because teachers' efficiency depends on how administrators provide support and services (i.e., discipline issues). Scriven asserts, "it is ethically objectionable to expect teachers to commit to an evaluation that administrators avoid, because administrators need it just as much, and the community has the same right to it" (p. 112).

Elements of the duties-based approach to evaluation were adopted by school district X for administrator evaluation. The district uses multiple measures to get a best estimate of the extent to which administrative tasks were done well and synthesizes the results. The model rarely relied on judges for anything they could not ably analyze. The validity of the duties-based approach derives from one particular source: "the obligation of the employee to discharge the duties of the job to the extent that is reasonably possible with the resources available" (Scriven, 1994, p. 126). As Scriven states, this source is "unimpeachable on logical, legal, and ethical grounds" (p. 126).

For district X, the DBTE addressed all purposes of appraisals that needed to be addressed, not just for teacher appraisals, but also for the performance appraisal of school administrators. Unlike school district X's policy, DBTE is negative in the area of peer evaluation. District X's appraisal process encouraged team evaluations among its administrators as a means to learn from

each other and to promote professional growth. DBTE is unique in that it defines the duties of teachers and administrators in a list that was compiled by several thousand educators. The validity of this model lies in the mutual understanding of contracting parties. It specifies minimum to excellent standards. The DBTE model rarely uses style indicators, only skill. It would be interesting to see how superintendents could look past style to arrive at administrative performance. Style and skill are essential components of any model of evaluation and were integral components of the model used in district X.

According to Seyfarth (2002), the background and experience of the appraiser have an enormous effect on quality of performance appraisals. Even when criteria are defined, it takes some level of expertise to recognize and appreciate it. A great deal of training is necessary for someone outside the profession before they can realistically be expected to play a useful role in the appraisal process. The DBTE is without doubt a more intense and thorough assessment process. The time factor to conduct such an appraisal could pose problems unless directors of education shuffle their priorities. Fortunately, in district X this policy was and continues to be a priority that is accepted board-wide and seen as being workable. At present (2003), although there have been changes in the education infrastructure of the school board (i.e., school closures, amalgamation of schools, downsizing and turn-over of central office administrators, and decline in student enrollment), much remains to be examined to determine whether this new performance appraisal model has had any effect on the leadership development and practice of school administrators in the areas of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that lead to effective student learning. Nevertheless, it is far past time that personnel in school districts across North America resigned themselves to the fact that more time, personnel, and resources are needed to facilitate effective administrator appraisals and development. Creating and/or adopting researched appraisal approaches that have proven to be successful in other settings is certainly a positive direction for school districts to take. Appraising personnel performance, after all, is the most crucial aspect of quality control in any school system and the most important substantial task of all supervisors in that system.

Recommendations

Keeves (1998, cited in Thomas et al., 2000) noted that it is critical to recommend conducting "longitudinal studies on the interconnectedness among the appraisal of school administrators, their behavior, their effectiveness, their school's cultures, effectiveness of their schools, and correlating the type of appraisal system to the school's context" (p. 235). All stakeholders need adequate time, preparation, and training in order to appraise and/or evaluate in the spirit and intent of the process. In addition, further research is required on contemporary models of performance appraisal systems of school administrators to determine their effect on student achievement. It would seem appropriate not only to describe, but also to examine critically the performance appraisal systems currently in place in other school districts in both Canada and the US to determine whether these performance appraisal systems have any effect on the level of leadership effectiveness of practicing school administrators or have any effect on overall student learning.

Conclusion, Implications, and Reflections

The perfect evaluation schema seems impossible to create, but it is an ideal that school districts can work toward and continually improve. In the current political environment the demand for accountability at all levels equates to fair appraisals of all personnel. Achieving a fair appraisal of the school administrator will require greater compatibility among appraisal instruments, actual duties of the school administrator, and an understanding of the standards that guide the profession. This in turn must be well suited to measure the professional standards. It is a good general principle in educational administration to allow others to play the guinea pig. Moving only "to the tried and true avoids wasting effort and debugging new approaches" (Scriven, 1994, p. 142). The situation may well be different in school district X. Although school district X cannot point to long track records with the proposed system as a totality, there is nothing unfamiliar with its data sources or the duties for which it appeals for validity.

There are similarities between the DBTE and School District X's Model for Administrator Appraisal protocols. Both models are methods that could assure the public of administrative accountability. The current performance appraisal document encourages all administrators to turn their aspirations into actions. The process allows them to assess their personal and organizational strengths and weaknesses as well as goals and directions. It assists them with time management and allocation of resources, which in turn will strengthen their schools. Building the performance management system where organization behaviors are expected and accounted for is critical (Drucker, 1996). School districts need to see performance goals become realities, not just wishes.

From the administrator's perspective, the new model used in district X would surely be preferable with an appraisal system that defines expectations and uses a set of criteria in the appraisal process that recognizes the great range of a administrator's duties and does not change with every new batch of research results. The appropriate response is certainly to remove from existing practice as quickly as possible all uses of impressionistic judgment, replacing them with duty-related data. Regardless of how carefully policies and practices dealing with performance appraisals of administrators have been defined in school systems, individual judgment is heavily weighted. Administrators at all levels of the system are responsible for ensuring that adequate time and resources are available and that appraisal decisions are made equitably and rationally.

What school district X is currently doing in this area should appeal to many school districts that are currently struggling with their existing performance appraisal models and are considering alternatives. The district is still in a relatively early stage with its appraisal model for school administrators. It is difficult to surmise the overall outcomes of implementing the performance appraisal activities and what effect these have on student achievement. We can see the specific steps taken by one school district and can report on the literature perceptions, but much in the individual plans is yet to unfold before long-term effects can be ascertained. Finding relevant information about performance appraisal processes for school administrators requires searching under other labels and categories of literature such as effective school districts,

educational governance, transformational leadership, and organizational learning. In particular there is a need for research that clearly conveys the links between performance appraisal of administrators and more generalized school district leadership practices. Performance appraisal of administrators cannot be treated as a lone concept in isolation, but rather as a component of organizational governance and procedural structures in a school district.

Reflections

Improving the performance of educational personnel is a significant issue in educational reform. In the past 20 years the leadership role of school administrators has changed dramatically. These changing demands and expectations have intensified to improve leadership performance appraisal systems for increased effectiveness for schools. The structure and developing process of school administrators appraisal processes often vary from one school district to another. Generally, one could anticipate a variation in perspectives about the purposes and the usefulness of appraisals. Nevertheless, the development of an appraisal program suggests the need for performance improvement and accountability.

The stakeholders in district X continue to monitor performance appraisal for school administrators. Although the purpose of the appraisal system has been made clear (i.e., to promote professional growth and improvement, to communicate role expectations, and to provide information for administrative decisions, *Professional growth and appraisal*, 1999), a clear set of performance expectations is still somewhat blurred due to the unique needs of schools. According to several school administrators, self-reflection was initially an integral part of the new policy, but few engage in this activity largely due to the lack of time for planned professional development activities that might enhance such a growth opportunity (i.e., leadership inservice, keeping abreast of best practices and learning theory, networking, book clubs, retreats, mentoring, professional conferences). Due to the ongoing restructuring in the school district, school administrators rarely have opportunities to observe each other in action. This could lead to some fragmentation in district and site-based leadership initiatives, especially if inadequate involvement is provided for peers, teachers, and central office personnel to provide feedback. Evidently a regular monitoring system of the district's performance appraisal of school administrators must be a priority.

Although the performance appraisal process has improved from previous years—virtually by strategic planning and improved coherency in expectations—the appraisal practices are still not where they should be. District X has incorporated a number of positive activities into the supervisory process when deficiencies appear in the regular cycle of professional growth. These include a list of criteria for improvement, a pre- and postconference, revisiting the improvement and implementation plans, and time for feedback. However, based on the structure of the appraisal process, one would expect ample professional growth opportunities and resources to support school administrators in their quest to improve their performance. Extensive socialization and a supportive culture are essential if performance appraisal of administrators is to result in professional growth. In personal conversations and informal sharing with school administrators, many asserted that the superintendent and other central

office supervisors have not devoted adequate time to working with and observing school administrators and have yet to assist some of them in developing plans for professional growth. This may be due to two factors: (a) the shift in supervision personnel at central office level (retirements and transfers) and thus lost momentum; and (b) the required time for new central office administrators to engage with school administrators in discussions about school culture and community and the effects of these elements on administrative practices.

Finally, in the light of the highly charged political context of administrative leadership (i.e., increased accountability, changing demands, amalgamation of school districts, downsizing) who work in turbulent organizations, it is imperative that performance appraisals by central office supervisors provide accurate, fair, and meaningful feedback to school administrators. This is unlikely to occur soon unless central office supervisors engage more frequently with site-based administrators and plan accordingly. Although district X has improved from past years, much remains to be done. With mutual understanding of values, preferences, and needs between schools and their communities, maybe these school administrators can bridge the common issues and situations in which demands from stakeholders remain congruent with those of central office. As a result, parents, teachers and other community members in district X may continue to restore their faith in schools and understand what their schools ought to be doing.

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