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An Inquiry into Evaluation as Related to Teacher Competency

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AN INQUIRY INTO EVALUATION AS RELATED

TO TEACHER COMPETENCY

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                            M. Curtis Howd

                FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

There have been many attempts to evaluate teachers; every school district has some form of competency evaluation of personnel. No two districts thus far have effectively used the same techniques in the same way. Researchers are still working to perfect an evaluative instrument capable of measuring the teacher's competency.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. This report will (1) reveal some of the prevalent views concerning the nature of a competent teacher and (2) characterize some of the many techniques for using evaluative data in promoting effective learning.

Importance of the study. An administrator is faced with the task of evaluating the personnel in his building, a problem becoming increasingly important in recent years. This appraisal may be undertaken for the purpose of merit rating on a salary schedule or as a tool for fostering growth among the staff. To achieve the objectives of the educational program, the processes aiding learning must be continually evaluated. The nature of our changing society has dictated a change in teaching procedure. The program

of the school must keep abreast of the social climate of the community.

For selection, guidance, and education of teachers, we must know much more than we now do about the prerequisites to teaching effectiveness and how to accurately identify and describe these prerequisites (14:1).

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Competency. This term will be used to denote the ability an instructor has to accomplish a specified job. Thus, competence is defined as a desired quality of job performance (15:10).

Evaluation. Barr defines evaluation as ". . . the process of making those value judgments by which one determines his course of action" (3:530). For the purpose of this research, the term will include the above definition and an emphasis on planning a course of action or method of attack tending to improve the situation being evaluated (15:36).

Supervision. This word, generally defined in the dictionary as meaning to superintend or to inspect, has been given a new denotation in the field of education during the last thirty years. Wiles states the meaning of this term very well: "Supervision is assistance in the development

of a better teaching-learning situation" (26:8).

Evaluative criterion. The function of evaluation requires a standard against which a judgment is measured. This standard or control, the starting point for the evaluator, is the "evaluative criterion."

Rating. Rating is used to define the physical act of placing a value judgment on a particular quality of the teacher's work.

Supervisor. The term "supervisor" is defined as any person who engages in supervisory duties. This may, at times, include the principal or other administrator.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS A COMPETENT TEACHER?

Much has been written on the qualities of good and poor teaching. A survey of literature shows only general agreement concerning the attributes of a competent teacher. In a recent article, Robinson had this to say (19:19):

> There is no existing single word to convey the meaning of superb "teachership" in the way that "leadership" expresses the combination of qualities necessary for the successful figure in public life, or as "enterprise" describes it for the business leader, and as "command" for the military leader.

Robinson (19:20) adds that the superior teacher is intelligent, flexible, well educated in the subject matter he is to teach, and in tune with his community. In other words he should have the advantage of knowing all there is to know about teaching. Although this sounds very ideal-istic, this does not mean a person with these qualities will necessarily do a good job of teaching.

Many authors (5:chp. 2; 7:124) have agreed that there are certain categories into which characteristics of a good teacher may be grouped. Cassel and Johns (7:110-124) conducted a survey to determine critical characteristics of good and poor teachers. Of the characteristics they studied, most appeared to distribute themselves logically into three functional groups: (1) teacher application, (2) teacher qualifications, and (3) teacher preparation.

It seems to be a considered opinion among many authors (4:240; 21:ch. 20; 5:ch. 1) that most school districts will have to determine their own list of characteristics in conformity with the objectives of their school district.

Recently, Beecher (4:270-281) has said that teachers and supervisors must work together to determine the behaviors and practices which tend to result in good teaching. They should also decide which behaviors and practices can be observed and how they may be recorded.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF COMPETENCY AS

A FUNCTION OF SUPERVISION

Evaluation is an important part of group leadership.
A supervisor can bring about self-improvement through
evaluation. The supervisor's responsibility is helping
staff members to develop skill in evaluating teaching
processes, the work and growth of pupils, and procedures
used in faculty operations (26:293).

I. CRITERIA FOR DEFINING

TEACHER COMPETENCE

Arvil Barr, in one of his many studies on this
subject, stated (2:363-364):

> Three approaches have been made to the measurement
> of teaching ability: a) measurement of changes in
> pupils; b) direct evaluation of the teacher's perform-
> ance ordinarily through the use of observational
> devices; and c) the measurement of qualities of the
> teacher herself such as, intelligence, judgment, poise,
> patience, impartiality, etc., thought to be associated
> with teaching success. Each of these approaches
> presents its own special problems.

Twelve years later Gage said essentially the same
thing (11:296). He said that teacher effectiveness is to be
ultimately defined in terms of the effects a teacher produces
particularly in: (a) pupils, (b) school operations, and
(c) school-community relationships.

Bolton pointed out that many schools have tried to evaluate teaching effectiveness on the basis of pupils' achievement scores. He added that because of the varying abilities of pupils this technique must be viewed with care (6:691-6).

Barr, Torgenson, and their collegues made a study using a number of mathematics groups (3:73-138). Scores on pupil achievement tests were correlated with teaching efficiency as measured by certain rating scales. The study was prefaced with the following statement (3:85-86):

> The ultimate criterion of teaching ability should consist of the measured changes in pupils (1) when these changes have been measured by valid and reliable instruments of measurement; (2) when the instruments of measurement have been chosen in terms of the established objectives of education; (3) when the measurement is complete, that is when all the important changes have been measured; and (4) when all the factors conditioning these changes, save differences in teaching ability, are held constant or otherwise equated as in properly planned experimental investigations.

Acknowledging the difficulties in holding all these controls constant, Barr concluded that there was a very low relationship between teaching ability and pupil achievement as measured in this study (3:107-108).

In these studies (Barr, Bolton, and Gage) the authors seemed to assume that measuring pupil achievement is similar to measuring the output of machines.

Davis said (9:134):

Measuring pupils in terms of pupil achievement seems

to be objective, but pupil groups differ in ability
and so in teachability, and with all the advance of the
testing movement, educational progress of pupils is
still not to be measured as accurately as factory
production, with which it is sometimes compared.

Vander Werf (25:1-13) stated that we should evaluate
teachers as well as teaching. He indicated that health,
personality, ability and intelligence, and knowledge are
important as well as performance.

In a previously cited study (3:151) Barr remarked that
teaching ability as used in many studies consists of the
reputation the teacher has been able to create in the minds
of the judges rating her and may possibly be quite different
from the technical ability to produce desirable changes in
pupils.

Knight (9:134) determined that objectivity is practi-
cally impossible when rating a teacher. If a teacher is
rated on forty different items, it is the supervisor's
general estimate expressed in forty different ways.

II. EVALUATING TEACHING

Appraisal of teaching has existed as long as there
has been teaching. Students have evaluated teachers in
ancient temples of long ago, in the homes of modern teachers,
and along today's streets and highways (5:1).

Evaluating or appraising the performance of staff
members constitutes one of the basic functions of

administrators and supervisors; it is necessary for the
successful operation of the school system (1:15). Estimates
of a teacher's work are necessary for two purposes: (1) as
a basis for administrative decisions and (2) as a basis for
improving instruction (22:2).

Dwight Beecher described what seems to be a democratic
view of the evaluative function when he said, ". . . the
evaluative function contributes a factual basis for the
cooperative determination of what policies and practices
should be developed, what improved, and what discontinued"
(4:270).

J. L. Merriam studied the evaluation of teaching as
far back as 1905. He is credited with taking the problem
of teaching effectiveness from the field of opinion and
placing it in the field or research. Merriam tried to show
a relationship between professional scholarship and teaching
ability, using a sample of 1185 normal school graduates.
He was forced to conclude that there was a negligible
relationship (5:5).

Eva Goodenough recently has approached the problem
of teaching effectiveness through a technique called "forced
choice." She described the biggest failure of classroom
teachers as ". . . a lack of ability to control children,
popularly called 'poor discipline'." According to Goodenough,
educators contribute differences in ability to control

pupils' behavior to the differences in teacher's personality.
In her study, teachers were asked to rate two colleagues on
298 descriptive items dealing with personality. She found
that kindness, patience, cooperation, sympathy, and tact
were more closely associated with classroom discipline than
self-confidence, frankness, independence, and modesty
(13:26-29).

III. EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION
TECHNIQUES

There are many ways in which a teacher may be
evaluated. Some are good and some are not. Eva Goodenough
stated the problem in this manner (13:25):

> Two major problems in teacher selection and evalua-
> tion are the lack of adequate instruments with which
> to measure teacher personality and the lack of satis-
> factory criteria by which to evaluate such instruments.

Some types of rating devices which have been used are
the following (22:7):

1. Check scale: listing desirable attributes of a
    teacher, each being checked in varying degrees.

2. Guided comment report: the same as a check scale
    with comments explaining the evaluator's
    rating.

3. Characterization report: requiring the rater to
    write a descriptive paragraph on several
    elements of teaching success.

4. <u>Descriptive</u> <u>report</u>: using a single letter or
   word to describe a teacher's merit.

5. <u>Ranking</u> <u>report</u>: comparing teachers with one
   another and ranking them on a predetermined
   scale.

A recent study of rating in 104 cities suggested
little unanimity of opinion regarding these rating scales.
Most schools used a combination of these types (22:8).

Barr made an analysis of 209 rating scales used in
forty-six states (23:679). He found that (a) a great
variety of terms were used to characterize teaching and
teaching ability, (b) items were generally highly subjective
and ill-defined, (c) content and organization varied widely,
and (d) social and personality traits surpassed, both in
frequency and consistency of mention, all other enumerated
traits.

An extensive staff evaluation program conducted in
Westfield, New Jersey, for many years is based on coopera-
tion among the staff. The success of the program is based
on the conferences following rating or an observation.
Following is a description of the appraisal session (1:15-
16):

1. They are scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

2. Effort is made to provide an informal, friendly
   climate.

3. Effort is made to develop the appraisee's desire to evaluate his own performance.

4. From self-evaluation, patterns are traced to indicate areas of strength and weaknesses.

5. A common aggreement is reached if possible; if not, the appraiser's recommendations must be accepted.

6. All points in the conference are summarized and sent to the superintendent's office.

These conferences are always followed by continued conferences to determine possible growth.

New York State has had an extensive program of teacher evaluation in their schools since 1947. The two objectives of their program have been (1) improvement of teaching and (2) recruitment and retention of competent teachers (4:270).

Since 1934, teachers have had a formal evaluation plan in Cincinnati, Ohio (25:33-36). It is interesting to note that the teachers have always had a part in the planning, the reexamination, and developmental processes that make their plan work.

Spears said about Cincinnati's plan (21:417):

The evaluation of teaching is accepted in the Cincinnati Public Schools as a definite responsibility calling for careful planning. The plan in use is described as representative of the prevailing attempt to humanize the judgment of teacher effort. The evaluation act does not stand alone. Instead it is

buttressed by related supervisory activities leading up to and away from it. Perhaps its most [sic] unique feature is the provision for and emphasis upon teacher self-appraisal.

Some tests that have been published and are presently available for use by public schools are:

1. The Evaluation of Teaching, Syracuse University, (1949).

2. Professional Knowledge Tests, D. E. B., (1949).

3. Teacher's Rating Card, State of Deleware, Department of Public Instruction, (1943).

4. A Self-Rating Scale for Teachers, Houghton Mifflin Company, (1947).

5. Ohio Teaching Record, Ohio State University, (1945). (20:70-125).

The insert found in the front of the Ohio Teaching Record states (18):

This record form is intended for use in a cooperative inquiry carried forward by teachers and competent, informed observers whose purposes are concerned with improvement of teaching.

Gans (12:81) has cautioned us that narrow teacher-rating scales, teacher examinations, and classroom observations that disquiet or intimidate teachers no longer befit an informed profession.

No ratings in present use can claim to be valid measures of teaching success. They could be, but proof is lacking. They are valid measures of the rater's opinion

of the teacher; they indicate the teacher's "prestige score" in the estimation of the rating officer. As such, they are useful as one indication of the quality of his relationships with others, but they are certainly not adequate for use as the sole basis for assignment to salary scales or for most major administrative decisions (22:10).

IV. PRINCIPLES OF TEACHER EVALUATION

According to a recent article by Dwight Beecher (4:270), ". . . evaluation is cooperative planning with purposeful procedures for collecting and interpreting information, and the constructive use of findings for improvement of instruction."

Even more recently, Spears (21:415) stated that rating systems are planned cooperatively today to enable a teacher to see his own classroom effectiveness as a help to his in-service development. Standards are set cooperatively, and self-rating is encouraged. One's work is judged against a standard, not against another teacher.

This modern view of teacher evaluation is different from that expressed by Lewis (17:ch. 11) thirty-five years ago or Cooke (8:ch. 13) twenty-eight years ago. They conceived of teacher evaluation as a scheme by which some authority rated a teacher for the purpose of retention or salary increase.

Evaluative situations in which purposes, instruments, methods of administering, scoring, and interpreting are determined solely by someone in authroity are more appropriate under a dictatorship than in a democracy (14:543).

As pointed out by Wiles (26:ch. 4), teachers need to feel that they are making a contribution to society and to their profession through their job. If teachers have a sense of achievement, a feeling of confidence, and are able to see their own progress, they are apt to do a better job in the classroom.

There seems to be agreement among many authors that evaluation is the prime responsibility of the supervisor (21:ch. 20; 26:ch. 13; 9:ch. 4). Spears said that to have teachers judging other teachers would be shifting the responsibility from the administrator to the teacher (21:409-410). In most schools supervisors can not escape the responsibility of sharing in the duties of teacher rating (21:413).

One author said supervisors should not be held responsible for rating teachers but should assist teachers in developing self-evaluation as a means of self-improvement (24:16). Self-evaluation is the key to mutual understanding. Teacher-fear can be best dispelled through the mutual confidence provided by teacher participation; therefore, a good evaluation program starts directly from

the teacher (25:29-30).

Self-evaluation forms, carrying no value for comparative purposes, are for the teacher's personal use. They may help a supervisor in working with teachers individually, but to file them in a school office might imply that, in a sense, some teachers would be testifying against themselves (21:422).

The following suggestions for an appraisal program are taken from Spears:

1. An appraisal system should reflect the spirit of in-service development.

2. The plan should grow out of the normal program of supervision.

3. The plan should be developed cooperatively by teachers, supervisors, and administrators.

4. It should be motivated by interest in continuous improvement.

5. Any rating form should be only a small feature of the whole program.

6. No evaluation plan or form used is an end in itself.

7. When teaching qualities are included on a form, their statement should represent a positive approach of good practice.

8. The success of an effective program depends on

the proper provision of supervision.

9. A teacher should never be classified as unsatis-
   factory over a long period of time (21:422-
   425).

Teachers should be encouraged to evaluate their own
work (25:29-30). With proper rapport between teacher and
supervisor, classroom observations can be an important
tool used in the appraisal program (26:ch. 13).

Vander Werf outlined these three important principles
(25:29-30): (1) A good program has its start in teacher
self-evaluation, (2) the supervisor should observe the
classroom as often as possible and as often as is needed,
and (3) an observation should always be followed by a
conference with the teacher.

The rating official who basis his judgment on class-
room techniques must see the teacher often enough to estimate
his success but not so often as to upset his morale (22:6).

V. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SUPERVISORY
PROGRAM

There are many methods by which the supervisor can
assess the teaching job. Self-evaluation is often used as
a tool to force a teacher to see his own effectiveness in
the classroom. Something must be said about the general
means by which a supervisor uses his influence to promote

a change in attitudes and behavior patterns in the teacher
(16:ch. 4).

In many school systems a teacher is required to
attend extension classes, summer school, workshops, or
other in-service types of instruction. This in itself may
not be good unless it serves to effect a change of interests
on the part of the teacher (16:70).

An administrator or supervisor must be able to talk
to his teachers in a manner that inspires them to improve.
If there is no way to implement this aspiration, his time
has been wasted. If he succeeds, if the tools are available,
then there must be inspiration for the teacher to realize a
need and a desire to use these tools (16:73).

The supervisor, to improve the teachers' efforts,
must exert some influence on them. If he is perceived to
be an influential person in the administration, teachers
will more willingly accept his suggestions. On the other
hand, if he is perceived to be "non-influential," teacher
response to his supervision may be low (16:95-96).

The principal's task, as supervisor, is to provide
leadership for the group so that the group sees a need and
will act. Research has shown that participatory type
leadership in a group will influence more change than a
supervisory type of leadership. There needs to be a strong
"we" feeling within the group (16:92).

If the group of teachers is attractive to its members, it can exert a strong influence on individuals. If a member does not have a feeling of belonging, he may satisfy his needs apart from the group effort (16:93).

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was not to develop a plan by which a school district could evaluate its teachers. It meant to offer the findings of research as evidence of studies in this field and present plans used by some schools.

It did not intend to suggest a way to rate teachers for some administrative decision such as salary scheduling or promotion and retention. This research has offered, as suggestions only, some underlying principles of evaluation. It is hoped, nevertheless, that this evaluation be a tool to promote teaching efficiency in the classroom.

Since there have been many attempts to study methods of evaluation, since a competent teacher has been defined in many ways, and since the main objective in the school is teaching the child--(1) a competent teacher is one who provides conditions under which pupils do desired learning, and (2) the learning atmosphere in a particular school district is expressed in terms of its educational objectives.

Are there universal criteria governing standards for judging a teacher's effectiveness? These criteria seem to include such things as pupil achievement, professional growth, school contributions, and community relations. Here

again a school has to be more specific in terms of its over all educational philosophy.

All studies drawn upon for this research stress one basic principal in relation to the total program of teacher evaluation: there should be participation to some degree by all personnel concerned. Effective evaluation stems from an interest on the part of each teacher to improve teaching proficiency. This can be achieved only by starting with the teacher.

A teacher, therefore, must continually self-evaluate his teaching objectives to determine if he is using the better techniques and providing experiences resulting in effective instruction.

There is no ready made plan to fit any school's needs. Ideas may be drawn from research and the experience of other schools; however, in the final analysis the school district's philosophy and purposes determine its approach to an evaluation of teaching.

Finally, this paper concludes that no evaluation program can be effective without adequate supervision. Quality is more important to this process than quantity. And, finally, the more effective supervisor is skilled in group processes and the science of human relations.

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