A Study on Teacher Evaluation System to Improve Professional Development Among Junior High School Teachers in Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the perceptions of teachers and supervisors in four circuits from the Oforikrom Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana on the impact of the Teacher Evaluation Process on their classroom practices and professional growth. The study sought to determine to what extent the process of evaluation and the role evaluators played in the process influenced the teacher's classroom practices and their professional growth. The themes that emerged from the data defined a new teacher-centered interpretation of evaluation and leadership expected of supervisors.

The study employed the simple qualitative methodology with narrative inquiry as the method. Interviews were conducted on Twenty-Four (24) participants from 12 schools in 4 circuits. The findings indicated that summative evaluation had prominence over the formative and that increased the level of subjectivity. The study therefore recommended that teacher evaluation be aligned with professional development to establish a positive link between them.

Keywords: Teacher evaluation, summative, formative, professional development

I. BACKGROUND

Quality education for all has been a topical issue on the table of world leaders over several decades. Among the top 17 goals of the United Nations in ensuring Sustainable Development among member states is a direct focus on education. The fourth goal of the SDG is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". To achieve the goals, certain targets were formulated to lead the implementation of the goals. One of such targets for SDG-4 ensures an upward adjustment in the supply of qualified teachers especially in developing countries (Farinde et al., 2015). According to Isoré, (2009), teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education and so must be adequately recruited, empowered, remunerated, motivated, and well-resourced to ensure effectiveness.

The teacher's quality is a requirement for building a more robust human resource for development and the only way to ensure a continuous supply of it is through a systematic performance appraisal otherwise known as evaluation (Kressler, 2003). Many researchers agree on the importance of evaluation. Pulakos (2009) indicates that one of the major roles of human resources management is to reward and promote effective performance among employees, and to recommend appropriate training for ineffective workers. London et al. (2003) reiterated this view by stating that performance appraisals thrive on a fair, unbiased, and objective assessment of an employee's performance. To ensure that learners receive knowledge from high-quality teachers, the teacher's performance needs to be evaluated to ensure quality (Donaldson, 2009; Papay, 2012).

The situation of performance evaluation at the Ghana Education Service (GES) is mostly conducted on employees who are due for one promotion or the other (Arthur, 2015). This practice has subverted and eroded the little credibility left of the evaluation process. To ensure effectiveness and quality, the evaluation ought to be periodic and must be conducted on all employees to assess their respective performances, identify weaknesses as well as strengths, and prescribe ways of improving their professional

competence. The impact of evaluation in GES has been negative, and this is mirrored by the decline in quality at both BECE and WASSCE levels.

There is also the "weak link problem" which suggests that most teacher evaluation systems are not linked to the improvement of the teacher's professional capabilities. Feedbacks were vague, weak, and the implementation of recommendations was not effective as it was left to the individual teachers or their local schools without any follow-ups. It is therefore imperative to link evaluation to professional development to help teachers set specific and achievable goals, provide positive criticism, and magnify their strengths (Boyd, 1989). According to Danielson (2016), teacher evaluation has now been reduced to assigning numbers, ratings, and rankings which is only good at reducing the purpose and worth of the exercise thereby undermining the overall confidence in the evaluation system.

It is in light of this situation that this research is conducted to establish the link between evaluation and professional development of Junior High School teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis and to adopt some best practices from countries that have over the years practiced effective evaluation systems. The study is therefore assessing how teacher evaluation as a tool can be used to enhance the productivity of the teaching staff of selected public Junior High Schools in Ghana.

II LITERATUTRE REVIEW

The Development of Teacher Education in Ghana

Education is a collected social effort that ensures that every citizen becomes a productive and critical member of society with the capacity for a quality life. Since independence, Ghana has demonstrated a strong belief in education as an important tool for national development, by pursuing policies and programs focused on ensuring equal opportunity for education for all its citizens and more importantly making it relevant to the developmental foundation of the country.

Ghanaian education is characterized by conservatism as well as resistance to change and various attempts to change the system have failed. Foster (1965) contends that the

educational system in Ghana was irrelevant and dysfunctional mainly because the type of education provided in Ghana did not address the very needs of the country at the time.

In 1951 when Ghana became self-governing, the Government implemented a plan called the Accelerated Development Plan for Education which provided the basis for primary education for all Ghanaian school-going children and since then, various regimes have attempted with different degrees of success, to fulfill this mandate (Adu-Gyamfi et. al., 2016). As indicated by Fobih et al (1999) an attempt was made to modify the educational system through reforms and acts of parliament (Education Act of 1961) by the Kwapong Education Committee. Unfortunately, lack of resources and political will coupled with the exit of some trained teachers to seek greener pastures in Lagos-Nigeria impeded the implementation of the reforms which led to the deterioration of primary education in Ghana. Abdalla (1986) explained that the education system in Ghana at the time had declined in its quality to a point where the drop-out rate had become alarming.

To arrest the deterioration of the educational system necessitated a call for a paradigm shift in the educational reform programs at the time. A new reform was set in motion for basic, secondary, and tertiary levels of education with the International Monetary Fund (IMP) and the World Bank lending financial backing in 1987 (Acheampong & Furlong, 2000). **Teacher Evaluation in Ghana**

For any institution to be counted among successful enterprises, there is always the need for a continuous mechanism that seeks to appraise the procedures and processes in the institution. The education sector is no exception to this rigorous evaluation exercise. Over the years the Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Education has been in charge of evaluation, supervision, and assessment of educational endeavors in Ghana. Due to the decentralization policy in Ghana, supervision, and evaluation especially the external ones are assigned to the Districts, Municipals, and the Metropolitan Education Directorates (Appiah, 2009). In all the various directorates, inspectors or supervisors carry out these responsibilities under the auspices of the Director of Education in the particular jurisdiction.

The role of these external supervisors and inspectors is to visit schools and classrooms to ensure teachers do what is expected of them. Head teachers who are the administrators of the local schools also carry out some internal inspections and supervisions as one of their day-to-day responsibilities. Wilkinson (2010) noted that headteachers perform other critical duties such as internal inspections and supervision as part of their daily routines, most especially on the use of teaching and learning materials. Oftentimes, the blame for fallen academic standards in school is laid on poor and ineffective supervision (Kpatakpa, 2008 p. 9). This assertion is supported by a Non-Governmental Organization in Ghana called the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC, 2011) which indicated that one of the major causes of fallen standards in Ghana is the weak supervision of teachers in our schools. A situation that according to the ISODEC has increased absenteeism among teachers, failure to prepare lesson notes for teaching, and teaching effectively to the understanding of students. This situation seems to be common in all the regions in the country.

Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

Will teachers perform better if there were no evaluations? All over the world teachers have been evaluated for so long that it is difficult to imagine any public school where this practice does not happen. The question is what causes policymakers to insist that the already meager resources be used to evaluate teachers' performance? As seen in the literature, there are numerous ways to state the purpose of teacher evaluation. Although the list of purposes of evaluation varies in content and length, there are essentially four purposes for which teachers are evaluated – Accountability, Growth, School Improvement, and Selection (Bolton, 1973; Mcgreal, 1983; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). According to Armiger (1981), a better appreciation of the concept of teacher evaluation lies in the tension between two vital goals of the process namely summative and formative otherwise known as accountability-based and development-based. The general perception has been that evaluation is a tool for quality control whose aim is to weed out

nonperforming teachers. However, current trends and reform efforts point to instructional improvement as the ultimate focus of evaluations.

Scriven (1967) attempted a distinction between formative and summative evaluation. A formative evaluation is intended to ensure an improvement within an ongoing phenomenon whereas summative evaluation focuses on benchmarking expected performance against the actual performance of employees. Misanchuk (1978) suggested the need to tighten up the definitions of formative and summative evaluations to get an accurate measurement of the behavior of the element under evaluation.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) also identified the professional development process and quality assurance mechanism as the two main purposes of every effective evaluation process. It can be inferred that quality assurance serves the same purpose as accountability. Many researchers agree that there has been a shift from development more towards accountability (Danielson, 2012; Beerens, 2000; Marzano, 2012). Deming (1986) admits that over-reliance on accountability as the main purpose of evaluation has proven to be unproductive and also encourages the climate of fear in teachers. Stronge (2006) supports the assertion that there are two main purposes or types of evaluation.

Teacher Professional Development in Ghana.

In Ghana, teacher professional development takes a various form which includes; initial Teacher Training Programmes (3-4years), Induction and Initial INSET programmes (within 1 year after pre-service training), In-Service Education and Training (INSET-continuous for updating and upgrading), Upgrading Programmes including Open and Distance Learning opportunities and Sandwich programs. The pre-service teacher training takes place in Colleges of Education (CoE), which awards diplomas to students after completing 3-4 years of study. Teachers are trained based on approved courses and practicum or a period of internship during the training as required by the NCTE, NAB, and NTC which are now combined as Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). There are also Teacher Training Universities in Ghana that take teachers through four years of training to obtain a bachelors' degree. The second stage of the structure of

professional development follows within the first year for beginning teachers. During the induction, teachers are taken through courses such as professional code of practice, classroom management practices, developing teaching and learning materials, School-Community Relations, and other important issues. Lastly, there is the INSET which is organized as both a demand and supply-driven activity. It operates at three levels: District level, Cluster-based and School-Based. The INSET seeks to accomplish some aims such as: developing the teacher's reflective practice, developing the teacher's capacity to promote student-centered learning, improving the teacher's management and leadership abilities. Professional learning activities among teachers at the Pre-Tertiary level of education in Ghana take the cascading form where headteachers and circuit supervisors are trained to train others (Acheampong, 2004). According to Kadingdi (n.d.), the cascading method of training teachers is the best way of re-skilling teachers in curriculum areas which they might have missed during their initial training programs. The Ghana Education Service has since 2005 developed a framework for the implementation of in-service education and training policy for all basic education teachers in the country. A move that is aimed at establishing an institutionalized structure for continuous professional development of basic school teachers. However, despite these efforts by the government of Ghana to regularize and regulate the teacher professional development agenda in the educational sector, these standards are yet to be reinforced. As noted by Atta and Mensah (2015), continuing professional development does not feature in most districts in Ghana due to inadequate funding and even when it is organized, only one or two teachers are made to represent the whole school leaving the mass behind. It is an indication that the program of professional development leaves only in the books of the GES and not in practice.

III METHODS

The focus of this write up is to ascertain the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher classroom practice and professional development among Junior high school teachers in Ghana. Seidman

(2006, p. 8) noted that "At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language." To put it simply, qualitative design has a primary goal of describing and understanding human behavior. Qualitative methodology resulted in comprehensive yet meaningful patterns and interpretations of the study, focusing on teachers' knowledge, skills, and experiences in the classroom over the period. It is also worth noting that qualitative research does not involve numbers and figures as quantitative does. It depends largely on the interpretations given by respondents based on the level of their experience hence, quality and in-depth data collection skills are needed (Best & Khan, 2006).

With the benefit of narrative inquiry, the research highlights the perception of respondents on the meaning and purpose of teacher evaluation system in Ghana. The study further reveals the level of quality of the evaluators as well as the impact of evaluation on pedagogy and professional development of the teacher. To ensure confirmability, the data, method and results are described and raw data and codes are kept by the researchers within the research process. For this study, four (4) circuit supervisors from the four circuits (Oforikrom, Bomso, Appiadu, and Weweso) in the municipal were interviewed: four (4) headteachers selected from the four circuits in the municipality were interviewed as well as eight (8) teachers from all four circuits in the municipal.

As it was not possible to interview all teachers and headteachers in the Municipality, a total of sixteen (16) participants were engaged in the research.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Overview of Nomenclature used for Circuits, Schools, and Participants

Oforikrom Circuit (OC), Bomso Circuit (BC), Appiadu Circuit (AC), and Weweso Circuit (WC) in the Oforikrom Municipal are the circuits used for the study. The table below gives the nomenclature of the schools used. Table 4.1. explains the names used to represent the participants based on their circuit. The Table below outlines the profile of the respondents;

	Item	Supervisors	Teachers	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	6	3	9	56
	Female	2	5	7	44
	Total	**8**	**8**	**16**	**100**
	25-30	-	1	1	6
Age	31-35	1	1	2	13
	36-40	2	3	5	31
	41-50	2	1	3	19
	51 and above	3	2	5	31
	Total	**8**	**8**	**16**	**100**
	1-5	-	1	1	6
No. of	6-10	1	1	2	13
years	11-15	2	3	5	31
as a	16 and above	5	3	8	50
Teacher/	**Total**	**8**	**8**	**16**	**100**
Supervisor					
	Master's degree	3	2	5	31
Education al Level	Bachelor's degree	5	5	10	63
	Diploma	-	1	1	6
	Cert 'A'	-	-	-	-
	Others	-	-	-	
	Total	**8**	**8**	**16**	**100**
	Assistant Director I	3	1	4	25
Profession al Rank	Assistant Dir. II	4	3	7	44
	Principal Sup I	1	2	3	19
	Senior Sup I		1	1	6
	Senior Sup II	-			
	Superintendent I	-	1	1	6
	Superintendent II	-			
	Teacher	-			
	Total	**8**	**8**	**16**	**100**

Research Question 1 – Meaning and understanding of Teacher Evaluation

How does one perceive the meaning and understanding of Teacher Evaluation in Ghana? Research question one on teacher evaluation was addressed by interview questions 1 to 3. Participants responded to the first question by providing their perspective on the meaning of evaluation. Subsequent questions investigated the forms and how frequently the process is undertaken in their respective schools.

The results indicate that more than half of the respondents have a clear understanding of what teacher evaluation is. The definition given by the majority described teacher evaluation as a means of helping teachers correct their mistakes and become better with their teaching profession which affects the general school performance. A typical definition of some respondents indicated that

"teacher evaluation is a process of helping individual teachers to professionally bridge the gap in their knowledge so that they can perform well in their line of work". By this definition, the interviewees explained that teacher evaluation is an admission that teachers have a deficiency that must be addressed. This definition conforms to Addison (2002) cited in Meyer (2007) who defined evaluation as a process of revealing opportunities, related to the performance of teachers and students through a system designed for the purpose.

Research Question 2: Perceived Purpose of Teacher Evaluation Process

In an attempt to establish the relationship that existed between teacher evaluation, pedagogy, and professional growth, the researcher ascertained how teachers and supervisors perceived the purpose of evaluation to be. The perception about the purpose of the evaluation procedure was addressed by interview questions 4 and 5. Two main themes emerged: a) Enhancing growth and b) Accountability.

The purpose of evaluation as stated by some of the participants as a means of enhancing professional growth was reiterated by Danielson (2012: p. 23) when she stated that the

ultimate goal for assessing a teacher's work is "to promote professional development". Below is sample of the responses

> **OT1:** *"I see the goal of teacher evaluation as a means of letting teachers see that they need support and there is the opportunity for them to grow professionally. The process encourages discussions on best practices and ways in which those practices can improve. The exercise to me reveals teachers' weaknesses for corrective measures to grow."*

The responses revealed that ten out of a total of sixteen respondents perceived the purpose of evaluation as a way to hold teachers accountable. Sample of their response is given below;

> **BT2:** *"Well, anytime the circuit supervisor comes around, it is to find the mistakes and faults we make. They come around to demonstrate superiority and to show us that they know what they are doing. The whole process is intimidating to me and does not achieve any meaningful results."*

Research Question 3: The Roles and Quality of the evaluator in the evaluation process

The implementation of evaluation requires a high level of experience, competence, and leadership. Mankoe (2007) writes that the evaluator must be competent enough to be able to help develop the personal work performance of teachers. The evaluator, therefore, needs some level of skills to be able to undertake the tasks of evaluation. Responses from participants were grouped under three sub-topics according to Ricketts (2003) and Mankoe (2007) Technical Skills (know-how), Human Skills (People), and Conceptual skills (Thinking).

Technical Skills: Okumbe (1998) stated that the ability to perform specific tasks effectively constitutes one's technical ability. The participants were asked to comment on the proficiency level of the evaluator on methodology, process, procedures, and techniques of teaching.

BT1: *I see that the evaluators especially the CSs lack the requisite knowledge needed for the job. I remember an occasion when the CS asked me to write up my lesson plan in a certain way that was different from the format that I was taught in college. Lesson preparation for teaching science involves alignment but the CS insisted I do it differently from the previous knowledge in college. Straightaway I saw that the CS was deficient in the procedure of lesson preparation. I have observed that the lesson plan method that we were taught in college is quite different from what the CSs expect us to write.*

Conceptual Skills

Conceptual skill according to Ricketts (2003) is the ability of the evaluator to better understand and see the teacher's work based on a variety of sources of evidence such as lesson plans, teaching materials, students' exercise books, etc.

OT3: *Well, I do not think that my CS considers this skill very important. I say so because the CS only refers to the lesson plan and observes the teaching. And based on what is heard, seen, and observed, he gives his judgment. I don't think he does anything outside of what happens on the day of evaluation. So, if bringing other sources of evidence from outside the lesson delivery is what you refer to as having a conceptual skill, then I can boldly say that my supervisor does not have that skill."*

Human Skills

According to Mankoe (2007), human relation skill is the ability to effectively communicate and cooperate with other team members to achieve a common goal.

"The supervisor who comes to my school is never friendly. He always looks serious and unapproachable. It becomes difficult for me to even ask him anything. I only nod my head when he is giving me feedback whether I understand or not. I only want him to leave me alone because the tension

that exists when he is in school is so bad. No wonder I always repeat the same mistakes he corrects"

Research Question 4: Perceived Impact of Feedback on Pedagogy and Professional Development

The question explored the impact of evaluation on both pedagogy and the professional advancement of the teacher.

a) Effect of Evaluation on Pedagogy

Almost all the respondents viewed evaluation as a means of self-development whilst improving classroom teaching techniques if the right things were done. However, the responses given by a section of the teachers were mixed in that, some stated that the process led to improvement of their teaching practice while some also stated otherwise. Sample of the responses from teachers are listed below;

AT2: *Unfortunately, I have not seen any significant change in my teaching. And it is because I see it as a formality that does not provide any meaningful solution. The recommendations or feedback given appear to be too general and trivial.*

b) Effect on Professional Development

It is believed that the more employees gain experience in their jobs, the chances are that they would perform better. The responses from the participants affirm what was stated by Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) that, feedback from evaluators in the form of encouragement pushes teachers to seek further knowledge in the latest educational issues.

> **WT2:** *Evaluation has made me more abreast with the current trend of educational issues even though it has its challenges. I do have my passion and philosophy of what effective teaching generally must be, but somewhat we tend to forget what the standards are. So we must be prompted from time to time to remember our first love [hahahahahahah.... Let me borrow the biblical saying].*

Findings

Research Question 1

The results of this study indicated that the majority of the teachers described teacher evaluation as a means of helping teachers correct their mistakes and become better with their teaching profession which affects the general school performance. The teachers confirmed that even though their understanding describes a perfect system, the actual situation in practice is quite different from their description of the phenomenon in principle.

Research Question 2

Majority of the teachers agreed with literature that there are two main purposes of evaluation, thus- Summative (accountability) and Formative (growth). Formative evaluation enhances the professional growth of the teacher whereas summative evaluation provides data for decision making (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Peterson, 2000).

Research Question 3

The literature highlighted three main competence levels of evaluators namely; Technical Skills, Conceptual Skills, and Human Skills.

Research Question 4

One major area that emerged from the responses was that professional development was the responsibility of the district and not the local school. However, the districts and Metropolitan show little effort regarding the professional development of the teachers.

Research Question 5

It was revealed from the study that the evaluation process that is practiced at the Oforikrom Municipality is not flexible and tailored to the specific needs of the individual teachers. On the discussion of training, respondents expressed concerns for evaluators to have more of such training to help them in the discharge of their duties as evaluators especially on the use of evaluation tools and their purposes.

Recommendations for Policy

- Clear Alignment of Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development
- A-360-degrees Evaluation System
- Effective Implementation of Evaluation Results
- Professional Development is possible where Evaluation is an ongoing Conversation

Recommendations for Practice

At the heart of every successful program lies the effective implementation of the ideas. Even the best-designed evaluation system and professional development programs may fail to produce desired outcomes if it is poorly implemented as intended.

- Ensure frequent evaluation exercises to consolidate its impact.
- Ensure adequate resources such as curriculum materials, transportation, to carry out the implementation.
- Ensure adequate foundational knowledge on the part of evaluators both internal and external.
- Design and implement a monitoring mechanism so that the teacher evaluation process is implemented to its conclusion.
- Clear norms and protocols for pre-and post-observation meetings should be given utmost priority to encourage self-reflection and critical thinking among teachers (Marzano & Toth, 2013). The timely delivery of feedback points teachers to specific areas of concern for professional growth
- Emphasis must be placed on the growth of teachers through appropriate feedback.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher examined the perceptions of 24 educationists mostly teachers, headteachers, and Circuit Supervisors of Junior High School at the Oforikrom Municipal educational area.

a) A future study could include other Municipalities in the country, to fully appreciate the perception of both teachers and evaluators about the impact of the teacher evaluation system on pedagogy and professional growth.

b) Conduct a comparative study in urban and suburban schools to understand differences, if any, in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher evaluation on improved classroom practices and professional development of the teacher.

c) Conduct a study of all Circuit Supervisors in the Ashanti Region about their and competence in teacher evaluation towards improved pedagogy and professional growth.

CONCLUSION

The 24 participants who shared their experience relevant to this study about the teacher evaluation system in Ghana were committed to growing professionally and also cultivating critical perspective in a system that increased their sense of confidence and competence in the teaching profession.

Hopefully, this study can augment the already existing body of knowledge with its suggested options that will elevate teachers to the highest level of their potential thereby improving their practice and professional growth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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