

AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF,
ATTITUDES TOWARD, AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT FOR THE
OBSERVATION OF TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

by
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Introduction

Teacher evaluation is a subject of prime importance in Alberta schools. Duncan (1985) identified the case of Jim Keegstra (Keegstra v. County of Lacombe, 1983), who was dismissed from his teaching position for promoting hatred toward Jews, as the most obvious example of rekindled public and political interest in evaluation of teachers. While Alberta Education has mandated that all teachers must be evaluated periodically during their careers, there is an apparent need to provide evaluators and teachers with more information and training in order to meet the major goals of teacher evaluation: improved quality of instruction, continuing professional growth, and the preparation of useful and accurately written reports.

During the past year, the Brooks School District has introduced a new teacher evaluation instrument called Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA). Evaluations using the IOTA are to be performed once every four years for tenured teachers, as well as systematically for teachers who are on temporary contracts, and for those who are eligible for permanent certification.

A great deal of money has been invested in this innovation. Evaluators (superintendent, assistant

superintendent, principals, and vice-principals) received a three-day inservice in January, 1987 to become acquainted with the philosophy and skills of IOTA. A half-day workshop was held in April, 1987 for all teachers in the district.

An interest in the changing teacher evaluation practices provided the impetus for this study. It is believed that an examination of the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward evaluation may provide important information about the overall process of teacher evaluation.

Rationale

Although the IOTA has been implemented, it is necessary for teachers to internalize its importance. In order for teachers to be committed to the process of teacher evaluation, they must be active participants. Teacher involvement is more likely to improve the quality of teacher evaluation, and enhance personal teaching effectiveness. Trust and cooperation are essential if teachers are to grow professionally. Teachers who subvert the process of teacher evaluation are likely to become less effective in their classroom performance, and the quality of education received by their students is less likely to improve.

Problem

The purpose of this research project is to consider the perspectives of various stakeholders in the teacher evaluation

process. Their attitudes toward and perceptions about past teacher evaluations, their attitudes toward and perceptions of the IOTA, and their visions for future teacher evaluations will be examined.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward and concerns about past teacher evaluations?
2. What are teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward and concerns about this new teacher evaluation instrument?
3. What visions for future teacher evaluations exist in the views of teachers and administrators?

Review of Related Literature

Teacher Evaluation

Evaluating is the act of making a judgment. House (1973) refers to evaluation as "the process of applying a set of standards, making judgments using the standards, and justifying the standards and their application" (p. 3).

Evaluation can have a number of purposes. "Evaluation used to modify and improve...is called formative evaluation. Evaluation used to make a final judgment...is called summative

evaluation. Formative evaluation is ongoing and continuous, summative evaluation is one-time and final" (Scriven, 1967, cited in Glickman, 1985, p. 233).

Glickman (1985) has expanded this definition in terms of formal evaluation and direct assistance.

Formal evaluation is performed to determine whether or not a teacher measures up to a standard of acceptable work--that is, to sum up the value of the teacher. Direct assistance is concerned with helping a teacher assess and work on his or her own classroom needs--that is, to form a focus for future improvement. Therefore, observation of teachers for purposes of direct assistance should be distinct from observation for decisions about renewal or nonrenewal of contracts. Direct assistance involves helping the teacher in continuous reassessment and change. When the task is one of getting a teacher to meet a prescribed level of performance--whether established by school administrators, central office, school board, or principal--then the procedures used for working with teachers are less supervisory and collegial and more administrative and directive (p. 270).

The objectives of teacher appraisal are described by Borich (1977) as diagnostic, formative, and summative. Diagnostic applications involve the hiring, placement, and initial training of teachers. Diagnostic data can be used to develop inservice training programs which build on the behaviors and skills already possessed by teachers.

Formative analyses are conducted while the teacher is learning and practicing the behaviors and skills to be assessed in the final stage of the appraisal process. The

objective of formative analyses is to identify absent or weak skills and recommend instructional experiences to help the teacher attain or improve these skills. Formative data must be applied frequently in order to provide a constant flow of information to the teacher.

A summative assessment yields a more comprehensive evaluation of the teacher's proficiency. Summative data are used to form cumulative judgments about the teacher, incorporating a broad range of teacher performance variables, as opposed to the small, discrete, observable bits of information required by formative objectives. Summative assessments are conducted infrequently, since they must summarize all the behaviors and skills observed over repeated formative assessments.

Between 1984 and 1987, Educational Research Service (E.R.S.) surveyed teachers and administrators in many different areas of the United States to assemble their opinions on the process of teacher evaluation. The E.R.S. Staff Report (1988) compiled the following data:

- 72.9 percent of the teachers whose performance had been formally evaluated were evaluated by their principal, while 12.9 percent were evaluated by an assistant principal.
- Teachers in secondary schools were more likely to be evaluated by persons other than the principal than were

teachers in elementary schools. For high school teachers, the evaluator was often an assistant principal or department chairperson.

- 72.7 percent of the teachers reported undergoing a formal evaluation during the 1984-85 school year. 17.7 percent reported undergoing no evaluation during that school year. There was a gender difference in that 75.3 percent of female teachers reported that they were evaluated, compared to 69.4 percent of the males. Also, 83.5 percent of the teachers under 31 years of age were evaluated during the school year, while 68.9 percent of teachers older than 50 were evaluated.
- Teachers reported an average of 1.6 evaluator visits to their classrooms during the 1984-85 school year.
- Formal peer participation in teacher evaluation was extremely rare. More than 93 percent of all teachers reported that other teachers played no formal role in their evaluations. Teachers generally were not supportive of peer evaluation. 70.4 percent of teachers surveyed said they preferred that their fellow teachers not be formally involved in their evaluations.
- The majority of teachers are generally satisfied with the form and substance of their evaluations. Indicators of teacher satisfaction were the degree to which teachers perceived their evaluations to be helpful and the extent to which they believed the evaluations were accurate. 65.8

percent of the teachers surveyed in 1985 felt that their most recent evaluation was either "very helpful" or "moderately helpful." A higher percentage of elementary teachers than high school teachers believed that their evaluations were helpful. More teachers under 31 years old found their evaluations helpful than did any other age group, while the fewest number that found them helpful were in the 41- to 50-year-old age group.

- A large majority of teachers (84.4 percent) felt that their most recent evaluation was an accurate assessment of their teaching performance. The highest confidence rating in evaluation accuracy (89.4 percent) was among teachers over 50 years old. The lowest confidence rating was a still-high 81.4 percent among those with uncertain career plans.
- School district superintendents in 1985 expressed confidence in the teacher evaluation process. When asked how they would rate teacher evaluation as it was implemented in their school district, 13.5 percent rated it "excellent" and 47.5 percent rated it "good". Thus, more than three-fifths of the surveyed superintendents felt positively about their teacher evaluation procedures.
- The most pressing problem cited by the principals was insufficient time for classroom observation. The problem was particularly widely reported among high school

- principals. Also high on the list of problems for principals was lack of time for teacher conferences. 78 percent of the surveyed principals cited this as a problem.
- When asked if inadequate training to supervise and evaluate teachers was a problem for them, 62.1 percent of the principals replied that it was not.
 - Teacher incompetence was cited as a "major" problem by only 2.7 percent of the principals surveyed. One-third said this was a "minor" problem, while 61.4 percent said this was "little or no" problem. Inadequate teacher competence was identified as a problem by more high school principals than elementary principals.

Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein (1985) selected for analysis four districts with diverse but effective teacher evaluation systems. They found four important common features across the four districts:

- (1) top-level leadership and institutional resources were applied to the evaluation process,
- (2) evaluators charged with the task of implementing the evaluation system had the necessary expertise to perform their task,
- (3) administrator-teacher collaboration enabled a common understanding of evaluation goals and processes, and
- (4) the evaluation process was compatible with the district's overall goals and organizational context (cited in Good & Brophy, 1987, p. 572).

Wise et al. argue that systematic attention to these four factors is essential if evaluation is to be a meaningful process rather than a meaningless ritual. They further note

that these prerequisites for effective evaluation are not easily accomplished and are often overlooked. They also point out that individual school districts must tailor an evaluation system to meet their unique circumstances.

Wise et al. conclude that to succeed,

first,...a teacher evaluation system must suit the educational goals, management style, conception of teaching, and community values of a school district...Second, administrator and teacher-leader commitment to evaluation is necessary...Third, a school district must decide the main purpose of its teacher evaluation system and then match the process to the purpose...Fourth, to sustain resource commitments and political support, teacher evaluation must be seen as useful, which in turn depends on the efficient use of resources to achieve reliability, validity, and cost-effectiveness...and finally, that teacher involvement and responsibility improve the quality of teacher evaluation (cited in Good & Brophy, 1987, p. 573 - 574).

Townsend (1987) demonstrated that factors such as existing administrative structures, frequency and focus of training, levels of commitment of building and district administrators as perceived by teachers, and levels of teacher commitment to the policy all influence the degree of successful implementation. Townsend further suggests that certain components must be in place before effective teacher evaluation can be pursued. A management system is necessary to assure all professional staff that the evaluators themselves are assessed regularly, that they are acquiring or already possess necessary skills, and that all components of the model are under active monitoring.

Training should be planned to occur, and should provide knowledge and theory, modelling, the opportunity for guided and independent practice, and coaching with technical feedback. Training is important for both administrators and teachers.

A written evaluation policy is important. This is mandatory in the province of Alberta.

Written procedures should be followed in the selection of teachers. Criteria should be ethically and professionally defensible, and should be developed involving representatives of all professional staff.

Job descriptions should be established. Representatives of teachers and administrators should be involved in this activity.

The articulation and acceptance of school and district standards is required. Thoughtful planning must be developed over time. A set of standards should not become a list of competency statements that can be "checked off", but it should provide all professional staff with an unambiguous statement of the basis for all future evaluation.

Evaluation instruments must be developed. They should provide objective, low-inference data, in addition to the more subjective elements of assessment.

Goal-setting should happen every year in which a teacher is being formally evaluated. This provides a structure in

which teachers and evaluators can help shape the educational goals of a school and a system.

Planning conferences should be conducted before classroom observations to provide the teacher and evaluator with information as to what will take place during the observation, and what the main focus of the observation will be. The evaluator will then have time to plan the most efficient and accurate ways of recording information about the lesson.

Multiple classroom observations, each providing specific information about a particular aspect of a teacher's performance, should occur. Additional information should be obtained from supporting documents such as daily plans, unit plans, course outlines, and other artifacts.

Observations should be followed by a conference in which the teacher and evaluator discuss outcomes and share perceptions of the lesson. The more professional, collaborative and positive the relationship between the teacher and evaluator, the more likely the process is to result in growth for both participants.

Teachers who are identified as being in need of assistance should be provided with opportunities to develop professionally. Teachers should be given quality support, and programs of assistance should be developed cooperatively, whenever possible.

A formal report which is an accurate assessment of a teacher's classroom performance and overall professional

standing should be written after a sufficient number of classroom observations have been conducted. The report must be of real value for purposes of promotion, retention, dismissal, and for verifying the professional growth of the teacher.

A copy of the formal evaluation report should be given to the teacher, and an interview should take place. Questions about the accuracy or intent of the report should be resolved.

A teacher may wish to appeal the assessment of performance contained in the evaluation report. A letter could be attached to all copies of the formal report. If both teachers and evaluators are aware of their respective roles and responsibilities, if both have received adequate training, and if both parties are committed professionally and ethically to the process, such appeals should be rare.

A school jurisdiction should have in place clearly defined procedures for the dismissal of a teacher who is perceived to be unwilling or unable to comply with established standards. Steps toward dismissal should be taken only after all other reasonable efforts have been made to assist a teacher in performing in accordance with established standards.

IOTA

The Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA) was developed by the National IOTA Council between 1964

and 1977. It has been updated several times since then. It is based upon The Role of the Teacher in Society which defines six areas of teacher competence. These six areas are:

- (1) Director of Learning, (2) Counselor and Advisor,
- (3) Mediator of the Culture, (4) Link with the Community,
- (5) Member of the Staff, and (6) Member of the Teaching Profession.

The IOTA states, in behavioral terms, what is expected of the competent classroom teacher. A basic premise of the instrument is that through classroom observations and interviews it is possible to ascertain a profile of a teacher's performance in the six roles.

Each teacher's performance is measured against accepted criteria, rather than against the performance of other teachers. This approach is believed to be "analytical as opposed to comparative, objective as opposed to subjective, and specific as opposed to general. It is based on verifiable data....The IOTA is used only for the improvement of instruction and may not be used for rating teachers for merit pay or for retention or dismissal" (Deever, Demeke, & Wochner, 1977, p. 2).

Deever, Demeke, & Wochner (1977) identify a number of characteristics which they believe make the IOTA an effective instrument. IOTA:

1. Defines teacher competence;

2. Provides a common set of criteria in behavioral terms in five levels of teacher competence;
3. Provides a common vocabulary;
4. Provides a basis for discussion with teachers concerning the philosophical and operational objectives of teaching;
5. Focuses on:
 - objectivity, not subjectivity
 - analysis, not comparison
 - specificity, not generalization;
6. Postulates that:
 - improvement of teaching competence is essential
 - teachers desire to seek improvement of teaching competence
 - improvement of teaching competence is possible.

The IOTA instrument consists of 27 scales. The first 14 scales are observational, and are designed for the evaluation of classroom teaching activities. The 14 observational scales are: (1) Classroom Objectives, (2) Variety in Learning Activities, (3) Use of Materials for Instruction, (4) Physical Educational Setting, (5) Classroom Control, (6) Individualization of Instruction, (7) Learning Difficulties, (8) Opportunity for Participation, (9) Teacher Reaction to Student Response, (10) Critical Thinking, (11) Student Initiative, (12) Social Climate, (13) Assessing Student Comprehension / Achievement During the Lesson, and

(14) Current Application of Subject Matter.

IOTA also consists of 13 interview scales which allow for a measure of teacher competence outside the classroom setting. The interview scales are: (1) Peer Relationships, (2) Participation in School Staff Activities, (3) Relating Classroom Program to Total School Curriculum, (4) Parent Participation in School Activities, (5) Utilization of Community Resources, (6) Responsibility for Innovative Practices, (7) Professional Self-Evaluation, (8) Teacher in the Community, (9) Enhancing Multi-Cultural Relationships, (10) Evaluation of Individual Student Progress by the Teacher, (11) Development of Student Self-Assessment, (12) Work with Specialized Services, and (13) Assisting Students in Exploring Vocational Opportunities.

Each IOTA scale contains five descriptors which the observer must use to describe teacher behavior, ranging from marginal to excellent. The descriptors are listed in random order, rather than in order of rating. A profile of teachers can be plotted to reveal areas of weakness which can be remedied by programs of assistance.

Richardson & Hatley (1980) describe a study involving 99 teachers in one school district which was conducted to determine whether teaching effectiveness, as defined and measured by the IOTA, could be improved using multiple techniques of inservice remediation. Seventy-eight teachers were assigned to groups that received remediation designed for

the improvement of instruction as noted on the IOTA, and twenty-one teachers received no treatment and served as the control group.

Group I was a pure control group. None of these teachers had received IOTA training. The subjects were observed, and data were not shared with them. No inservice suggestions were provided to this group.

Group II teachers had been evaluated using IOTA previously, but they had not received IOTA training. These subjects were observed, the data were shared, but no suggestions were made for inservice.

The Group III subjects differed from those in Group II in that they had all received IOTA training. Observations were made of these teachers, results were shared, but no formal inservice activities were provided.

Group IV consisted of IOTA-trained teachers. They were observed, and results were shared with them. There was continuous principal involvement in efforts to remediate low profile scales on the IOTA. Frequent suggestions were provided to assist teachers to achieve higher levels of classroom performance as measured by IOTA observations.

Group V included 20 IOTA-trained teachers who were observed, and who received the results of the observation. No suggestions were made for remediation at that time. Rather, a profile of the 14 observational scales was compiled, and the scales receiving consistently low group ratings became

topics for specific inservice classes taught by faculty members from a local university. Teachers receiving low rating on a specific scale were invited to participate in classes designed to provide remediation on that scale.

The researchers found that Group I held its own on the effectiveness measure, and improved slightly, without any treatment. Significant changes for Groups II, III, and IV were in the direction of lessened teacher effectiveness or greater teacher weaknesses, as measured by the IOTA. Only the subjects in Group V, who were given feedback on the IOTA pretest data and who received structured inservice activities focusing on identified weaknesses showed a significant positive change.

This suggests that feedback of IOTA observation results to teachers, coupled with formal inservice training, can produce changes in teachers' behavior in the direction of increased effectiveness. Less formal remediation procedures produced negative results. Once weaknesses are identified, remediation efforts are more effective if directed toward specific teachers demonstrating common identified weaknesses. Also, remediation efforts are more fruitful when they are more formally structured.

Adachi (1972) describes the IOTA as a criterion-referenced measurement, rather than a norm-referenced measurement. That is, it can be used to ascertain teachers' performance with respect to some criterion. Teachers are

compared with established criteria, rather than with other individuals. Teachers are measured against themselves. He further states that the IOTA is used "only for the improvement of instruction. It is not to be used for rating teachers for retention or dismissal purposes" (p. 8).

Adachi believes that

the acceptance of the program by educators throughout the nation indicates that the rationale upon which the IOTA is based is sound. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when it is criterion-referenced. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when it is for the improvement of instruction. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when self-evaluation and not rating is emphasized. The IOTA is a professional approach to the evaluation of teaching competence (p. 9).

Adachi (1977) suggests that "the approach to evaluating teaching competence that is acceptable to all teachers is based on what the teacher does. What the teacher does is specific, observable, and with proper instrumentation, measurable....Objectivity is the key focus" (p. 2 - 3).

He suggests five necessary conditions for any teacher evaluation program to be successful. These include a criterion defining the role of the teacher, an instrumentation related to the criterion, a training program, focus on the improvement of instruction, and the self-evaluation dimension. The criterion must have social validity, that is, the teaching profession must have input into what constitutes good teaching. The instrument must reflect specific teaching

activities from the criterion or definition of good teaching. The instrumentation must be specific.

A training program is vital. Teachers, as well as administrators, must be given training in the evaluative process, especially in the use of the instrument.

The evaluation of teaching competence must focus on the improvement of instruction, and not on dismissal. Self-evaluation must also be a major focus. The likelihood of the teacher taking the responsibility to maintain or improve teaching competency is greatly enhanced when self-evaluation is a component of the program.

The National IOTA Program (1972) contends that

Data resulting from classroom observation and the interview provide the basis for the trained observer and interviewer to assess the teaching competence ... and identify the factors where improvement of instruction can be accomplished.

The IOTA is strongly weighted toward self-improvement and thus the activities might actually be self-motivated by the teacher since the IOTA instrument is one which encourages self-evaluation by the teacher. The primary purpose of the instrument is to guide the observer in collecting specific, objective information on which a valid and reliable assessment may be based (p. 12).

Methodology

Overview of the Problem

Teacher evaluation is a necessity in the total educational endeavor. The need to accurately and consistently

evaluate teacher performance has been, and will continue to be, a major concern in education.

The Brooks School District has introduced a new teacher evaluation instrument called Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA) in order to assess teacher effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to consider the perspectives of the various stakeholders in the teacher evaluation process. Their attitudes toward and perceptions about past teacher evaluations, their attitudes toward and perceptions of the IOTA, and their visions for future teacher evaluations were examined.

The Instrument

Fourteen questions (Appendix C) were developed to be used during interviews with teachers. Twelve interview questions (Appendix D) were asked of administrators. These were asked to determine teachers' and administrators' feelings and perceptions about teacher evaluation as it existed in the past, as it presently exists, and their suggestions for improvement for the future.

Sample

Letters of explanation (Appendix A) were sent to 6 teachers and 5 administrators (3 school-based administrators and 2 central office administrators), along with a "Consent for Interview" form (Appendix B). Teachers and school-based administrators were randomly selected from a list of participants who had been involved with IOTA during the

previous school year. Two of the original six teachers contacted did not reply, so two additional teachers were subsequently contacted. Of those two, one teacher responded. One further teacher was contacted in order to attain a sample of six teachers. All five administrators who were contacted responded and expressed a willingness to participate in the study.

Table 1 shows the number of participants in the study according to job placement.

Table 1
Participants According to Job Placement

N=11

Job Placement	Number
Grades 1 to 3	2
Grades 4 to 6	2
Grades 7 to 9	0
Grades 10 to 12	2
School-Based Administrators	3
Central Office Administrators	2
Total	11

Table 1 indicates that teachers from three of the four grade divisions were represented. Although two teachers at the Junior High level were contacted, neither of them agreed to participate in the study.

Table 2
Gender of Participants
N=11

Gender	Number
Male Teachers	3
Male Administrators	5
Female Teachers	3
Female Administrators	0
Total	11

Table 2 indicates that there was an equal number of male and female teachers participating in the research. All administrators were male.

Design

The design of this study is descriptive in nature, and the collection of data was through the use of interviews. Structured interviews of approximately sixty minutes were conducted, at times and places which were mutually convenient.

The interview questions were piloted on teachers who were not involved in the research project. Their comments were noted, and changes made where deemed necessary.

Transcripts of the interviews were produced for analysis. They were promptly returned to the interviewees so that they could be verified for accuracy. The researcher was available for further interviews if the subjects wished to clarify or add information.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations.

This research is subject to the following limitations:

1. The research was conducted with volunteer samples. Their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns may be different from those of non-volunteers.
2. The findings are limited by the population involved, and generalizations to other teachers and school districts cannot be made.
3. The accuracy is limited by time. Since the IOTA has been implemented for only one school year, it is probable that its role in the process of teacher evaluation has not fully evolved.

Delimitations.

This study was delimited in the following ways:

1. The participation was restricted to six teachers, three school-based administrators, and two central office administrators.

2. Fourteen questions were asked of teachers, and twelve questions were asked of administrators.
3. Teachers' and administrators' perceptions were considered during one brief period of time, in January and February, 1989.

Analysis of Data

Teacher Perceptions

The Purpose of Teacher Evaluation.

When asked about the purpose of teacher evaluation, respondents made the following suggestions:

- For professional improvement (5);
- To determine teacher competence (5).

Teacher Knowledge of IOTA.

Teachers generally felt that they had a sound basic knowledge of the philosophy and process of the IOTA. They were familiar with the criteria prior to being evaluated. Many positive comments were stated regarding the teacher inservice on this new teacher evaluation instrument.

Teacher Evaluation Prior to IOTA.

Three respondents reported that their past teacher evaluations were subjective. Evaluators typically visited the classroom on one or two occasions, gathered information, met later to discuss perceptions with the teacher, and wrote a final report. These teachers felt that these evaluations were

of little help to them, and provided them with few or no suggestions for improvement.

Two respondents were involved in teacher evaluations which were objective. Pre-conferences occurred in which the evaluator obtained information on the objective of the lesson, methods of collecting data, activities in which the teacher and students would be involved, and many other aspects of teaching. Final reports were written after one or two classroom visitations. The two teachers who participated in evaluations which they described as "objective" are new to Brooks, and were teaching in jurisdictions other than Brooks at the time of their evaluations.

Position of the Evaluator Prior to IOTA.

Four of the interviewees were evaluated by the superintendent. Three teachers also reported being evaluated by their assistant superintendent. Only one teacher mentioned being evaluated by a school principal.

Purpose of the Previous Evaluation.

When asked about the purpose of their previous evaluation, teachers supplied the following reasons:

- To determine teacher effectiveness (4);
- A change in teaching position (2);
- To satisfy Board policy (1);
- To provide a recent report for the purpose of finding employment elsewhere (1).

Accuracy of the IOTA Report.

Three teachers stated that their final reports were accurate. Two of these "final reports", however, were simply carbon copies of the data which was collected during the observation. These teachers felt that the information was an accurate description of what happened during the class, and that the opinions were also accurate.

Three teachers felt that their final reports were not accurate. The limited number of visits, and the lengthy period of time between the visits and the writing of the report were mentioned as factors affecting the accuracy of the final reports.

Teacher Agreement with the Conclusions.

Four teachers agreed with the conclusions of the final reports, which were very positive. Two teachers felt that, although their reports were positive, they did not accurately portray the essence of their performance in the classroom.

The IOTA Evaluation Process.

Four teachers mentioned that they were notified in advance, at least on one occasion, that they would be evaluated during a specified time. The number of visitations varied from a minimum of two to a maximum of five. The majority of these visits were from Central Office administrators, but school-based administrators were also mentioned, particularly at the High School level. The evaluator typically sat in an inconspicuous area in the

classroom, and collected data on the IOTA form. A copy was always left with the teacher. The number of post-conferences varied from one to three. One teacher mentioned that the evaluator also spent time outside the classroom discussing such things as student evaluation and planning.

One teacher suggested that the post-conference was not effective because there was insufficient time for a thorough discussion. Most teachers, however, thought that the follow-up discussions were lengthy and covered all areas of mutual concern. Most teachers mentioned that the post-conferences revolved around the descriptors on the IOTA form. Teachers had determined their position in advance, and they discussed this with their evaluator. Clarification and additional information were given in circumstances where there were questions.

Three teachers reported having received no final report, one teacher received a final report in December of the following school year, and two teachers received their final report in January of the following school year. Only two teachers expressed concern over the lengthy delay in receiving their final reports. The other four teachers did not appear to be distressed about this situation.

Similarities with Previous Evaluations.

The following similarities between the IOTA evaluation and previous evaluations were mentioned:

- They were both very positive (1);

- The reports were very similar, regardless of the instrument used (1);
- It was a "one-shot" thing, a formality (1).

A number of respondents could not determine any similarities between the two types of evaluations.

Differences from Previous Evaluations.

The following differences between the IOTA evaluation and previous evaluations were mentioned:

- Specific categories were observed using the IOTA instrument (2);
- IOTA is more accurate because the evaluator knows what to look for (1);
- Data was collected with the IOTA format, as opposed to filling in checklists in previous evaluations (1);
- The IOTA evaluation was more "in-depth". The evaluators wrote more and brought up some very important points (1);
- When the evaluators left the classroom, the teacher had a copy of what was observed, and there was something concrete to ponder (1).

Teacher Preparation for Evaluation.

The following responses were elicited from the question, "What did you do to prepare for your teacher evaluation?":

- Nothing (4);
- I made sure my mark book was in order, and my plan book was up-to-date (1);

- I made certain that my classroom was fairly neat (1);
- I made sure that I was "on track". I make sure that I asked questions of all students, I was more aware of discipline, and the pace of the lesson (1);
- I made sure that I had more displays on the walls. I had my students do some projects in this regard, which I probably wouldn't have done otherwise (1).

Teacher Expectations of IOTA.

Three teachers stated that they had no expectations for IOTA. One teacher expected to learn more about her own teaching, and she did not. One teacher was satisfied because he was evaluated as being a "good" teacher.

Active Involvement of Teachers.

Three teachers did not feel that they were actively involved in an evaluation of their present teaching practices, and the implementation of different, more effective practices. Their perception is that they have not changed in any way, nor have they become more effective in their teaching practices. One teacher stated, "Despite how much you can pretend that evaluation stimulates growth, I don't think it does. Evaluation is for the employer, really. He's paying you, and he has the right to decide whether he wants to keep you or let you go. That's the bottom line....I would think that evaluations don't generally help teachers teach better. It's anxiety producing, and none of us works well scared."

Three teachers believed that they were actively involved through the discussions which followed the observations. They evaluated their own performance and discussed this with their evaluators. Answering questions, comparing perspectives, and examining teaching practices were examples of active involvement.

The Encouragement of Professional Growth and Improved Teaching Methods.

Two teachers did not view the IOTA as encouraging professional growth. Four teachers believed that the IOTA identifies areas of weakness which will lead to change. Teachers must still make the effort to develop and grow, since the evaluation simply identifies.

Suggestions for Improvement in Teacher Evaluation.

The following suggestions were made by teachers as ways to improve teacher evaluation:

- Leave teacher evaluation to the school-based administrators (1);
- Involve the school-based administrators more in teacher evaluation (1);
- Do less teacher evaluation, as teachers are too heavily evaluated (1);
- Be guided by the IOTA, rather than ruled by it (1);
- Evaluate content more, rather than merely evaluating process (1);
- Implement peer coaching (1);

- Increase the amount of release time available to school-based administrators so that they have more time for teacher evaluation (1);
- Involve experienced teachers, particularly in specialty areas, in teacher evaluation (1).

Administrator Perceptions

Purpose of Teacher Evaluation.

Administrators articulated several purposes of teacher evaluation. They are:

- Professional improvement, to have a positive impact on teaching (4);
- Performance review, to keep informed as to what the employees are doing, to be accountable for what is happening in the classroom (3);
- For purposes of promotion, advancement, and management decisions (2).

Purpose of IOTA.

Administrators view the IOTA as a tool, or an instrument, which can be used as part of teacher evaluation. It is the criteria against which teacher performance is measured. It is a model of teaching, and a way of organizing what happens in the classroom so that evaluator and evaluatee can review the events in a structured manner. The purpose is also to try

to provide continuity and common understanding about the elements of effective teaching.

Suitability of IOTA to the Purpose of Teacher Evaluation.

The IOTA is viewed simply as a tool to assist in the evaluation of teachers, and not the "end all". Its effectiveness, according to one administrator, is dependent on the level of trust between the evaluator and evaluatee. It highlights areas which are important to the act of teaching, and provides information to evaluators charged with writing reports on teachers' effectiveness. It is felt that the IOTA instrument embraces the multitude of components of teaching.

Evaluator Training.

All five evaluators attended a three-day inservice on the use of the IOTA. The inservice included a discussion of the philosophy, the instrument, practice data gathering, scoring, reconciling, and actual classroom observations. Subsequent to the inservice, a workshop was held where evaluator concerns were discussed, and questions were answered.

Teacher Evaluations Before IOTA.

Typical teacher evaluations before the implementation of the IOTA varied from administrator to administrator. Three administrators routinely used pre-conferences and post-conferences, although some of the post-conferences were similar to short, unstructured conversations.

Two administrators followed the David Townsend model, and one was guided by the Madeline Hunter model of teacher evaluation. Anecdotal records were written by the majority of administrators, and the number of visitations varied from a minimum of one per year to a maximum of three per year for each teacher being evaluated.

School-based administrators usually did not write a formal report at the end of the evaluation cycle, unless specifically requested to do so by the teacher being evaluated. Both central office administrators, however, did write formal reports, after discussion with the school-based administrators.

Effectiveness of Teacher Evaluation Prior to IOTA.

The following characteristics of previous teacher evaluations were considered by some evaluators to be effective:

- Teachers chose the aspect of their performance in which they were interested and on which they wanted data collected (1);
- This type of evaluation lends itself well to the formative aspect (1);
- Teachers had ownership of this method of teacher evaluation, and were more committed to the process (1).

The following ineffective characteristics of teacher evaluation, prior to the IOTA, were suggested:

- Fewer areas were dealt with (2);
- There was no long-term goal setting (1);

- The process was time-consuming (1);
- It was more difficult to write a summative report (1);
- The evaluation was subject to the biases of the evaluator (1);
- There was no common language (1);
- Teachers were not involved in the process (1).

Use Made of the Evaluation Results.

All five evaluators reported that they provide the teacher with a copy of the final report and a copy is put in their file. It is referred to when a letter of reference is required, but it is not sent to other school jurisdictions.

Rewards for Superior Teachers.

All evaluators reported that they have no formal reward system for superior teachers. There are, however, a number of informal methods of recognition, such as appointments to committees, and consideration for leadership positions.

Programs of Assistance.

The District does not have in place a formal program of assistance for teachers who are experiencing difficulty. Three evaluators believed that the teacher must be responsible for professional growth, and the impetus should not come from evaluators. Two evaluators have attempted to develop strategies to assist teachers, and work with them more closely.

Evaluator Expectations of IOTA.

All evaluators, without exception, believed that the IOTA has met their expectations. The following expectations were stated:

- It is merely a tool (3);
- It was a way of taking evaluators at their present levels of expertise and allowing them to do a credible job of teacher evaluation (1);
- It encourages two-way interaction (1);
- It fosters more effective conferences (1);
- It is an objective method of teacher evaluation (1).

Teacher Involvement.

Most administrators felt that teacher involvement was most evident in the post-conferences. Teachers are asked to come to their own conclusions about the data, and share perceptions with their evaluators. School-based administrators also employ pre-conferences as a way of involving the teacher. One evaluator asks teachers to rate him as to his effectiveness as an evaluator. Teachers have been involved in discussions on the role of the teacher, and in the modification of the instrument to suit the purposes of the local School District.

Encouragement of Professional Growth and Improved Teaching Methods.

Only one evaluator felt that teachers are not encouraged to improve or grow professionally as a result of the IOTA.

One evaluator felt that teachers have more freedom to exchange ideas. The IOTA specifies areas for improvement, and two administrators felt that this encourages teachers to attain higher levels of performance.

Achievement of Goals.

One administrator expressed disappointment with the IOTA, and felt that the previous method was more effective. However, there were numerous goals which were satisfied with the implementation of the IOTA. These were:

- Consistency of the instrument (2);
- Facilitation of meaningful discussion (2);
- More administrators going into classrooms more often (2);
- The provision of concrete structure (2);
- Promotion of collaboration and increased efficacy (1);
- Improved goal-setting (1);
- The collection of data that is more objective (1).

Suggestions for Improvement.

There were numerous suggestions for the improvement of teacher evaluation. They include:

- Reduce the formality and threat involved with teacher evaluation (2);
- Develop programs of assistance (2);
- Incorporate peer supervision into the process (2);
- Perform fewer teacher evaluations to lessen teacher stress (1);
- Develop a termination policy (1);

- Review the teacher evaluation policy to address the area of teacher supervision (1);
- Entrust teacher evaluation to teachers (1);
- Investigate ways of lessening the time commitment (1);
- Explore ways to reduce the negative feelings of some teachers (1).

Discussion

In many school districts, teacher evaluation is a perfunctory, routine, bureaucratic requirement that yields no help to teachers and no decision-oriented information to the school district. The process does nothing for teachers except contribute to their weariness and reinforce their skepticism of bureaucratic routine...It does little for administrators except add to their workload....The ritual exists to satisfy the bureaucratic imperative that every teacher be observed by an administrator every year....The time of the evaluator is too short, the span of control too wide, and the expertise too limited to produce reliable and valid insights that might lead to significant action (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1985, p. 28, 29).

Increased interest in and debate about teacher evaluation highlight the need for a greater understanding of teachers' attitudes toward this topic. Professionalism requires that teachers' perspectives be considered. Teacher evaluation must not be a perfunctory routine which provides no credible information or assistance to teachers. Educators must be involved, energized, and possess ownership in their own improvement.

This research project has revealed a number of teacher attitudes which merit consideration. Perhaps the most important is that teachers believe that teacher evaluation should be both for the purpose of professional improvement (formative) and to determine competence (summative).

The teachers involved in this study generally feel neutral about the IOTA instrument used for teacher evaluations in the Brooks School District. They did not participate in the selection of this particular instrument. They do not have strong feelings about the instrument used, the evaluation process, or the results.

Of the teachers interviewed, those who have been formally trained in teacher evaluation have higher expectations. They desire a more thorough, personal involvement in the evaluation process.

Teachers reported that they had all received information about the purpose and process of the IOTA, and do not desire additional information. The inservice they received is viewed positively by the teachers of the district.

The IOTA has been tailored to meet the needs of the Brooks School District. A number of scales and scale descriptors have been modified to more accurately measure teaching effectiveness as specified at the local level.

Teachers in Brooks state that they are most often evaluated by central office administrators for the purpose of decision-making. Professional growth is not encouraged in the

opinions of the teachers interviewed. Areas of weakness are identified, but improvement is not required. Mediocre teachers continue to be mediocre, and incompetent teachers continue to be incompetent. Exceptional teachers continue to be exceptional, but their continued growth is not due to their evaluation, but rather to their own interest in, and concern for, quality instruction.

Most teachers are pleased with their reports because the reports are generally very positive. However, teachers do not necessarily agree with such "glowing" accounts. They do not view their evaluations as credible. The limited number of observations and the extensive periods of time between the observations and the writing of the report may be causing teachers to question the usefulness of the whole endeavor.

"Evaluation must be a cooperative endeavor, with the full support, involvement and commitment of teachers, and designed to establish rapport and communication between evaluators and evaluatees" (Alberta Education, 1985, p. 3). Fifty percent of the teachers interviewed do not feel actively involved in their evaluations. In their opinion, evaluation is done to them, rather than with them. The visits are seen by these teachers as superficial and having little or no impact on teaching behavior. In contrast, the other teachers felt actively involved in the discussions subsequent to the observations. They reflected on their performance and compared perspectives with their evaluators.

In general, evaluators felt more positive than teachers about the evaluations in which they were involved. They consider the IOTA to be one tool which they have at their disposal, which allows for more focused observations and more meaningful discussions.

Administrators feel well trained in the use of the instrument. In many cases, they believe that the IOTA is superior to what they used before, in that it is more structured. They need and appreciate the instrument because it is objective and gives them a sense of control.

The IOTA specifies observational scales on which the evaluator is to focus. The administrators believe that these provide for greater consistency. They also increase the structure and organization of the evaluation.

Conclusion

Teacher evaluation is important and must occur continuously. The administrators in the Brooks School District are to be commended for their interest in teacher evaluation. They perceived the former approaches to teacher evaluation to be lacking in certain areas and, after a great deal of research and discussion, they have implemented an instrument which they believe will better meet their needs. Local administrators are constantly monitoring the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation process and anticipate changes as the innovation evolves.

The IOTA is a well-researched instrument which is based on sound teaching principles. It is highly structured and can provide evaluators with an objective method of gaining information. It can produce standardized and defensible information about teacher performance. The IOTA can identify areas of strength and weakness, which can be used for purposes of professional development. Evaluators using the instrument have the ability to provide fair, thorough, and consistent data.

Teachers within the district want to be more involved in future decisions concerning teacher evaluation. Townsend (1987) states:

On every school staff there are teachers whose opinions and attitudes have extensive influence. These key teachers frequently have much to offer when new policies are being introduced. Some of them may have years of valuable experience to draw upon in aiding the implementation. Others may have special skills and knowledge, the sharing of which could be most beneficial. Some may be the moral or the political leaders on a staff. Encouraged, these teachers can be a powerful energizing force. Ignored, they have the potential to subvert the best intentions of any new policy (p. 4).

The involvement of classroom teachers is likely to increase their knowledge of and commitment to the process of formal teacher evaluation. Involvement is also likely to increase collaboration within a relationship of trust. Evaluators are more likely to be seen as colleagues rather than adversaries. In some cases, the relationship could shift

from that of a "cold war" to that of a partnership.

Although the teachers involved in this study do not have strong feelings of pleasure or displeasure with their evaluations, it should be of some concern that they are detached and disinterested. The IOTA has stimulated some discussion among professionals, but it is still not a major influence upon the work lives of most teachers.

Peer supervision could encourage teacher involvement in the evaluation process. "Appraisal data...should serve not only to evaluate but also to improve teaching performance" (Borich, 1977, p. 43). Peer supervision must certainly be considered as a method of improving teacher effectiveness. Resources such as training and release time could be provided to facilitate collegial peer visitations and discussions to enable teachers to exchange information and assistance. It is apparent that teachers who have received additional training in evaluation favor greater collegial activities related to the improvement of teaching.

Recommendations

1. An administrative position could be created within the Brooks School District to co-ordinate peer supervision and carry out teacher evaluations. In the selection of this administrator, the principal criteria should be

commitment to teacher evaluation and adequate training.

The person occupying this position would be responsible for evaluating teachers in ways which would involve all participants. Numerous visitations could be performed, preceded and followed by useful discussions. Because performance appraisal is a time-consuming task, it is imperative that this person have the time to genuinely involve teachers in an evaluation of their performance, both for formative and summative purposes. Reports could then be written for every teacher evaluated. Since teacher evaluation would be the primary concern of this administrator, reports could be written promptly after the observations were complete. Methods of following up on recommendations could be more rigorously implemented and monitored.

2. Other methods of evaluation could be encouraged to complement the use of the IOTA. This would increase the likelihood of meeting the needs of all teachers involved.
3. Consideration should be given to the development of programs of assistance. Teachers who are unable to meet acceptable standards of performance should be provided with opportunities for professional development. Professional journals and books should be available, inservice should be provided, and university courses should be recommended for teachers whose effectiveness in a particular area requires improvement.

4. The formation of a termination policy for the Brooks School District should be contemplated. Teachers who are unable or unwilling to meet acceptable standards after all reasonable attempts have been made to enhance their teaching effectiveness, should have their contracts terminated. This would ensure that only competent and excellent teachers are employed in the district, and it would give credibility to the evaluation process. The professional approach to teacher evaluation removes those who are incompetent, and helps others to become more committed to their profession.

Summary

The Brooks School District has made strides in the improvement of teacher evaluation during the past two years. Despite difficulties in the implementation of a new teacher evaluation instrument, it is evident that more discussion is taking place among professionals, and that change is occurring to meet the needs of teachers and evaluators.

Teacher evaluation is important to all stakeholders in the educational endeavor. All teachers must be evaluated at various stages in their careers, and they are entitled to evaluations which are accurate, will improve the quality of instruction, and will encourage their professional growth. The time has come for teachers to take an active role in their evaluations. A horizontal process, based on respect and

expertise, should encourage greater honesty and cooperation. When increased professional growth, heightened perceptions of self-worth, greater teacher effectiveness, and an improved quality of education result, the effort and expense will be seen to be worthwhile.

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Appendix A

Letter to Teachers and Administrators

Eastbrook Elementary School
P. O. Bag 830
Brooks, Alberta
TOJ OJO

January 16, 1989

Dear Colleague:

I am currently involved in a research project which is in partial fulfillment of my Master of Education degree at the University of Lethbridge. My interest is in Teacher Evaluation.

As you are aware, the Brooks School District has implemented a new teacher evaluation instrument called Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA). My research project involves the examination of the perspectives of the various stakeholders in the teacher evaluation process. Their attitudes toward and perceptions about past teacher evaluations, their attitudes toward and perceptions about IOTA, and their visions for future teacher evaluations will be studied. I anticipate that educators in our school district will benefit from this project if evaluators and teachers continue to discuss and reflect upon current teacher evaluation practices.

Because you have been personally involved with IOTA, I feel that you are my best source of information, and I am requesting your participation in this research project. I intend to interview six teachers who were evaluated last year using the IOTA instrument, three school-based administrators, and two Central Office evaluators. Each participant will be interviewed on one occasion, for approximately thirty to sixty minutes. Interviews will be conducted at times and places which are mutually convenient.

I am requesting that you fill out the Consent for Interview form and return it to me through the internal mail service on or before January 20, 1989. All specific information will remain confidential, and only trends and generalities will be reported. No names, locations, or other identifying information will be included in any discussion of the results. You have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time. You have the right to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of the information obtained from your interview and will have access to a copy of the study results.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 362-5464 (Eastbrook Elementary School) or 362-5909 (home). Also, feel free to contact any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Myrna Greene, who can be reached at 329-2424. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Debra Ireland

Debra Ireland
Graduate Student
University of Lethbridge

Appendix B

Stakeholders' Perspectives of Teacher Evaluation
in Brooks School District #2092

Consent for Interview

I hereby give my consent to be interviewed. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research without prejudice at any time.

Signature

Home Phone Number

Date

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What do you think should be the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. What do you know about IOTA?
3. Describe a typical evaluation in which you were involved prior to the introduction of IOTA.
4. When were you last evaluated (before the introduction of IOTA)?
5. What position did your evaluator hold in the Brooks School District?
6. What was the main purpose of that evaluation?
7. In your opinion, was your teacher evaluation report an accurate appraisal of your performance?
8. Did you agree with the conclusions?
9. Describe the evaluation process as you experienced it last year with IOTA. Explain the similarities and differences between IOTA and your previous evaluations.
10. What did you do to prepare for your teacher evaluation?
11. Has your IOTA evaluation met your expectations? Please elaborate.

12. How does the teacher evaluation process actively involve teachers and evaluators in an evaluation of present teaching practices and the implementation of different, more effective practices?
13. To what extent does the instrument encourage professional growth and improved teaching methods?
14. Can you suggest any ways in which teacher evaluation practices in Brooks could be made more effective? What teacher evaluation practices would you like to see in the future?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Administrators

1. What is the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. What is the purpose of IOTA?
3. Does IOTA suit the purpose of teacher evaluation?
Does it do what it says it will do?
4. What training and information have you received on IOTA?
5. Describe a typical teacher evaluation in which you were the evaluator before you used IOTA. What was effective? What was deficient?
6. Describe a typical teacher evaluation in which you use IOTA. What is effective? What is deficient?
7. What is done with the evaluation results? What is done to reward "superior" teachers and to assist teachers in need of support? How is this different than in the past?
8. Has IOTA met your expectations? Please elaborate.
9. How does the teacher evaluation process actively involve teachers and evaluators in an evaluation of present teaching practices and the implementation of different, more effective practices?

10. To what extent does the instrument encourage professional growth and improved teaching methods?
11. To what extent has IOTA satisfied your goals?
12. Can you suggest any ways in which teacher evaluation practices in Brooks could be made more effective? What teacher evaluation practices would you like to see in the future?