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Teachers who feel evaluation processes are used for instructional purposes have different attitudes about the procedure than those who feel the evaluations are used for administrative purposes.

# Teacher attitudes concerning the procedures involved in teacher evaluation

by Mel J. Zelenak



Mel J. Zelenak is an assistant professor of consumer economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His M.A. degree is from Trenton (N.J.) State College in business and distributive education. His Ph.D. is from the University of Iowa in education administration. He is the author of numerous articles appearing in educational journals.

In 1654 the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colonies passed a law that required the elders of a town, as well as the overseers of Harvard University, to insure that no teachers were hired who were "unsound in the faith or scandalous in their lives."<sup>1</sup> This was the beginning of a long process that we now know as teacher selection and evaluation.

The burden of proof of determining competency is usually assumed by the building principal or other administrative personnel. Current literature suggests that administrators are divided into two distinct groups relative to their philosophies concerning the purpose of teacher evaluation. One group emphasizes the intent of evaluation is for administrative purposes, i.e. teacher tenure, promotion, dismissal, assignment, salary, etc. are involved. The other group denotes that evaluation is to assist the teacher to improve performance and advance in his profession.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the controversy concerning teacher competency will continue until educators concur on an acceptable purpose for teacher evaluation.

## Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this investigation was to compare attitudes of teachers who believe the intent of evaluation is for administrative purposes with those of teachers who believe the intent of evaluation is for instructional purposes. This investigation was a follow-up to a similar study completed by the researcher at the University of Iowa.<sup>3</sup> The following questions were presented to assist the investigator in evaluating the above:

1. Do teachers with different perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching evaluation differ in their attitudes toward the first concept: "teaching evaluation in this school?"
2. Do teachers with different perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching evaluation differ in their attitudes toward the second concept: "the individual(s) who evaluate in this school?"
3. Do teachers with different perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching evaluation differ in their attitudes toward the third concept: "the evaluation form used by this school?"
3. Do teachers with different perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching evaluation differ in their attitudes toward the fourth concept: "in-service programs related to teaching evaluation in this school?"
5. Do teachers with different perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching evaluation differ in their attitudes toward the fifth concept: "the post-evaluation conference used by this school?"

## Procedures

The data gathering instrument used for the investigation was similar to the semantic differential technique developed by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum.<sup>4</sup> Three attitudinal dimensions or elements of semantic meaning (activity, evaluative and potency) were developed by these three authors. The following bipolar adjectives were found to be highly weighted on these dimensions and were used as the opposite ends of the scales of measurement employed to rate the concepts presented to subjects in this study: (1) activity: dull-sharp, passive-active, slow-fast and cold-hot; (2) evaluative: worthless-valuable, unfair-fair, bad-good and unpleasant-pleasant; (3) potency: rough-smooth, shallow-deep, weak-strong and narrow-wide.

**TABLE I**  
 Semantic Differential Differences Between Two Groups of Teachers on Five Evaluation Concepts

		Administrative N = 83		Instructional N = 157		Diff.	t
		$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$	$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$		
Concept I:	Activity	3.98	1.01	4.42	.91	.44	-3.45*
	Evaluative	4.70	1.32	5.23	1.27	.53	-5.99*
	Potency	3.83	1.31	4.50	1.24	.67	-3.89*
Concept II:	Activity	4.42	1.10	4.65	1.07	.23	-1.64
	Evaluative	5.04	1.40	5.48	1.27	.44	-2.48*
	Potency	4.33	1.36	4.77	1.28	.44	-2.51*
Concept III:	Activity	4.08	.90	4.26	.95	.18	-1.41
	Evaluative	4.28	1.26	4.95	1.26	.67	-3.93*
	Potency	3.97	1.19	4.39	1.11	.42	-2.71*
Concept IV:	Activity	3.36	1.03	3.85	1.00	.49	-3.06*
	Evaluative	3.63	1.21	4.26	1.33	.63	-3.11*
	Potency	3.39	1.08	4.01	1.15	.62	-3.56*
Concept V:	Activity	4.09	1.05	4.44	1.00	.35	-2.28*
	Evaluative	4.47	1.11	5.24	1.16	.77	-4.15*
	Potency	4.03	1.14	4.62	1.21	.59	-3.32*

\*Significant beyond the .01 level for two-tailed tests and 229 d.f.

Teachers from school districts throughout the state of Kansas were asked to participate in the endeavor. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, 236 were returned, of which 232 or 58 per cent were useable.

For purposes of analysis, the respondents were divided into two groups: (1) the administrative group (those teachers who indicated the intent of teacher evaluation is for administrative purposes) and (2) the instructional group (those teachers who believe the intent of evaluation is for instructional purposes.) The two group means for the three attitudinal dimensions were compared through the utilization of a t-test. For the two groups to be significantly different on any of the five concepts, all three attitudinal dimensions for a particular concept had to be significant.

#### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

- Concept I. Table I shows that the administrative group of teachers scored significantly lower on all three attitudinal dimensions toward the concept, "teaching evaluation in this school," than the instructional group of teachers.
- Concept II. The administrative group of teachers scored significantly lower on two of the three attitudinal dimensions toward the concept, "the individual(s) who evaluate in this school," than the instructional group of teachers.
- Concept III. The administrative group of teachers scored significantly lower on two of three attitudinal dimensions toward the concept, "the evaluation form used by this school," than the instructional group of teachers.
- Concept IV. The administrative group of teachers scored significantly lower on all three attitudinal dimensions toward the concept, "in-service programs related to teaching evaluation in this school," than the instructional group of teachers.

Concept V. The administrative group of teachers scored significantly lower on all three attitudinal dimensions toward the concept, "the post-evaluation conference used by this school," than the instructional group of teachers.

#### Conclusions

The follow-up investigation of teacher perceptions of the teacher evaluation process provided results that tend to indicate that teachers who feel evaluation is for instructional purposes are supportive of evaluation. However, those teachers who feel evaluation is utilized for administrative purposes (teacher's tenure, promotion, dismissal, assignment, salary, and permanent record file) tend to regard the teacher evaluation process in a negative manner.

The writer suggests that interested principals and other supervisory personnel administer the aforementioned questionnaire to teaching staff members. If a large proportion of the results suggest that teachers' perceptions of evaluation conflict with the administrator's view of the purpose of evaluation, then communications between administrators and teachers on this critical morale issue should be strengthened.

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