

THE USE AND MISUSE OF TEACHER APPRAISAL

An overview of cases in the developed world

SUMMARY

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Summary of main findings

Teacher appraisal takes place on a regular basis in many countries, and has become increasingly common in the last few years. According to information provided by EI affiliates in OECD countries, teacher assessment methods generally encompass self-assessment, peer and school leader evaluation, student and, less frequently, parent surveys, external assessment through inspectors, inspection authorities, assessment centres, and, recently, student performance test scores. Appraisal methods range from a more formal, objective approach, (e.g. as part of a formal performance management system involving set procedures and criteria), to a more informal, subjective one (e.g. informal discussions teachers, interviews and discussion of individual professional development plans). Criteria typically include the subject and pedagogical knowledge of the teacher, some assessment of teaching methods, levels of in-service training and, increasingly, measures of student performance through standardised tests. School evaluation systems tend to be centred mainly on local authorities, responsible for evaluating their own educational provision and assessed by central education authorities or agencies. Teacher appraisal is usually linked with career progression and changes in teacher responsibilities, (although to a varying degree), and connected to further opportunities for teachers' professional development. Country schemes where there are links between teacher appraisal and salary and pay progression are not common.

In spite of the widespread use of teacher appraisal, though, teachers have expressed concern about the methods used to carry it out, and also about its impact on their work and morale. They are also concerned about appraisal when evaluation appears to be linked to student outcomes and salary. Teacher unions frequently indicate that principals and other senior staff often lack the time, tools or training to carry out teacher evaluations satisfactorily. Moreover, the choice of criteria and instruments for appraising teachers is a source of apprehension, particularly where 'innovative' value added methods are being developed.

In particular, a number of teacher unions and their members have raised concerns about the validity of standardized tests of student performance as a basis for evaluation. In some countries (notably the US), current policies have placed test scores in a prominent role, ignoring evidence proving their instability. These policies tend to promote teaching to standardized tests and a narrowing of the curriculum, as well as a culture of competitiveness among teachers. Teachers' concerns are amplified when teacher rankings from test score-based evaluations are published, as unsatisfactory rankings may have devastating consequences for teacher reputations.

The evidence is that many dimensions need to be taken into account when evaluating teachers. Student achievements are but one dimension – especially when these are standardized tests. Where teacher appraisal is based on professional standards, classroom observations, curriculum development, and a wide range of associated factors which are associated with teaching and teacher perspectives, comprehensive methods seem to be able to provide more valuable information. When teacher appraisal arrangements and policies are conceived with the participation of teachers and their unions, comprehensive methods seem to be able to gain teachers' trust and provide valuable information. As such, they are gaining growing recognition in the debate on teacher appraisal.

1. Background

1.1. Rationale

Teacher appraisal takes place on a regular basis in many countries, and, in the last few years, has become increasingly common. In spite of the widespread application of teacher appraisal sections of the teaching profession have raised concerns about its use. There are concerns not only about the methods used to perform appraisal but also about its impact on teacher work and morale, and, where it occurs, on teacher salary.

During its most recent Congress in Cape Town, in July 2011, Education International agreed a resolution on the Future of the Teaching profession, identifying the evaluation of teachers as one of the key elements defining the broader context in which education workers will be operating in the coming future. Specifically, EI has called for the evaluation of teachers to be based on feedback that identifies teachers' strengths and development needs.

Teachers should feel that they can be honest about their professional needs, as well as their strengths, without being penalised. There is no evidence that individual financial incentives, such as performance-related pay, works in schools. There is a great deal of evidence that evaluation linked to identifying and providing high-quality professional development for teachers has positive effects. (*EI Resolution on the Future of the Teaching Profession, 1.1.2 E, July 2011*)

Putting aside education policy making per se, a quick search on Twitter gives an idea of how critical the issue of teacher assessment is at broader level. It is a debate which involves students, parents, teachers, principals, and professionals engaged in education as well as a significant segment of well-informed public opinion. The topic comes up in more than 100 tweets per day, in its various labels of 'teacher evaluation', 'teacher appraisal', 'teacher feedback', 'teacher assessment'. Similarly, a Facebook search yields a range of results connected to groups or pages focusing on teacher appraisal and assessment.

With teacher appraisal such a popular topic for discussion on Internet, a social network like Twitter could represent the ideal platform for finding information on appraisal methods across OECD countries. For EI it could provide an up-to-date and innovative overview of good and bad practices.

1.2. A note from Education International on the relationship between the OECD's Background Report for the 2013 International Summit on the Teaching Profession and EI's study; 'The Use and Misuse of Teacher Appraisal.

In October 2012, the OECD consulted the Summit Planning Committee including EI on the drafting of a survey on teacher appraisal and professional standards. The OECD through its survey asked Education Ministries of OECD countries to gather information on teacher evaluation policies, in order to provide additional evidence for the OECD's background report for the 2013 International Summit on the Teaching Profession - a report which is being written in consultation with the

Summit stakeholders including EI. Since the survey was sent to government participants in the Summit it was felt that a perspective from teacher unions was important in informing the evidence for the OECD background report. John Bangs, Senior Consultant at EI and a member of the Summit planning group, sent the survey to EI affiliates for completion.

The survey questions were based on the three agreed 'theme' questions addressed by the 2013 Summit on the Teaching Profession. They are set out below.

- How is teacher quality defined by policy makers, the teaching profession and society? What standards are set and by whom?
- How is teacher quality evaluated? What systems are in place and how are the evaluations carried out?
- How do evaluations contribute to school improvement and teacher self-efficacy? What impact can be expected on teaching and learning from teacher evaluation?

Subsequently EI decided to conduct a separate analysis of the OECD surveys returned by EI affiliates. EIRI Consultant Laura Figazzolo was asked to analyse the surveys and the additional comments within them. Her analysis is included in this study of teacher appraisal which was commissioned by the Education International Research Institute. The additional comments from Education International affiliates have varied in volume with a number of teacher unions such as those in the US and the UK providing the greatest amount of information. Survey forms were returned from 27 EI affiliates in 19 OECD member countries.

This report is entirely separate from the background report presented by the OECD to the 2013 Summit on the Teaching Profession. EI believes that both its report and the OECD background report will be a valuable resource for policy makers and teachers alike. EI is grateful to the OECD for its co-operation in enabling the joint use of its survey forms.

1.3. Aim of the research work

The intention of this paper is to inform the policy debate on teacher appraisal, with the specific purpose of providing EI and its affiliates with a powerful advocacy tool. To this end, teacher appraisal methods were researched on digital and virtual platforms. Research results were then analysed with the intention of sharing them with the Summit participants, teacher unions and the OECD.

1.4. Methodology

The study focussed on two strands.

First, it used social platforms (chiefly *Twitter*) to find relevant information for compiling a critical search and subsequent analysis of cases of use and misuse of teacher assessment, highlighting key emerging trends. In this search, unions represented the main sources of information. To this purpose, a special account (*@EI_Research*) was created and used on Twitter, and the topic *#Teacher_assessment* was launched for discussion.

Twitter has proven a useful yet challenging source of information (see Box 11 at the end of the paper). It has proven quite difficult to obtain continuous and prompt feedback from unions, either

because only a few of them actually use Twitter, or because, even when they do have a Twitter account, they use it very sporadically. At the same time, though, Twitter has been a source of tremendously valuable input from other stakeholders (journalists, practitioners, teachers, students themselves, academics and researchers). More than 200 articles have been collected.

Second, the work is based on an analysis of EI's affiliates' replies to the *OECD Summit questionnaire*, as these provided the direct perspective of unions on the issue. Specifically, 28 replies were received from 19 OECD countries (see Table 1 below). One extra reply has been collected, showing the situation in a non-OECD country: India.

Table 1. Received replies

Union	Country
AEU	Australia
CTF EFTO	Canada
DLF GL	Denmark
OAJ	Finland
SNES SNUipp	France
GEW	Germany
KPT FDSZ	Hungary
Ki	Iceland
<i>AIPTF</i>	<i>India</i>
ITU	Israel
ASTI	Ireland
JTU	Japan
KTU	Korea
ISEA NZPPTA NZEI	New Zealand
UEN	Norway
Solidarnosc	Poland
Läraryförbundet	Sweden
LCH	Switzerland
NUT NASUWT	UK
NEA AFT	US

1.5. Timeline

The study was developed from the beginning of October 2012 to the end of January 2013. Its results reflect up to date information and opinions on the topic as of the beginning of January 2013.