



Saint Louis University
School of Advanced Studies
PhDEM 302

Action Research

**A Policy Development on Teacher Appraisal Using Strategic Evaluation
Strategies at Dominican International School**

**A Partial Fulfillment for
The Final Requirement**

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2023-2024

Abstract

This action research explores the implementation of a student evaluation tool and its strategies at Dominican International School as an enhancement of its current teacher appraisal policy. The research found that implementing a student evaluation as a source of data for teachers' appraisal is necessary to provide valuable information for teachers' goal setting and the school's teacher performance report. Under student evaluation strategies, the process of interviewing a focus group to validate students' evaluations is found to be unnecessary, as students' comments support their ratings. The adopted student evaluation tool fits the school's areas and indicators of evaluation; however, a slight modification is made in the tool by omitting two unimportant indicators. The research concludes that Dominican International School adds a transparent student evaluation system for teachers and appraisers concerned. It also recommends that the school advocates constructive feedback and professionalism in the process.

Keywords: *Educational Administration, Teacher Goal Setting, and Instruction*

Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through its Education GPS program in 2021, provided a concise overview of what teacher appraisal intends to do and what policies can be put in place in schools. It illustrates that the purpose of a teacher appraisal is an evidential basis for teacher employment, teacher practices, and teacher professional development where it requires the primary involvement of teachers; thus, the evaluation tools and process and their quality are viewed as essential factors to enhance teacher effectiveness to attain higher student learning outcomes. Other external factors that affect teacher appraisal, including educational leadership, have been comprehensively identified. student assessment, and teacher working conditions, to name a few. Some policies are recommended to ensure the effective implementation of any teacher appraisal system: focused on teacher practices, not on administrative purposes; aligned for professional development, not so much on accountability and high-stake consequences that may appear threatening to teachers; utilize various appraisal instruments from class observations, teacher interviews, self-appraisals, students and parents' feedback, and other documented data.

Recent studies have divulged how teacher appraisals are conducted across the globe. In Oman, teacher appraisal systems are proven to have a significant role in increasing teacher performance and accountability; however, it was recommended that schools create a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of teacher appraisal for all stakeholders involved in the process, and evaluators use several data sources rather than relying only on class observations (Hamed, 2023). In Zimbabwe, teachers in urban areas perceive teacher appraisal as empowering compared to their counterparts in rural areas, as they find it controlling and judgemental. In contrast, those in urban schools view it as reflecting and enhancing. The difference in their perceptions results from a regular feedback system where the culture of professional evaluation is keenly valued among teachers. Overall, it is implied that effective implementation of teacher appraisal is affected by teacher working conditions like school resources, teacher workload, and salary (Nkoma & Shoshore, 2023).

In Italy, Perla et al. (2023) acknowledged that students' and parents' feedback has to be included as new data sources to evaluate teacher quality despite school principals being concerned with using external forms to appraise teachers' performance. The concern can be addressed by using the "leadership for learning" approach, where school principals adhere to "multivoicing in conversations" and "shared leadership," where feedback from teachers, students, and parents is regarded as valuable for long-term professional development of teachers and not on a simple one-shot solution of attending seminars and workshops. In other words, the study found that rather than using teacher appraisal for accountability, it has to shift to teacher improvement but only with an understanding that teachers plan for their professional growth based on feedback from different sources. In relation to students' evaluation as a method of teacher appraisal in the United Arab Emirates' setting, Abdulrazzaq (2022) divulged concerns about students' subjectivity. Some teacher appraisers recommended one solution: choose key students who are mature and objective to give specific and detailed feedback about teachers' performance. Those

teacher appraisers suggested including criteria on technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities.

Interestingly, a student evaluation form was created to provide valuable feedback for teacher improvement in one of the universities in Eswatini (Swaziland). Designing student evaluation forms (in the context of English for Academic Purposes classes) can focus on the top five characteristics of an effective teacher: knowledge of content, command of English, ability to motivate, technological literacy, and patience. Effective class activities and climate can also be stated as indicators for these top five preferences: *provides detailed feedback on work, explains everything in detail, knows how to connect with students, gives many examples from the real world, and delivers each idea/concept in different ways* (Arfa-Kaboodvand, 2023).

In the Philippine setting, the Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (PAST) is used in public schools where school principals evaluate their teachers every three years for salary grade increases and promotion. The component of the PAST includes Instructional Competence, Professional and Personal Characteristics, Punctuality and Attendance, and Plus Factor (Aringay & Prado, 2019). Student evaluation of teachers' performance is not implemented by DepEd. However, state universities, like the University of the Philippines, allow student evaluation and utilize the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) to improve teaching effectiveness. In Taiwan, the teacher evaluation and appraisal system officially began in 2013. Still, it faced difficulties in its implementation as it found the scheme vague, and teachers do not necessarily need to be evaluated (Lee, 2016). The literature did not yield much information on how Taiwanese teachers are evaluated.

In summary, teacher appraisal is generally regarded as a vital professional development system mainly for teaching improvement for better student learning results. It is also determined that different data sources help provide better decisions on which direction a teacher should set as a priority in enhancing his or her teaching performance. Different methods are also used in teacher appraisals depending on the culture of professional growth from feedback from each school. Different countries implement nationwide teacher evaluation and appraisal schemes, but the purpose remains the same either for professional development and/or employment retainment. While some schools question using students' and parents' evaluation, others consider it a necessary tool as a reference added to the usual classroom observation, peer-to-peer observations, self-evaluations, and evidence of teacher performances.

This action research for policy development is one of the promising approaches for school leadership and policymakers to seek “authentic knowledge” to understand any pressing issues or situations faced by schools that are shared by the stakeholders using community-based analysis to resolve or put action on identified problems (Call-Cummings & Hauber-Özer 2018). As policy development involves evaluation in the form of teacher appraisal, it holds the philosophy of realism, where it provides discernment on how causation works. The policy development of this action research involves explaining how enhancing an existing teacher appraisal system causes positive outcomes given the circumstances. Further, the philosophy of realism clings to the concept that “*evaluations...work towards a better understanding of whether, how and why programs work, but can never provide 100% ‘proof’ of any conclusion*” (Greenhalgh et al., 2017).

It goes to show that the process of any evaluation system has more bearing than the product itself. Realism also emphasizes the parts rather than the whole, which is the reason why there is a need to include various evaluation data sources because of possibilities that can understand realities rather than seeing them as unnecessarily subjective inclusions. Direct experience on seeing is another tenet of realism, according to O’Weber, which is why, in the context of this action research, any stakeholders who have more exposure and direct contact with the teacher have a better sense of what “real” is. A sociological point of view in connection to social realism in education is that through social interaction, knowledge reflects “truth” and “truthfulness” (Kumar et al., 2015). The ‘social interaction’ in a school setting refers to the inclusion of teachers in their performance evaluation and students who regularly interact with their teachers. While classroom observations are meant to help appraise a teacher’s performance, any form of feedback from any stakeholders can realistically pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher. The “knowledge” that social realism pertains to is knowing the different areas of performance evaluation to arrive at the “truth,” which refers to decisions on the direction of either professional development or continuation of employability.

Dominican International School (DIS) is one of the leading international schools in Taipei, Taiwan. The school follows Danielson’s Framework For Teaching (FFT) evaluation instrument for three purposes: classroom observations and walkthroughs conducted at the beginning and the end of the school year, peer-to-peer evaluation in the second semester, and a basis for self-evaluation to support teachers’ goal setting. Danielson's FFT has strengths and weaknesses like any other evaluation tool. One of the strengths of the tool is that it is comprehensive enough to cover areas under the four domains of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Each domain has several areas with descriptions and rubrics (Danielson, 2013). However, its strength is its weakness, as it is so comprehensive that teachers and appraisers find it rigorous and time-consuming.

The school committee decided to utilize only the “Instruction” domain of the FFT for classroom observations, which has proven effective but is limiting. This action research intends to create a policy development that strengthens its current teacher appraisal by adding student evaluation as an initial step to respond to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) recommendation of allowing students to provide feedback in the form of evaluation. A part of policy development is instilling transparency in all evaluation strategies, including the data and procedures for proper teacher appraisal. Now, the DIS’ independent evaluations for teacher appraisal are vaguely and incoherently used, resulting in a decision for teacher professional development from one office. As a teacher appraiser, the point of doing rounds of observations and walkthroughs is to determine what professional development options can be offered to a teacher; however, such an outcome does not come to fruition without the teacher appraisers’ involvement.

This action research aims to present how a student’s evaluation facilitates a better understanding of teachers’ performance, which can be instrumental for the professional development direction of a teacher by factoring it into his or her goal setting along with other evaluation data sources such as class observations, peer-to-peer evaluation, self-evaluation, and evidence of progress and achievement. It also aims to address issues of

subjectivity and appropriateness by coming up with a fair component of what areas are to be evaluated by students and how it is appreciated by the volunteer teachers who agreed to be evaluated by their students.

Methodology

This section covers research design, sampling, materials, action plan, procedure, and data analysis.

Design

This case study involves volunteer teachers and students at Dominican International School, Taipei, Taiwan. The school is selected to conduct action research that is useful to develop its teacher appraisal policy, starting with the implementation of a student evaluation system.

Sampling

Two teachers volunteered to be evaluated by their students, 101 students submitted their evaluation forms, and two focus groups involving three students from the two volunteer teachers' classes participated in this study.

Materials and Action Plan

The wider plan is to recommend evaluation tools that specifically target teaching performance in relation to student learning outcomes. The Danielson evaluation tool can be used for teachers' self-evaluation; however, the tools for classroom observations, evaluation of teachers by department heads, evaluation of academic heads by teachers, and evaluation of teachers by students are simplified to reflect the school's areas of interest as a part of teachers (including academic heads) appraisal scheme. A "Teaching Proficiency Report" is prepared based on the recommended evaluation strategies. This report is transparent for the individuals concerned, protected by a privacy clause that is only available for the teacher and appraisers for conferences to determine what professional development and employability options are offered to the teacher concerned. To address the issue of the validity of the tools, they would be scrutinized by focus groups before their pilot testing.

The initial action plan is to develop a student evaluation tool that covers the most essential areas with indicators stated objectively and easily understood by the students. This is the priority as such evaluation strategy is not currently practiced at DIS. The recommended student evaluation tool is presented on the next page.

The two areas that cover the student evaluation tool are Instruction and Classroom Management. There are nine indicators in Instruction and seven indicators in Classroom Management. There are 16 indicators, which would take at most five minutes to complete via Google Form. Five rating scales (from excellent to poor) with their descriptions are formulated. The "Instruction" criteria follow a teacher's typical preparation and expected performance, from coming to class prepared down to providing learning evaluation.

Meanwhile, “Classroom Management” is designed to evaluate the teacher’s capabilities and strategies to ensure that the class is ready to learn, active participation of students is encouraged, and whatnot.

The evaluation strategies are in two phases. Phase one allows all students in each class of the same subject handled by the teacher concerned to do the evaluation. Doing so provides a more objective average of the teacher’s rating. The second phase is to choose selected students who are known for their high level of maturity and objectivity in each class, as recommended by the faculty, for a short group interview. Here, the main focus is observations and discussions on the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses in time management and relationship with students.

These documented sources are evidence that students’ feedback is included in the evaluation process for the school's next accreditation cycle.

EVALUATION OF FACULTY BY STUDENTS

Name of Faculty: _____ Subject: _____

Period covered: _____ Semester, Academic Year _____

Dear Students,

We would like you to evaluate your teachers for the improvement of the teaching-learning process of our school. Please rate your teachers honestly and give objective comments on his/her qualities. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality, so do not worry because your grades will not be affected by this evaluation.

Please rate your teacher on each factor using the following scale:

- 5 – Excellent (often, if not always exceeds your expectations)
- 4 – Very Good (sometimes exceeds expectations)
- 3 – Average (often, if not always meets expectations)
- 2 – Below Average (sometimes meets expectations)
- 1 – Poor (rarely, or never meets expectations)

RATING

I. Instruction

The teacher...

- 1. comes to class well-prepared _____
- 2. reviews the past lesson before starting a new one _____
- 3. explains the lesson clearly _____
- 4. is knowledgeable of the subject matter _____
- 5. raises interesting questions or problems for discussion _____
- 6. answers/entertains students' comments, questions, and suggestions which are related to the subject matter _____
- 7. adjusts his/her teaching style to the students' ability _____
- 8. summarizes major points in the lecture _____
- 9. provides examination which reflects the important aspects of the subject matter _____

II. Classroom Management

The teacher...

- 1. maintains discipline in the classroom _____
- 2. reprimands erring students with respect _____
- 3. makes sure that the classroom is clean and in order before and after our class _____
- 4. holds students' interest during class discussion _____
- 5. gives class activities and requirements (readings, exams, projects, etc.) related to the subject _____
- 6. encourages students to ask questions or express opinions _____
- 7. keeps class discussion always in accordance with the subject's objectives/course syllabi _____

Figure 1. Student Evaluation Tool

Procedures

A permission from the school administration was also sought to do the pilot testing after the tool was validated by a selected group representing department heads, teachers, students, human resource officers, and academic coordinators.

The first phase was conducted by identifying the grade level and subject, and the evaluation testing was implemented for a week according to the volunteer teacher's schedule. After the first phase, I invited three student representatives from each class who were willing to join the focus group interview. Students' observations and experiences on the volunteer teacher's strengths and weaknesses were discussed, and a few questions to validate the collated data from the students' evaluation tool were also included. I readied my report for a short conference with the volunteer teacher to allow him or her to respond freely to the students' evaluation results. The student evaluation strategy is a cycle where teacher improvements that can be done in the short term before the end of the school year can be supported by a second round of student evaluation.

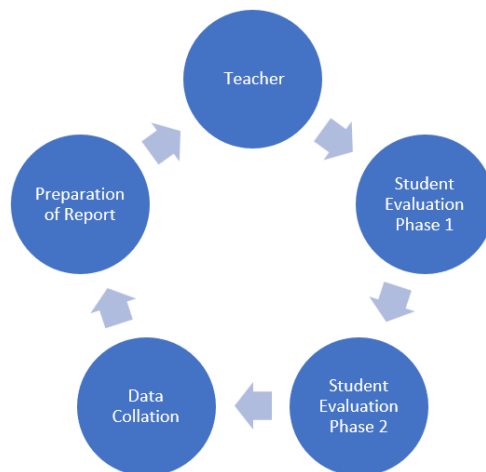


Figure 2. Evaluation Strategies

Data Analysis

The results of the student evaluation were tabulated using frequency and averaging. They were ranked according to the top and lowest-rated areas and indicators. Meanwhile, the interviews were thematically analyzed based on the student evaluation results.

Results and Discussion

Two teachers volunteered to participate in developing the student evaluation tool and processes. The student evaluation was administered using Google Forms on December 04, 2023. It took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey; as observed, much of the students' time was spent writing their comments. The data was collated using averaging to determine the average rating of every item under each area, including the overall average rating of all areas, on December 06, 2023. The comments of students remained as they were; no editing was made. The complete documented results of the student's evaluation for each teacher are found in the appendices. The teachers' names, gender identities, and subjects taught were replaced with asterisks to protect their privacy. Table 1 presents the two teachers' average ratings in each area, including their overall average ratings and interpretations.

Table 1. Overall Results of Student Evaluation

EVALUATION OF FACULTY BY STUDENTS		
Areas/ Teachers	Teacher A	Teacher B
	Average Rating	Average Rating
I. Instruction	4.53	3.53
II. Classroom Management	4.28	3.19
III. Time Management	4.44	3.96
IV. Relationship with Students	4.41	3.72
Overall Average Rating	4.41	3.60
Interpretation	Very Good (sometimes exceeds expectations)	Average (often, if not always meets expectations)

The areas with the highest and lowest average ratings were used to identify the top three and the lowest three average-rated items, which were validated by the list of comments written by the students. Any inappropriate comments like those feedback about the teachers' physical looks were culled out in preparing the report. Nevertheless, copies of the collated student evaluation are given to the teachers for reflection and goal setting.

For Teacher A, 54 students submitted their evaluation forms. Although the teacher obtained high scores in almost all areas, the lowest average-ranked area and items are still identified as they may be competencies that are points for improvement. The area that obtained the highest average rating is Instruction (4.53), while the area with the lowest

average rating is Classroom Management (4.28). Under Instruction, the top three average-rated items are: *1. comes to class well-prepared (4.91)*; *7. uses technological tools such as PPT and other educational tools to deliver lessons (4.78)*; *4. is knowledgeable of the subject matter (4.76)*. Under Classroom Management (4.28), the lowest three average-rated items are: *3. makes sure that the classroom is clean and in order before and after our class (3.59)*; *4. holds students' interest during class discussion (4.22)*; *2. reprimands erring students with respect (4.31)*. Another lowest average-rated item is under Time Management: *5. checks students' attendance (3.81)*.

Table 2 shows some students' comments that are identified to validate the average ratings that Teacher A obtained in Instruction, Classroom Management, and Time Management.

Table 2. *Students' Comments for Teacher A*

Instruction	Comments
1. comes to class well-prepared (4.91)	<p><i>Always prepared for class. When teaching, he gives many details and information about the class topic.</i></p> <p><i>Some qualities of the teacher are that he is always ready for class and has all the materials provided.</i></p>
7. uses technological tools such as PPT and other educational tools to deliver lessons (4.78)	<p><i>** is always prepared for class by making a ppt/SLIDE about our topic</i></p> <p><i>** prepares the class with lots of research informations about the subject, researchs a lot more than the book has offered and make the information into a well-organized PPT, this helps us understand the question better by giving us different prepective of the same thing and also it is very easy to read the PPT,</i></p>
4. is knowledgeable of the subject matter (4.76).	<p><i>Sometimes he can point out a very interesting point or just expresses his feeling towards this topic.</i></p> <p><i>** explains beyond the textbook and provides evidence and explanations.</i></p>
Classroom Management	Comments
3. makes sure that the classroom is clean and in order before and after our class (3.59)	<p><i>the classroom is too dirty.</i></p> <p><i>...making sure the classroom is clean.</i></p>

4. holds students' interest during class discussion (4.22)	<i>...ask more interesting questions</i>
2. reprimands erring students with respect (4.31)	<i>Sometimes, he can be a little bit rude, but overall he is a very good teacher. Sometimes the teacher's statements can be offensive, while sometimes ** might be very strict.</i>
Time Management	Comments
5. checks students' attendance (3.81)	<i>One time, ** forgot that ** has class and about half of class time is delayed. But aside from that, everything else is pretty much perfect.</i>

The students' comments supported the ratings except for one on checking students' attendance, which can be caused by a few situations like the one in the above table. A hint about the teacher's forgetfulness may explain why he/she misses checking students' attendance. In the second phase of the student evaluation, I invited two students further to validate the students' ratings and comments. They both claimed that Teacher A generally performs well in the classroom and that the teacher can easily improve on a few issues in classroom management and time management. Overall, the students provided good impressions in learning with the teacher.

For Teacher B, a total of 47 evaluation forms were submitted by students from two grade levels. The area with the highest average rating is Time Management (3.96), while the area with the lowest average rating is Classroom Management (3.19). The top three highest rated items under Time Management are: 3. *finishes the class on time* (4.45); 4. *is in regular attendance* (4.45); 2. *begins the class on time* (4.21). The lowest ranked items under Classroom Management are: 1. *maintains discipline in the classroom* (2.23); 4. *holds students' interest during class discussion* (2.79); 5. *gives class activities and requirements (readings, exams, projects, etc.) related to the subject* (3.15). Under Instruction, two indicators were rated lowest: 8. *adjusts his/her teaching style to the student's ability* (2.94), and 7. *uses technological tools such as PPT and other educational tools to deliver lessons* (2.57).

Table 3 shows some students' comments that are identified to validate the average ratings that Teacher B obtained in Time Management, Classroom Management, and Instruction.

Table 3. Students' Comments for Teacher B

Time Management	Comments
3. finishes the class on time (4.45)	<i>The teacher always comes prepared and always on time.</i>
4. is in regular attendance (4.45)	<i>**** shows up on time</i>
2. begins the class on time (4.21)	<i>**** comes to class on time</i>
Classroom Management	Comments
1. maintains discipline in the classroom (2.23)	<i>Our class often gets very loud during **** class ...is that *** is not strict enough and too kind to the students, therefore, he is unable to control the class well and stop the students who are fooling around.</i>
4. holds students' interest during class discussion (2.79)	<i>Sometimes **** gets mad really easily, for example when some people can't understand what **** is saying and asks *** multiple times **** will get mad. Sometimes *** pronunciation makes it hard to understand what ***nis trying to say.</i>
5. gives class activities and requirements (readings, exams, projects, etc.) related to the subject (3.15)	<i>My opinion of the teacher, **** improvement is that *** could give us an more interesting way of learning that isn't just asking us questions and reading the book, for example, we could do presentations or projects about the subject.</i>
Instruction	Comments
8. adjusts his/her teaching style to the students' ability (2.94)	<i>...stop just teacher students vocabulary words only. My opinion of the teacher, **** improvement is that he could give us an more interesting way of learning that isn't just asking us questions and reading the book, for example, we could do presentations or projects about the subject. To complement with that, I think that the teacher could have more control in the class by being more strict and control the students who are unwilling to learn.</i>
7. uses technological tools such as PPT and other	<i>I wish this teacher can put more effort into *** hand writing. Also I wish the teacher can make printed test</i>

<p>educational tools to deliver lessons (2.57)</p>	<p><i>paper instead of writing the test questions on the white board since due to the lack of care of *** hand writing. We spend half the class trying to figure out what the teacher has written on the board.</i></p> <p><i>I wish **** could use ppt to teaches *** class. And maybe **** should use google classroom, which ****never uses. And give us some materials such as ppt or even extra practices that could make sure the students understanding of *** class.</i></p>
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Almost all of the comments supported the ratings that Teacher B obtained except for item 8 under Instruction; the selected comments provide hints on what can be done to adjust the teacher’s teaching style, particularly on following the same vocabulary learning routine and using the same teaching method. What is evident in the students’ comments are those concerns about the lack of use of technological tools and the inability to control emotions. In the second phase, two students were invited to validate students’ ratings and comments. By sharing their classroom experience and observation with the teacher, their claims supported positive and negative feedback. Teacher B had to reflect on the students’ suggestions and concerns.

The student evaluation results are a part of the report to be given to the teachers along with the classroom observations, peer-to-peer feedback, and self-assessment. Teachers will be furnished with copies of the collated student evaluation, including the comments. Some slight revisions in the student evaluation tool have to be made, like omitting two items under time management that involve praying, and the tool will use the score bracketing below.

- 4.21 - 5.00
- 3.41 - 4.20
- 2.61 - 3.40
- 1.81 - 2.60
- 1.00 - 1.80

The second phase of the student evaluation, inviting some students to validate some of the students’ average ratings and comments, will no longer be needed as I found that students’ comments are sufficient to validate their ratings. It also appears that students are confident in giving their comments, which made the evaluation process even more reliable as I could see the pattern of the students’ feedback.

Conclusions and Implication

The purpose of adding a student evaluation as one of the sources of data for teachers' appraisal is significantly tested in this action research. The students' evaluation by rating Teacher A and Teacher B in the areas of Instruction, Classroom Management, Time Management, and Relationship with Students allows appraisers in a better position to contextualize their teacher performance report. Two items under Time Management would be deleted, and a score bracketing would be used for a more accurate interpretation of the ratings. Schools should encourage student assessment so that their voice can be heard by giving constructive feedback to help improve their learning experience. Students' evaluations should also be transparent so that teachers can reflect on their students' concerns. An implication of reminding students to be constructive when giving their comments is constant advocacy; meanwhile, teachers must be cautious in dealing with the students' comments professionally rather than personally. The reflection process has to be objective so that positive change is expected to be enacted.

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