

Teacher Evaluation: Barrier to Communication?

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KIMBALL Wiles (among others) suggested that evaluation of teachers by supervisors is a barrier to effective communication between teachers and supervisors.¹ This notion has led many educators to recommend the removal of the evaluation responsibility from the hands of the supervisor in order to improve or facilitate communication with teachers.

The Problem

The assumption that evaluation acts as a barrier to communication between teachers and supervisors must be reexamined in the light of some new evidence collected by this author.²

Hypothesis

Originally, it was thought that teachers who perceived that they were being evaluated by their supervisors would communicate less

¹ Kimball Wiles. *Supervision for Better Schools*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967. pp. 3-10.

² Bertram C. Lindemann. "Communication Between Teachers and Supervisors." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1970. p. 49.

frequently with supervisors than would teachers who perceived that they were *not* being evaluated by their supervisors.

It was assumed, by Kimball Wiles and others, that evaluation was a barrier to communication; that is, that teachers viewed evaluation as a threat and, for that reason, would be rather reluctant to ask supervisors for advice for fear of inadvertently confessing their ignorance.³

Results

However, this did not prove to be the case after the data were collected and analyzed. Teachers and supervisors in two upstate New York public school districts were surveyed by mailed questionnaire. The results necessitate a restatement of the original assumption.

It was found that teachers who perceived that they were being evaluated by their supervisors communicated more frequently with their supervisors than did teachers who perceived that they were not being evaluated by their supervisors.⁴

³ George C. Homans. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961. p. 334.

⁴ Lindemann. *op. cit.*

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Conclusion

Based on the findings, it may be assumed that teachers who perceive that they are being evaluated by their supervisors find it more rewarding to interact with supervisors than not to, in order to ingratiate themselves with supervisors and to assure themselves a good evaluation. And teachers who perceive that they are not being evaluated by their supervisors may not see a need to interact with supervisors.

Moreover, Unger assumes that ". . . the greater the degree of predictability between principal and teacher, the greater the willingness of the teacher to adopt trusting attitudes."⁵ Unger defines trust as ". . . the mutual expectation and predictability persons have toward one another as they are developed through the social exchange process."⁶

It may be assumed that being evaluated is likely to be more predictable to teachers than not being evaluated. The more formal the evaluation, the greater the trust. The greater the trust, the more frequent teacher-supervisor interaction, according to the findings of another hypothesis in the author's study.⁷

Therefore, it is logical to assume that

⁵ Marvin H. Unger. "A Study of the Relationship of Selected Organizational Climate Variables and Personal Background Variables to the Expressed Willingness of Teachers To Adopt Trusting Attitudes." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1970. p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷ Lindemann, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

teachers who perceive that they are being evaluated by their supervisors are more likely to interact with supervisors than are teachers who perceive that they are not being evaluated by their supervisors.

Recommendations

A basic recommendation would be that supervisors ought to evaluate teachers. However, this recommendation, taken alone, would be incomplete without consideration of the methodology of evaluation employed as well as the rationale for having evaluation.

First, any evaluation of teachers ought to be a joint venture of supervisors and teachers. Teachers can be expected to be more accepting of evaluation results when they have had a part in developing the evaluation. This is a notion evolving from the concept of participative decision making.

Second, the focus of the evaluation should be the accomplishment of specific objectives stated in behavioral (operational) terms. The degree of effectiveness would be the measure of the discrepancy (if any) between what is expected (the objective) and what is accomplished (the behavior).

And, finally, the knowledge of the effectiveness would be the feedback the teacher needs to modify his course of action to align it with the stated objectives. This, after all, is the purpose of evaluation.

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