

JAMAICAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE DESIRABILITY OF PERFORMANCE-BASED PAYMENT: LESSONS FOR EDUCATION POLICY MAKERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the perspectives of Jamaican teachers on performance-based evaluation as a mode of compensation for Jamaican teachers. The paper is written against the backdrop of continued unsatisfactory results of the Jamaican Education System. In 2015, having completed inspections of all 953 public schools, the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) found that 55% of schools were performing unsatisfactorily.

The study found, among other things, that approximately two-thirds of teachers agree or strongly agree that the performance of teachers and schools can be objectively evaluated. However, only approximately one-third held the view that the performance of the school could be the subject of performance-based compensation.

The findings of the study suggest that there is a gap between teachers' belief in the objectivity of the performance evaluation system and their readiness and willingness to embrace the idea of being held contractually responsible for the results realized and to be compensated accordingly. This finding points to the need for further dialogue between policy makers and practitioners on the issue of how to improve educational outcomes.

The study recommends that the major players in the education system – the Ministry of Education, the Unions representing teachers, and the University community, among others, convene a series of sessions to discuss the unsatisfactory outputs of the education system and develop strategies to improve both teacher and student performance and accountability. The study proposes that one of the strategies which may be considered is a performance-based payment system.

INTRODUCTION

There is a strong positive correlation between the academic performance of students and the quality of teaching and teachers. This view has been convincingly argued by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) who found that the single most critical determinant of student performance is the quality of teaching and learning. The positions of Leithwood and his colleagues are corroborated by Goldhaber (2008) and Gentles (2016) who contend that investments in education, such as additional space to reduce class size and investments in technology are all trumped in their effectiveness by improvements in teacher quality.

The foregoing perspectives are endorsed by Hutton (2010) who identifies nine core qualities of effective school leadership; Fullan (2014) who explores three ways by which a principal can maximize his/her leadership effectiveness; and Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005), who stress the overwhelming importance of teacher quality as the path to improved school performance.

If teacher quality plays such an overwhelmingly critical role in students' performance, then the skillful harnessing of the talents of teachers and the evaluation of their performance are indispensable to ensuring maximum impact of teacher quality on students' performance. Citing its

2005 report, the OECD takes two important platform positions. According to the report, gains in student learning are dependent on highly skilled and motivated teachers, on one hand, and effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching, on the other.

The question of how to evaluate teachers' performance and the perspectives of teachers on how their performance is evaluated have been the subject of unresolved debate for decades. In Jamaica, for example, the issue is raised each time the government and the unions representing teachers are to commence their wage and fringe benefits negotiations. While the issue of school "performance" is being debated at four levels, (the education system, individual schools and schools generally, teachers as a collective group, and students) the focus of this paper is primarily on the question of teachers' performance and whether there is justification for introducing performance-based payments and contracts (relative to their delivery of service and contributions to students' performance) and if so, what approaches should be adopted in framing those performance-based pay systems.

There is evidence of growing acceptance of the view that there is a relationship between students' performance and teacher quality — and by extension teachers' performance. The OECD (2005) indicates that in Chile, for example, teachers are rewarded collectively when they work in schools which are identified as high-performing by the National Performance Evaluation System of Subsidized Schools. In the continental United States, a significant number of states are using performance-based pay systems. Between 2007 and 2010 sixteen States had introduced merit pay. Since 2011, several others have introduced the system. Koretz (2009), who characterizes the issue as being centrally about accountability, notes that the policy of rewarding teachers and schools for students' test scores has become a corner stone of educational policy in the United States of America since the 1990s, but he critiques existing performance pay systems as being simplistic.

Citing Springer (2009), Jensen, Yamashiro and Tibbetts (2010) suggest that there is visible support for linking teacher quality and compensation, based in part on the weak links between teacher experience and educational credentials and student achievement. Chiat and Miller (2009) see the need for attention to be paid to improving the compensation of teachers in order to retain skilled teachers, while Heneman, Milanowski, and Kimball (2007) point to the relationship between equitable teacher compensation and development and increased teacher engagement. Conley and Odden (1995), Heneman et al. (2007), and Mohrman, Mohrman, and Odden (1996) are persuaded that there are several models including skill-based pay, individual-based performance, school-based performance and plans that combine all the key ingredients to produce effective teacher performance-based pay systems.

The workability and efficacy of performance-based pay systems are dependent on how acceptable and respected the overall performance-based system is. However, there is a virtually settled universal opinion that the quality of teaching is the single most critical variable in student performance (Liethwood et al., 2004). There is also a global concern that a significant number of students are underperforming, and in some countries, for example Jamaica, 55% of schools have been found to be performing unsatisfactorily, (National Education Inspectorate, 2015). Given the globally accepted position that quality teaching affects students' performance, on one hand, and the unacceptably high levels of students who are underperforming academically in several countries, on the other, and having regard to the critical role of teacher performance evaluation, between the two, this research seeks to uncover the perspectives of Jamaican teachers on the performance evaluation system being used in the public education system in Jamaica.

THE PROBLEM

Despite a large and growing number of jurisdictions implementing performance-based evaluation systems, there is strong skepticism about their efficacy. Castro Ramos (2009) in an OECD report points to the complexity of teacher evaluation systems, posits that the fact of complexity does not mean that attempts to implement performance-based evaluation systems should be abandoned. According to Ramos, factors such as societal attitudes, the school system, the media, and general perceptions of schooling and teachers, all influence the design of teacher evaluation policies. An exceedingly critical factor that must inform the design of teacher evaluation systems is the attitudes and perspectives of teachers themselves. Any successful linking of pay and promotion to performance, the latter two being among the most important values to every employee – including teachers – will be founded on a strong belief in the fairness and objectivity of the overall performance evaluation system.

In arguing the case for a more rigorous performance evaluation system, Hull (2013) laments that the problem with most teacher-evaluation instruments is that they simply seek to determine whether a teacher's performance is satisfactory or not. Hull's critique was echoed by Jamaica's former Minister of Education (2012 – 2016) and the current Opposition Spokesperson Education, Ronald Thwaites, who dismisses the current practices in teacher evaluation in Jamaica as being ineffectual, given that they do not provide a reliable and credible mechanism to enable school administrators and the Ministry of Education to hold underperforming teachers accountable. Thwaites contends that unless the teacher evaluation can enable the authorities to effectively distinguish between good and bad teachers and ensure accountability, the system is useless. Having regard to the relationship between teacher quality and student performance and the need for teacher to buy-in to any system that seeks to evaluate their pedigree (quality) and their performance, particularly as these affect pay and promotion, this study seeks to understand the perspectives of Jamaican teachers on the performance evaluation system in the public education system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Three objectives drive the study:

- (a) To understand Jamaican teachers' perspectives on the objectivity of the performance evaluation system;
- (b) To ascertain teachers' views on the responsibility of school leaders for the performance of the school;
- (c) To canvass teachers' opinions of whether their compensation should be linked to students' performance

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Consistent with objectives of this study, three questions are explored, namely:

- (1) What are teachers' perspectives on the objectivity of performance evaluation system?
- (2) Should the leadership of a school be held responsible for the factors that drive performance in the school?
- (3) What are the key elements of a performance-based evaluation which is tied to compensation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant for at least three reasons, namely:

- (a) It reengages discussion on an issue about which the Jamaican public in general and the stakeholders in the education system have been somewhat equivocal, shy, combative, or defensive. The paper is designed as an inducement to discuss an issue that many appear unwilling to even mention.
- (b) The paper provides evidence of the position and expectations of teachers regarding performance-based compensation and thus indicates the parameters within which administrators and policy makers will need to frame the policy and planning debate.
- (c) The discussion on how the education system treats with the issues of teacher quality, student performance, and teacher evaluation is relevant, given the challenges facing the education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hull (2013) asserts that teacher evaluations have, for decades, been virtually meaningless bureaucratic exercises that have failed to distinguish between excellence and mediocrity. Wagner (2013) cites the example of the state of North Carolina which had replaced tenure contracts with performance-based contracts. The Bill to replace the tenure system with performance-based contracts was piloted by Senator Phil Berger who argued that the tenure system does not remove bad teachers from the classroom and in many respects rewarded mediocrity and punished excellence by granting unlimited job security to all. The concerns of the North Carolina Senator are endorsed by the findings of a TIME magazine poll released in September 2010, which found that 71 percent support the idea of paying teachers based on their effectiveness in the classroom.

Performance-based Contracts

The use of performance-based contracting and compensation is not novel. The issue really revolves around whether the practice, as it has emerged in various areas of public procurement and contracting, is applicable to the teaching and learning. While it is to be acknowledged that measuring performance in education is complex, there are parallels between the principles of performance measurement under performance-based contracts generally, and those in education.

Performance-based contract, as a method by which governments procure services, have become an increasingly popular method of procurement and is being used in several sectors as Loevinsohn (2008) notes. The key feature and fundamental purpose of performance-based contracting, as Loevinsohn explains, is that it enables government agencies to acquire services using contracts which stipulate what is to be achieved and not necessarily how the work is done. According to Loevinsohn, performance-based contracting by emphasizing results, rather than processes, creates the space for innovation on the part of the contractor while providing the government with the benefit of receiving best-value products and services. Loevinsohn identifies three critical elements of performance-based contracts, two of which are features of school improvement planning:

- (a) A clear definition of a series of objectives and indicators by which to measure the contractor's (principal's/teacher's) performance
- (b) Collection of data on performance indicators to assess the extent to which the contractor is successfully implementing the agreed services and attaining the planned deliverables.

Key Factors that Determine School Performance – Concerns and Cautions

The factors that determine the performance of schools are many and varied and relate not only to teachers and the quality of leadership but include factors such as resources, the support and influence of the community, and the support of past students (Mulford, 2003). In considering the mechanics of implementing a performance-based evaluation and compensation system, some teachers are understandably skeptical and indeed fearful as they are of the view that an unfair School Board could create the means to dismiss them without justification and place on them the burden of having to fight for their rights. These concerns cannot be dismissed as being without foundation, but the probability of that happening cannot be used to allow the status quo to remain.

Koretz (2009) takes note of the attempts to justify pay for performance in schools by referencing practices in the private sector. He cautions, however, that pay for performance in the private sector is hardly based on numerical measures, arguing that economists have found that for many occupations (particularly, professionals with complex roles), the available objective measures are seriously incomplete indicators of value to firms, and therefore, other measures, including subjective evaluations are considered as part of the pay for performance.

Williams and Engel (2013) of the George Washington University found that teacher evaluation is used for both accountability and instructional improvement in most school systems; and observe a growing trend to use student test results and metrics to inform accountability for schools, principals, and teachers, instructional improvement in classrooms and schools, and reforms at the system level. Williams and Engel identified four primary approaches to accountability, namely: professional, organizational, market, and parental/community. They suggest that each approach has strong implications for teacher evaluation and its use in instructional improvement. In expounding on the issue of accountability, Williams and Engel highlighted the Finnish system pointing out that the Finland's teacher evaluation system is based almost entirely on professional accountability. Under this system, teachers are accountable to each other, the school, the children, and their parents. Williams and Engel note that the Finns abolished the school inspection system in the early 1900's and replaced it with an evaluation system that is more group-based, reflective, and participatory, with the aim of creating professional learning communities among teachers and administrators (Sahlberg, 2011).

Practice Models in Performance-based Compensation Systems

One of the strategies that several countries have adopted to reward teachers and to distinguish between high performing and mediocre teachers is performance-based pay systems. Walker (2013), in looking at teacher evaluation systems across several countries, found that in many countries teacher evaluations systems are a work-in-progress and of the 28 countries surveyed in the OECD report, 22 have formal policy frameworks in place at the national level to regulate teacher evaluations.

The key issues around which the debate about performance-based pay systems now revolves are, (a) whether they work, that is, whether they result in improved student performance, and (b) whether instances of inconclusive results are related to factors such as the administration of the systems as against the potential efficacy of the systems themselves. In this regard, we consider the cases in some countries.

Finland. Though having one of the world's most successful education systems, the Ministry of Education in Finland plays no role in teacher evaluation, instead, broad policies are defined in the contract with the teachers' union (Sahlberg, 2011). These contracts give the local school principal extensive powers over the performance of teachers who are typically evaluated

against the national core curriculum and the school development plan. Finland does not use standardized testing, so it is impossible to use individual student test scores to evaluate teachers. Using the School's Development Plan as a reference point and the contract of employment, teachers who do not perform acceptably are eventually removed from the system.

But the teacher evaluation system in Finland is ultimately a consultative and formative process, as Williams and Engels (2013) indicate. While there can be negative performance consequences, the emphasis is on collaboration and support. Principals often use their own knowledge and experience as teachers to assist teachers and help them recognize areas of strengths and improve areas of weakness. Thus, poor performance represents a violation of professional norms and violates the trust that characterizes the system. In Finland, parents are free to choose the school to which they send their children. But whatever school they choose the quality is the same.

According to Partanen (2011), since the 1980s, the main driver of Finnish education policy has been the idea that every child should have the same opportunity to learn, regardless of family background, income, or geographic location. Education has been seen first as an instrument to even out social inequality. It is instructive that while Finland does not use standardized testing nor has a sector-wide teacher evaluation system it maintains the highest standards of accountability and performance globally.

Singapore. Steiner (2010) argues that countries that wish to see radical improvements in their education systems should look to nations, like Singapore, that have revamped teacher performance measurement to sustain teaching excellence. The Singapore system which was introduced in the early 2000's enables measurement of teachers in all subjects and grades. According to Steiner, one element of the Singapore model that stands out, "is the development and thorough use of performance-linked competencies to measure, reward, and develop teacher performance."

The Singapore system enjoys the support of teachers, school administrators, policy makers and the public despite having an ethnically diverse Asian population. As a result of the rigorous and successful system, Singapore boasts some spectacular educational outcomes, including, ranking in the top five in major international exams, and copping first place on several occasions.

The key to the success of the Singaporean system is that they emphasize the building of teacher competencies and having fully equipped teachers for the task and requiring them to engage in continuous professional development, they hold them accountable for the performance of their schools. Thus, competencies are used in conjunction with performance outcomes to evaluate, promote, and pay teachers.

Denver, Colorado and Washington D.C. The two most well-known performance-based pay plans, according to Lohman (2011), are the systems used in Denver and Washington, D.C., both of which were implemented as part of collective bargaining agreements between the school district and its teachers and which make participation voluntary. Other key features of the systems in Denver and D.C. are that they use a combination of annual bonuses and increases in teachers' base pay and offer bonuses for increasing students' academic achievement.

The Denver system, known as ProComp, went into effect in 2006 after a four-year pilot program in 12 of Denver's 142 schools. It is a district-wide compensation program designed through a partnership of the teachers' union and the school district, and covers classroom teachers and other special instructional personnel, such as librarians, counselors, and therapists. The system was made optional for teachers already working for the school district when the program became effective, but mandatory for those who were employed on or after January 1, 2006. Features of the system include an initial base salary, based on the district's traditional salary schedule, plus raises and

bonuses. These bonuses were based on four main factors, namely: (1) the school's and students' academic performance and growth, (2) teachers' qualifications and specifically advanced degrees and professional-development units earned, (3) performance evaluation ratings, and (4) special conditions such as teachers working in hard-to-staff schools or subjects. (Lohman, 2011).

A 2008 study of the ProComp program found no solid evidence that ProComp teachers had improved student achievement over those teachers who did not participate in the ProComp program. The findings of this evaluation appeared to have left the authorities worried that the initiative was not having the desired effect. It was, however, recognized that two years was too short a time in which to see marked improvements. The 2010 evaluation found, among other things, that there was substantial growth in mathematics and reading achievement, that teachers hired after the program was implemented (and who therefore were mandated to join the programme) exhibited higher first-year achievement than those hired prior to the programme. The evaluation also found that teachers who had voluntarily opted into the ProComp program slightly outperformed their non-participant colleagues, though the differences were less pronounced when adjusted for individual differences between teachers who chose to participate and those who did not. The 2012 Evaluation report showed further improvements in mathematics though there were declines in reading and writing.

The Center for Education Reform (2010) conducted a study on various performance-based systems in the United States. The study entitled, *Making the Grade? A Report Card on Performance Programs across the US*, gave a grade of "C" to the Denver system. The Center's basic assessment of the Denver system was that the program is a step in the right direction but that there was not enough emphasis on student achievement. The Washington system was given a "B minus" grade in 2010 by the Centre for Education Reform, with the comment that the program's salary increases are attractive and thus the system retains teachers. The report concluded that the program is the country's closest to what the report described as a true performance-based pay system.

Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Shakman, Riordan, Sánchez, Cook, Fournier, and Brett (2012), conducted a study of performance-based teacher evaluation systems in five States (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) and found, among other things, that, "all five states include observations and self-assessments as part of teacher assessment, but States differ in who conducts the observation, how often evaluations are conducted, and what scoring parameters are used." Four of the five introduced performance-based evaluations within the last decade but Texas introduced this system in 1997/98. The dominant and common features of these systems are teacher quality and preparedness, professional growth, student achievement, and planning.

Oakes and Robertson (2014) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the North Carolina system and found, among other things, that while over two-thirds of teachers agreed with their evaluation, less than 25 per cent agreed that the process would help them improve their teaching or student achievement. Seventy per cent said the process took more effort than the results are worth. In Texas the system was reported as showing positive results in the area of teacher retention but no evidence that it fostered student achievement.

Summary

The literature shows that several jurisdictions implemented performance-based compensation systems in schools. These systems have similar elements, but there are several unique features. While there is unease among teachers in some jurisdictions concerning the objectivity and trustworthiness of the system, there is confidence and support among others. In some cases, some jurisdictions have acted to improve on the original design in direct response to teachers' concerns.

The picture that has emerged is that performance-based compensation systems are works in progress and are fraught with complexities but are nonetheless necessary interventions designed to improve students' outcomes. The emerging picture also confirms that given the critical importance of teacher quality to acceptable student outcomes, teacher compensation tied to performance is a critical issue for policy makers and educational planners to consider.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research uses a descriptive non-experimental quantitative design. According to Creswell (2013), quantitative designs are used when a researcher wishes to explore relationships between variables and intends to generalize, relating to a large population. Specifically, for this study, a descriptive design provides a description of the current status of an identified phenomenon and provides a systematic assessment of said phenomenon: as in this case, "teachers' perspectives of the performance-based evaluation system."

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of one hundred and fifty-one (151) teachers, although in some instances fewer than the 151 responded to all the items on the questionnaire. As can be seen in Table 1, there were 148 respondents, and in Table 2, 149 respondents. The sample was drawn using a convenience sampling technique. It is to be noted that participants were not selected based on the school in which they worked, however the sample was drawn from nineteen (19) educational institutions located across Jamaica, involving seven (7) schools whose performance was generally good and the remaining eleven (12) being fair to low.

The gender, age cohorts, years of experience, professional qualification, management or non-management status, and highest level of qualification of the sample teachers are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. With respect to gender, 75% of the sample were female and this is consistent with the teaching population which consists of one male for every three females. In relation to age, 62% are in the cohorts of 31 – 40 and 41 – 50 years, which is again consistent with the general population. The other demographics also reflect the distribution of the general population and qualifications which show that only about 25% have a master's or doctoral degree.

Table 1*Gender and the Age Group of Teachers*

		Age Group					Total
		Under 20 years	20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	
Gender	Male	2	11	15	4	4	36
	Female	1	24	47	29	11	112
Total		3	35	62	33	15	148

Table 2*Gender and Teachers' Years of Experience*

		Teacher with less than 5 years' experience	Teacher with 6-10 years' experience	Teacher with 11-15 years' experience	Teacher with 16-20 years' experience	Teacher with over 20 years' experience	Total
Gender	Male	8	13	8	3	4	36
	Female	18	34	20	13	28	113
Total		26	47	28	16	32	149

Table 3*Teachers' Highest Level of Professional Qualification and the Current Positions*

		Current position					Total
		Prin.	Vice prin.	HoD	Grade S/visor	Class/ Subject Teacher	
Highest professional qualification	Diploma	0	0	0	5	20	25
	Bachelors	1	2	8	16	65	92
	Masters	0	2	6	7	15	30
	Postgrad Certificate	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total		1	4	14	28	102	149

Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected using a self-developed performance-based evaluation questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire were largely constructed by the primary researcher and informed by issues in the literature on performance evaluation. This instrument consisted of twenty (20) items measured on a five-point agreement response format Likert scale with 1 being 'strongly disagree', 2 'disagree', 3 'undecided', 4 'agree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. Additionally, there were eight (8) demographical questions that recorded the teachers' age, gender, position at school, highest level

of professional qualification, years of experience, years of experience at current school, the level at which they teach, as well as, the type of school at which they teach.

Reliability and Validity

The instrument was pilot tested among a group of thirty aspiring principals and analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha (C-Alpha). The original instrument had twenty-four Likert items and based on the results an item analysis conducted on the pilot four items were removed due to their generation of low item-total correlations. The C-Alpha produced a reliability score of .784 which was deemed to be a strong indicator of reliability. This assessment is based on the positions of Nunnally (1978), Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991), and Drost (2011) who argue that a C-Alpha score in the region of, or close to .9, suggests a high degree of level of reliability.

The degree to which the instrument can be relied upon to accurately measure the issues examined in the research questions is verified by the extent to which the instrument covers the key variables in the scientific literature. According to Trochim (2006), the issue of construct validity revolves around the degree to which a concept or idea is translated into a functioning and operating reality. The size and scope of the sample provided the level of representativeness which would support the generalizability of the findings. The representativeness of the sample is critical to supporting the validity of the findings.

Data Collection Procedures

The instrument was distributed to the schools that had been conveniently chosen. These schools were chosen based on the primary researcher's access to those schools having taught some teachers at those schools in either a graduate program or professional development program or both. These graduate students served as points of contact and research assistants. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed with 151 returned constituting a 75.5% response rate.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0. Data were entered and coded and cleansed for analyses. Several analyses were conducted in relation to the results: frequency analyses, an exploratory factor analysis, and a Pearson's R product moment correlation coefficient test. Frequency analyses were used to decide how many teachers responded to a specific response option as it relates to specific questions. An exploratory factor analysis allowed for the generation of key factors associated with the performance-based evaluation scale which in turn allowed the researcher the opportunity to perform the Pearson R product moment correlation coefficient test. This test assessed the magnitude and direction of the relationship of the factors associated with the performance-based evaluation scale.

RESULTS

Research Question # 1: What are teachers' perspectives on the objectivity of the performance evaluation system?

In answering this question, data from four items of the dataset which focused on teachers' perceptions of the performance evaluation system were summarized to generate the findings. The items stated:

- (a) Their performance can be objectively evaluated;
- (b) A school's performance can be objectively evaluated;
- (c) The performance of a school could be the subject of a contractual agreement; and
- (d) The factors that affect the performance of a school can be objectively identified.

In examining the first item, the study found that less than one-quarter of the sample (23.6%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that teachers' performance can be objectively evaluated, while less than one-tenth (9.5%) said they were unsure; thus, the remaining two-thirds (66.9%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the performance of teachers can be objectively evaluated.

A somewhat similar set of findings were made in relation to the second item. The findings here show that a slightly lower number of 22.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that a school's performance can be objectively evaluated, while 8.8% were unsure, and 68.9% agreed or strongly agreed.

While most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that both individual teachers' performance and a school's performance can be objectively evaluated the picture was different when they were asked the performance of the school could be the subject of a contractual agreement. Those disagreeing or strongly disagreeing remained in the same general percentage when compared to the two previous items with 21.4% in this instance. However, those who expressed that they were unsure swelled to almost five times the numbers in the previous two items coming out at 40%. Those who agreed or strongly agreed was 38.6%.

In relation to the fourth item used, nearly three-quarters (74.8%, of which 66.7% accounted for 'agree'), either agreed or strongly agreed that the factors that affect a school's performance can be objectively identified. Just over 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the number saying they were unsure being in the same general area as the first two items at 10.4%.

Research Question # 2: Should the leadership of a school be held responsible for the factors that drive performance in the school?

A single item provided the answer to the second research question. This question sought to determine whether teachers were of the view that the leadership of the school should be held responsible for the factors that drive the school's performance. The findings are disclosed in Table 4 which show that an overwhelming majority, 80.2%, agreed or strongly agreed that the leadership should be held responsible. This finding is instructive, and it shows that teachers are looking to leaders to exercise a level of activism in driving school performance.

Table 4
Leadership of the School being held Responsible for the Factors that Drive Performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	3.3	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	15	9.9	10.3	13.7
	Undecided	9	6.0	6.2	19.9
	Agree	68	45.0	46.6	66.4
	Strongly Agree	49	32.5	33.6	100.0
	Total	146	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.3		
Total		151	100.0		

Research Question # 3: What are the key elements of a performance-based evaluation which is tied to compensation?

The third research question explores the key factors associated with the performance-based evaluation and sought to establish whether a relationship exists between these factors or not. Five factors were identified through the process of an exploratory factor analysis. The factors generated are identified as Confidence in Fairness (Factor 1), System of Evaluation (Factor2), Annual Assessment (Factor 3), Accountability (Factor 4), and Objectivity (Factor 5), as seen in Table 5. These 5 factors have accounted for 60.188% of the total variability in the data.

Additionally, the relationship between each factor ranged from insignificant to moderately weak positive relationships (see Table 6). There was no significant relation between the following: objectivity and confidence in fairness, objectivity and system of evaluation, objectivity and annual assessment, objectivity and accountability, system of evaluation and accountability, as well as, confidence in fairness and accountability. However, there were weak or moderately weak positive relationships between: confidence in fairness and system of evaluation, confidence in fairness and annual assessment, as well as, system of evaluation and annual assessment.

Table 5*Rotated Component Matrix of the Factors Associated with Performance Based Evaluation.***Rotated Component Matrix^a**

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
You have confidence in the fairness of the board of management of your school	.836				
To the best of your knowledge most of your colleagues have confidence in the fairness of the board of management of your school	.771				
To the best of your knowledge most of your colleagues have confidence in the fairness of the principal of your school	.745				
Teachers at your school who perform excellently are recognized	.537				
You are comfortable with the current system of teacher evaluation		.872			
The current system of teacher evaluation is working well		.849			
To the best of your knowledge, most of your colleagues are comfortable with the current system of teacher evaluation		.752			
A school's performance can be objectively evaluated			.938		
Teachers' Performance can be objectively evaluated			.926		
The factors that affects the performance of a school can be objectively identified			.843		
Your performance is assessed every year				.845	
To the best of your knowledge the performance of your colleagues on staff at your school is assessed every year				.837	
You have received feedback on the suggestions you have made to improve the system of teacher performance evaluation				.496	
You are satisfied with your performance				.451	
The planned performance of a school could be the subject of a contractual agreement					.643
You would support a performance-based teacher evaluation if you are satisfied that the mechanisms for evaluating performance are fair					.547
The leadership of a school should be held responsible for the factors that drive performance over which the school has control					.478
You believe that teachers who perform excellently should be rewarded accordingly					.470
Teachers at your school who perform poorly are subject to disciplinary action					.417

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 6*Showing the Relationship between the Factors Associated with Performance Based Evaluation***Correlations**

		Objectivity	Confidence in Fairness	System of Evaluation	Annual Assessment	Accountability
Objectivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.093	.075	.091	.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.263	.363	.271	.091
	N	148	148	148	148	148
Confidence in Fairness	Pearson Correlation	.093	1	.278**	.397**	.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.263		.001	.000	.207
	N	148	151	151	151	151
System of Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.075	.278**	1	.351**	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.363	.001		.000	.426
	N	148	151	151	151	151
Annual Assessment	Pearson Correlation	.091	.397**	.351**	1	.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.271	.000	.000		.111
	N	148	151	151	151	151
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.139	.103	.065	.130	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.207	.426	.111	
	N	148	151	151	151	151

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

There is broad consensus that strategies to improve teacher quality and performance, on the one hand, and student achievement, on the other, are critical to the advancement of nations and the global society and economy. Many jurisdictions have sought to address the problem of school underperformance and teacher quality by introducing performance-based teacher evaluation systems. These jurisdictions include countries such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Singapore, which are regarded as being among the more successful pay systems, according to Walker (2013). Other jurisdictions include various States in the United States of America of which the Denver ProCom is rated as being among the most successful, according to Wiley, Splindler, and Subert (2010). There is also the expanding practice of governments using performance-based contracting to secure public service (Loevinsohn, 2008).

The key elements of these systems that have been rated as successful are accountability, according to Walker (2013) and Koretz (2009); objectivity (Steiner, 2010); regard for the opinions of teachers on the effectiveness of the system (Williams & Engels, 2013); ongoing tweaking (Eurydice, 2008), and fairness in meeting out rewards and consequences depending on outcomes, as outlined by Hendrickson (2012) and Partanen (2011).

The findings of this study support the general direction of the literature. In Table 4 it is shown that the major issues about which teachers are concerned with respect to a performance-

based evaluation system are objectivity, fairness, and accountability. The insight that these findings highlights is self-evident, namely, that the credibility of a performance-based evaluation system rests with these three factors, primarily.

It is instructive that while the study found that a majority of teachers (about two-thirds) held the view that it is possible to assess the performance of schools and teachers objectively, and that the leadership of the school should be held responsible for the factors affecting performance over which they have control, there was no clear majority in support of the idea of performance-based contracting with the category 'unsure' accounting for the largest block of responses, at 40%. This suggests that although teachers believe performance can be objectively measured, they are not confident that the risks of a performance-based system are likely to be overcome by pure objectivity. The lack of support for performance-based contracting may also be an indication that teachers do not have confidence in the fairness of the system.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to answer three questions, namely:

- (1) What are teachers' perspectives on the objectivity of performance evaluation system?
- (2) Should the leadership of a school be held responsible for the factors that drive performance in the school?
- (3) What are the key elements of a performance-based evaluation which is tied to compensation?

The findings show that 66.9% either agreed or strongly agreed that the performance of teachers can be objectively evaluated. A similar percentage 68.9% agreed or strongly agreed that a school's performance can be objectively evaluated. Given the background data which show that 55% of Jamaican schools are performing unsatisfactorily, these findings suggest that there is an opportunity to reengage public discussion on the issue of teacher (and school) performance with stakeholders across the spectrum of Jamaican society. While the issue is likely to evoke pushback from some sectors and some stakeholders, the state of the education system suggests that it is not a matter about which policy makers can be any longer equivocal or shy.

It is to be further noted that given the percentages of teachers who believe in the possibility of objectively assessing teachers' and schools' performance, and having regard to the key factors which were found to highlight their major concerns, namely, confidence in fairness (Factor 1), system of evaluation (Factor 2), annual assessment (Factor 3), accountability (Factor 4) and objectivity (Factor 5), (which factors account for 60.188% of the total variability in the data), the paper has provided ample indications of what teachers expect should be the parameters of a performance-based compensation system and thus provides a roadmap for policy-making and educational planning.

The foregoing findings also put in context other findings which show that a majority of teachers hold that the leadership of schools should be held responsible for the factors that affect school performance but, somewhat strangely enough, most teachers (40%) are unsure about, and 38.6% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing about whether teachers' performance should be the subject of contractual agreement. The study also found that 80.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the leadership should be held responsible for the factors that affect a school's performance. These findings collectively point to the need for discussion among stakeholders on the broader philosophical and strategic planning questions of how the education system treats with the issues of teacher quality, student performance, and teacher evaluation in face of the challenges facing the Jamaican education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, three recommendations are made as follows:

- (a) Given performance problems faced by the Jamaican education system and the perspectives of teachers regarding objectively evaluating teachers' and schools' performance, it is recommended that policy makers advance the dialogue with teachers and teachers' unions concerning how to strengthen the elements of the performance evaluation system in which teachers' have confidence in order to expand the pool of support for the system.
- (b) Taking account of the practice in performance-based compensation in several jurisdictions, countries, like Jamaica, which face severe performance problems, education systems are urged to look carefully at models and assess the experiences of those jurisdictions before seeking to implement policies of performance-based compensation.
- (c) Based on the finding that most teachers in Jamaica are not in support of performance-based compensation, government should exercise caution and ensure that there is extensive consultation and a ground-swell of buy-in before seeking to implement.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE - TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PERFORMANCE-BASED TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

Dear Colleague: Thanks for agreeing to participate in this research. Your answers to the question below will help to inform my understanding on the perspectives of teachers on the use of teacher performance-evaluation. It will take you less than ten minutes to complete this questionnaire.

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

	SD	D	U	A	SA
(1) Teachers' performance can be objectively evaluated.					
(2) A schools' performance can be objectively evaluated.					
(3) The planned performance of a school could be the subject of a contractual arrangement.					
(4) The factors that affect the performance of a school can be objectively identified.					
(5) The leadership of a school should be held responsible for the factors that drive performance over which the school has control					
(6) You have confidence in the fairness of the principal of your school					
(7) You have confidence in the fairness of the board of management of your school					
(8) To the best of your knowledge most of your colleagues have confidence in the fairness of the principal of your school					
(9) To best of your knowledge most of your colleagues have confidence in the fairness of the board of management of your school					
(10) You would support a performance-based teacher evaluation if you are satisfied that the mechanisms for evaluating performance are fair					
(11) You believe that teachers who perform excellently should be rewarded accordingly					
(12) The current system of teacher evaluation is working well					
(13) You are comfortable with the current system of teacher evaluation					
(14) To the best of your knowledge most of your colleagues are comfortable with the current system of teacher evaluation					
(15) Your performance is assessed every year					
(16) You are satisfied with your performance					
(17) To the best of your knowledge the performance of your colleagues on staff at your school is assessed every year					
(18) Teachers at your school who perform poorly are subject to disciplinary action					
(19) Teachers at your school who perform excellently are recognized					
(20) You have received feedback on the suggestions you have made to improve the system of teacher performance evaluation					

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOURSELF BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- (21) Your age group is:
- (a) Under 20 years []
 - (b) 20 – 30 []
 - (c) 31 – 40 []
 - (d) 41 – 50 []
 - (e) 51 – 60 []
- (22) You are a:
- (a) Teacher with less than 5 years' experience []
 - (b) Teacher with 6 – 10 years' experience []
 - (c) Teacher with 11 – 15 years' experience []
 - (d) Teacher with 16 – 20 years' experience []
 - (e) Teacher with over 20 years' experience []
- (23) You teach at what level?
- (a) Early Childhood []
 - (b) Primary []
 - (c) Secondary []
 - (d) Tertiary []
- (24) You have been at your current school for:
- (a) 5 years or less []
 - (b) 6 – 10 years []
 - (c) 11 – 15 years []
 - (d) 16 – 20 years []
 - (e) Over 20 years []
 - (f) Not applicable []
- (25) Your highest professional qualification is:
- (a) High School Graduate []
 - (b) Diploma []
 - (c) Bachelor's Degree []
 - (d) Master's Degree []
 - (e) Postgraduate Cert in Education []
 - (f) Doctorate []
- (26) Your position at your school is
- (a) Principal []
 - (b) Vice Principal []
 - (c) Head of Department []
 - (d) Grade Supervisor []
 - (e) Classroom / Subject Teacher []
- (27) Your school is a
- (a) Traditional High []
 - (b) Upgraded Secondary []
 - (c) Primary and Junior High []
 - (d) Primary []
- (28) You are:
- (a) Male []
 - (b) Female []