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Teacher Perspectives On The Use Of The Australian Professional Standards For Teachers As Part Of Their Evaluation Process

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Abstract: Teacher effectiveness has a powerful impact on student performance and a teacher evaluation process that supports professional growth can be a key lever for improving teaching quality. The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perspectives on the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, when used as part of their evaluation process, and, to determine what other factors may need to be considered in the design and implementation of such a process. A single case study of a school in Victoria, Australia was conducted, using a pre and post interview approach with six teachers. Responses were analysed using a thematic network methodology. Findings reveal that the inclusion of The Standards as part of any evaluation mechanism is secondary to a range of other factors, including the relationship the teacher has with their evaluator; the skills of the evaluator; and the addition of a developmental plan post evaluation.

Introduction

There is strong evidence that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on student performance (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006; Hattie, 2012; Jensen, Hunter, Sonnermann, & Cooper, 2014; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). *The National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality* (NPITQ) (2008) and the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008), noted that improving teacher quality is a critical factor as part of Australia's efforts to improve student attainment and ensure it has a strong, globally competitive education system that is able to meet the demands for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Partly in response to this imperative, in 2009, development of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (hereafter referred to as *The Standards*) commenced under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). In all, seven standards were developed that incorporate three teaching domains: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement - across four career stages of teaching, these being: Graduate; Proficient; Highly Accomplished; and Lead.

In Australia, the Federal, State and Territory governments established a body whose remit was to ensure that *The Standards* provided teachers and school leaders with guidelines and evidence to improve outcomes for all students. In 2010, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was formed to provide national educational leadership for the Federal, State and Territory governments. Funded by the Australian Federal Government, the aim of AITSL is to promote excellence in teaching within the profession

and in school leadership. AITSL assumed responsibility for validating and finalising *The Standards* in July 2010. In February 2011, AITSL published *The Standards* as a means to clearly articulate what teachers are expected to know (knowledge) and be able to do (skills). The release of these *Standards* was followed in August 2012 by the publication of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012), which provided a platform for the implementation of *The Standards*. These documents were not released in isolation, but rather, were part of a series of papers (Kamener, 2012; OECD, 2009; 2011) all aimed at improving the quality of teaching in Australian schools. The premise was that at both a national and international level, there is substantial evidence that the quality of teachers is the most important in-school element affecting student outcomes (AITSL, 2012; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hattie, 2012; OECD, 2009).

In order to improve teacher quality and to therefore have significant, lasting effects on student outcomes, it has been recommended that schools put effort into building teacher capacity for improvement (Aaronson, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2012). To support the building of teacher capacity, schools are encouraged to create and promote effective systems of teacher performance, evaluation and development, or appraisal as it is otherwise known (Piggott Irvine, 2003a). It has been argued that teacher appraisal processes in schools are done poorly, with teachers reporting that they do not receive any real or tangible benefits from current teacher evaluation, performance or development systems (Elliott, 2015; Hay Group, 2012; Jensen & Hunter, 2010). However, effective performance and development processes within a school have been shown to be one of the key platforms to improving teacher quality (Jensen & Reichl, 2012; OECD, 2009). As such, it is suggested that reforming teacher evaluation and development processes should not only improve the quality of teaching, but also student outcomes (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010).

While the purpose of *The Standards*, is to provide a clear expression of what teachers are expected to know and do across the four career stages of teaching, these standards also provide a platform that schools may use to establish a collective understanding of what effective teaching looks like. As such, schools have increasingly used *The Standards* as a mechanism to conduct their own method of teacher evaluation, appraisal, or performance development and management (Elliot, 2015). There is a need, therefore, to examine teacher perspectives on the use of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, when used as part of their evaluation process, and to determine what other factors may need to be considered in the design and implementation of such a process.

Literature Review

The process of teacher evaluation consists of a complex web of interrelated areas. With the recognition of the importance of improving teacher quality, a critical analysis of the research reveals six significant elements which are essential to achieve the successful implementation of a teacher evaluation process, these being: school culture; quality teaching; management; rewards and consequences; the role of the evaluator; and summative versus formative evaluation. The elements, as a summary of the existing research and literature, are presented in Figure 1.

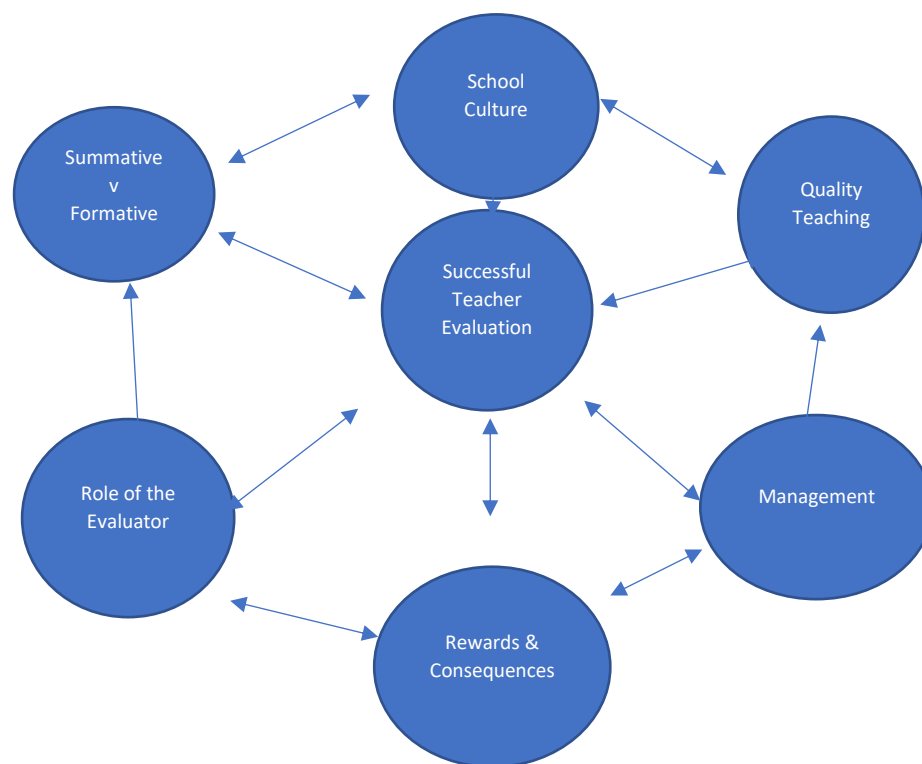


Figure 1: Significant elements essential to achieve successful implementation of a teacher evaluation process

The literature surrounding each of these identified contributors to the successful implementation of a teacher evaluation process will now be explored in the context of its relevance to the research paper.

School Culture

A school's culture can be described as the rituals, customs, traditions, group norms, rules, climate, shared meanings, and the hidden symbols that are imbued in the physical space of that organisation (Fullan, 2001). Every school has an established school culture and entrenched value systems that affect the implementation of any new initiative, program or change process. Therefore, before a decision can be made as to the design of a teacher evaluation system, the culture of a school must be such that it is accepting of such implementation. If there is a culture of resistance within a school, then a new or modified teacher evaluation system will also be resisted. Furthermore, there is a broad body of research to suggest that for a change process to be successful, a school culture must be one that is open to constructive feedback, mentoring, monitoring of classroom performance, collegial discussions, ongoing professional development, and a high level of trust (Kamener, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Ustunluoglu, 2009). Indeed, Kamener (2012) argued that if such a culture does not exist, it is futile to impose an evaluation process, irrespective of how good the process actually purports to be. This view is supported by Down, Chadbourne and Hogan (2000) who found that, for teachers who are already deeply concerned and suspicious about evaluation, the tool itself is not what matters most, but, rather, it is the way in which it is implemented and the existing climate within a school.

Concern and suspicion have arisen from previous attempts to impose an evaluation process upon school staff where the underlying purpose was perceived to be more about

control and manipulation, rather than professional growth and development (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997b; Smyth, 1996). Where evaluation is used purely as a mechanism of management to control, measure and monitor teachers, it misses the point of being the key method to improve teacher quality and student outcomes as espoused by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2012). Like many policy initiatives, it becomes a case of playing the game, or what Smyth and Shacklock (1998) described as ‘paper posturing’. Thus, evaluation processes are perceived by teachers as an artificial imposition as opposed to an authentic one. As such, for an evaluation process to be effective, there needs to be an existing climate of trust, and a school culture that is conducive to evaluation, where relationships and collegiality are nurtured and valued (Kamener, 2012; Fullan, 2001).

Quality Teaching

With the overarching goal of evaluation systems to improve teachers practice, there is still much conjecture about what quality teaching actually looks like (Blake & Jacques, 1990; Wragg et al., 1996). Collins (2011) contends that there is no argument that teacher quality matters, however, describing, quantifying and classifying it is contentious. Good (2008) concurs, asserting that teacher quality is a ‘ubiquitous’ term and is measured differently depending on the stakeholders. Classroom practice is an indicator of teacher quality for schools whereas bureaucrats responsible for funding in schools equate teacher quality to student achievement results. There are in fact numerous dimensions to teacher quality (Byrne, 2015). The very nature of teaching is subjective and not easily identified, agreed upon or quantifiable. As Barber and Mourshed (2007) suggested, the challenge is to define what great instruction looks like, which has become a crucial issue as there is not only no single way of teaching well, but also no hard empirical evidence about effective teaching or even agreement about what ‘effectiveness’ is (Wragg et al., 1996). Thus, with no clear understanding, and agreement, of what effective teaching looks like within a school, and an appreciation for the difficulties in evaluating what is, in many cases, a subjective field and profession (Jensen & Reichl, 2011; Marland, 1986), teacher evaluation processes continue to be a point of tension between teachers and school leaders.

Management

Viewing teacher evaluation as a management tool, a method of accountability, or a purely administrative exercise are major impediments to its successful implementation (Blake & Jacques, 1990; Hay Group, 2012; Jensen & Hunter, 2010; OECD, 2009). Despite 76% of Australian teachers reporting that they receive annual feedback on their work, they indicated that the feedback, for the most part, was inadequate, meaningless and little more than a supervisory exercise (Hickey, 2012). This feedback challenges the purpose and method of these evaluation processes, with 61% of Australian teachers reporting that current evaluation processes have little impact on their teaching (Jensen & Reichl, 2012). Fitzgerald, Youngs, and Grootenboer (2003) found similar feedback across schools and among teachers in New Zealand, where a number of mandatory mechanisms were introduced by the New Zealand government to regulate teacher performance and teacher accountability during the 1990s. While it was reported that most teachers acknowledged that some form of appraisal was necessary, the increased level of bureaucratic control of teacher’s professional work was to the disadvantage of teachers, the quality of their work, outcomes for students and led to what they dubbed the ‘bureaucratisation’ of the profession (Fitzgerald et al., 2003, p. 94). Without

sufficient emphasis upon the developmental purpose of teacher evaluation, its function becomes viewed by teachers as an accountability mechanism only, largely for the purposes of administration rather than professional development and lacking any real tangible benefits or outcomes. As such, any evaluation process needs to be a mechanism for teacher development rather than a management tool and a means of accountability (Blake & Jacques, 1990; Hay Group 2012).

Rewards and Consequences

Throughout Australia, current teacher evaluation and development processes are not addressing ineffective teaching (Kamener, 2012; Jensen & Reichl, 2012; OECD 2018). To illustrate this point, 71% of teachers reported that teachers with sustained poor performance will not be dismissed in their school (Jensen & Hunter, 2010). Conversely, 92% of teachers reported that if they improved the quality of their teaching, they would not receive any recognition from their school (i.e., reward). In addition, 83% of teachers reported that the evaluation of their work had no impact on the likelihood of career advancement (Jensen & Reichl, 2011).

The literature is also equivocal about the effect, if any, of teacher performance pay on student outcomes (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bassey, 1999; OECD, 2011). Broadly speaking, teacher performance pay is where teachers are appraised or evaluated, ideally via a variety of data sources, and provided with a financial reward based on their value to the organisation. However, the Australian Government Productivity Commission report, *Schools Workforce* (2011), found that, despite extensive experience over many years, there is surprisingly little evidence around the effectiveness of performance-based pay in improving student outcomes. On this basis, the report recommended that the Australian Government defer the full-scale introduction of a national bonus scheme for teachers. Despite this decision, there is some evidence to suggest that certain types of performance pay can influence teacher performance and student outcomes when it is based on a broad assessment of teacher performance rather than test results alone (Odden, 1995). Thus, it could be argued that rewards and authentic recognition for ongoing improvement and exemplary practice should be part of a teacher evaluation process. Conversely, however, there are few ways to remove poor teachers from the profession or consequences for repeated poor performance (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Odden, 1995).

The Role of the Evaluator

Trust in the belief that the person leading the evaluation knows what good teaching looks like, can provide effective feedback and has an honest desire to see a teacher improve professionally, is another key element of an effective evaluation process. The literature identifies some links between effective evaluation and types of interpersonal interactions that lead to high trust and open relationships (Cardno & Piggott Irvine, 1997; Marshall, 1995; Wildy, 1996). According to Patterson (1986) for any reform effort, including a new teacher evaluation process, to be effective, the non-rational aspects of schools must be acknowledged, particularly issues of trust, relationships, collegiality, power and decision making. According to Strong and Tucker (1999), the individuals facilitating such an effort must pay careful attention to the interpersonal dynamics of communication and persuasion as much as to the technical design of a teacher evaluation process.

Mo, Connors and McCormick (1998) found that the relationship between the teacher and evaluator is central to successful outcomes. If the evaluation is conducted by someone in a line management position, it is important that the evaluator is credible, respected and skilful in appraising teachers so as to eliminate the fear or misuse of evaluation data (McNamara, 1995). Teacher evaluation has been perceived to be ineffective when staff do not trust the process and see it as bureaucratic, and when there is low trust between the evaluator and those being appraised (Piggott Irvine, 2010). In some cases, this has been due to insufficient or poor training for those tasked with the role of evaluation (Piggott Irvine, 2003a). When challenged with problems in evaluation, there is considerable evidence to suggest that evaluators adopt defensive, control or avoidance responses (Popham, 1988). Thus, a high level of trust between the evaluator and those being evaluated must be established. Poor outcomes are attained where evaluators have insufficient knowledge and training, and where the teacher lacks confidence in, and has a poor relationship with, their evaluator (Cardno & Piggott Irvine, 1997; Wildly, 1996).

Summative Versus Formative Feedback

The nature of formative and summative evaluation must be clearly articulated and understood for the purposes of this paper but also from the perspective of teachers themselves. Stronge (2006) asserted that the two most frequently cited purposes of personnel evaluation are accountability and professional growth. These two broad purposes suggest that summative evaluation (accountability) and formative evaluation (professional growth) of teachers are essential elements to promote student achievement and overall school improvement. Debate ensues around whether both types of evaluation processes should be conducted by the same person or separated and conducted by different people in separate parts of the organisation. Zapeda (2006) argued that it is almost impossible to separate, and perhaps inadvisable, to try to separate these two forms of evaluation as they act in a complementary and reciprocal fashion. However, there are problems with this approach, because unless the procedures for formative evaluation are made clearly distinct and separate from the summative, teachers will continue to be guarded, suspicious and fearful (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 1998). Research from the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) survey (OECD, 2013) indicated that nearly half of all teachers reported that evaluation processes in their school were largely for administrative purposes. However, eight in ten teachers work in schools where an outcome of the evaluation process is a developmental plan. Earlier research by Kyriacou (1997) suggested that for formative and summative mechanisms to be combined, then the kinds of interactions and relationships between the evaluator and those being evaluated are critical, and so too the way in which feedback is delivered and understood. With tensions between the two purposes of teacher evaluation, there must exist a clarity of purpose and outcome, and each must be aligned with school-wide goals as well as personal fulfilment (Zapeda, 2006; Gordon 2002).

Gaps in the Research

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when designing and implementing a teacher evaluation process. A key factor is for teachers to have a clear understanding of what effective teaching looks like, and what they will be appraised against. Whilst *The Standards* do provide this when included within a school's evaluation framework, there are potentially a range of other, equally important aspects, that need to be addressed.

This includes the skill and experience of the evaluator, and the role of school management in providing the resources needed to do it effectively.

The Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives on the use of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, when used as part of their evaluation process, and to determine what other factors may need to be considered in the design and implementation of such a process.

This study sought to explore teachers' experiences with a process that used *The Standards* as the key benchmark of their summative evaluation. A process where all seven standards were embedded in a school's teacher evaluation framework, and, were used as a tool to appraise teacher performance, and to establish areas of future improvement.

A purposive sampling method was used (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) to identify a case study school that had (a) not used *The Standards* prior to the 2017 school year for the purposes of teacher evaluation and (b) indicated that for the 2017 school year, they intended to implement a teacher evaluation process using *The Standards* as the basis for evaluation. This single case study was conducted in a multi-campus school in Victoria, Australia. Each campus had a Head of Campus who managed the daily operations of the campus. The Head of Campus conducted the evaluation of all teaching staff on their campus. The rationale for using *The Standards* was to provide a level of understanding around the expectations the school had of its teachers, and around which professional formal and informal conversations could be conducted between teacher and evaluator.

Methodology

All 61 teaching staff, both part-time and full-time across all campuses were invited to participate with six (N=6) agreeing to be interviewed. The interview participants came from a broad cross-section of subject areas, year levels and campuses. There were three males and three females. All participants had been with the school for two years or more, while three of participants had been with the school for more than 10 years. The majority of the participants' teaching experience was in the secondary years, that is, Years 7 to 12.

A qualitative semi-structured interview methodology was used to ascertain the effectiveness of *The Standards* when used within a teacher evaluation system at a school. Data were collected through pre (Phase 1) and post (Phase 2) semi-structured interviews to gain a greater depth of understanding of teacher attitudes towards the efficacy of the tool, the process, and overall effectiveness (Yin, 2014). As they were semi-structured, each guiding question provided a platform for additional questions based on responses and further elaboration. The interview questions were devised around the six elements identified in the review of literature as having the greatest impact on the outcome of an evaluation tool. Phase 1 interviews were conducted early in the school year and asked teachers to focus on their previous experiences with teacher evaluation processes prior to the 2017 school year when *The Standards* were not used as part of their evaluation. Phase 2 interviews were conducted at the end of the 2017 school year and asked the same questions, with the focus on teachers' experiences with the teacher evaluation process throughout the 2017 school year when *The Standards* were embedded within their school evaluation tool.

Each element and an example of a corresponding question developed for the interview protocol are outlined in Table 1.

Element	Interview Question
School Culture	Do you feel that you are valued in your school?
Quality Teaching	Do you have a clear understanding of what quality teaching looks like?
Management	What is your perception of your schools' teacher evaluation process? Do you feel that it promotes professional growth or is it more an administrative exercise?
Rewards and Consequences	Is there any reward or consequence mechanism built into your school teacher evaluation tool? For instance, do persistent poor performers receive support and/or consequences, and conversely, do high achievers receive additional remuneration?
Role of the Evaluator	Was the level and type of feedback you received as part of your performance evaluation helpful to your ongoing professional growth?
Summative v Formative	Is the feedback you receive as part of your annual evaluation the only time you receive it, or are there other informal occasions throughout the school year? If so, how is this conducted?

Table 1: Element and corresponding question

Research Ethics

Ethical clearance was sought through the Griffith University Research Ethics Department and was subsequently granted. As part of the process to ensure research ethics were considered and applied to this research, the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2015) was consulted. Permission was also sort from the school principal and subsequently granted.

Limitations of the Study

The constraints of this single case study were the need to ensure that a sufficient number of teachers firstly, agreed to complete the survey, and secondly, agreed to be interviewed in order to gather enough data to draw valid and reliable conclusions. A larger number of participants would have provided a greater level of validity to the overall outcomes of the research simply in that the experiences of a larger cohort would have added additional richness and breadth of data.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the interview data followed the Thematic Networks approach as described by Attridge-Sterling (2001). The interviews were firstly transcribed and themes identified. Thematic networks systematize the extraction of: (i) lowest-order premises evident in the text (Basic Themes); (ii) categories of basic themes grouped together to summarize more abstract principles (Organizing Themes); and (iii) super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text as a whole (Global Themes). These themes are then represented as web-like maps depicting the salient themes at each of the three levels, and, illustrating the relationships between them. The value of this method of analysis is that it provides a methodical manner in how to organise, and then analyse, qualitative data.

While the themes were not a direct correlation of the six elements identified through the literature, there were significant similarities, as displayed in the findings (see findings). For example, when analysing the interview transcripts, the concept of trust between evaluator

and teacher continued to emerge as an ongoing theme. Therefore, the word ‘trust’ was initially coded, before it became a Basic Theme. This was then developed to become an Organising Theme, and subsequently a Global Theme due to the large number of times it was mentioned in response to a range of questions from all participants and the connections it had across all six elements.

Findings

Phase One

In Phase One of the study, six themes emerged as significant experiences with teacher evaluation prior to the 2017 school year. These were in summary: trust; purpose of evaluation; rewards and consequences; *The Standards*; sources of data; and, the outcomes of evaluation. Table 2 shows the codes, basic themes, organising themes and global themes.

Codes	Issues discussed	Themes as Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Trust	Importance of trust	Trust in the evaluator Importance of trust in the process	Trust between evaluator and those being evaluated is critical	
Relationships Professionalism Value Respect	Feelings of being valued Professionalism of the evaluator Respect for the evaluator	Relationships with evaluator and colleagues Feelings of being valued by evaluator and the organisation Respect both given and received	Respect in the process and between participants Building and maintaining professional relationships	Trust as critical to the evaluation process
Culture	Respect loyalty honesty	Existing school climate and impact on evaluation	The existing school climate towards evaluation and honest conversations	
Evaluation process Process driven Evaluation experience Evaluation purpose Tick a box Administrative exercise	Steps Framework Past experiences Purpose Administrative exercise only	General steps or phases of evaluation Seen as driven by the process rather than the outcome An administrative or management tool	Clarity around the process of evaluation Purpose of evaluation Outcomes of evaluation – administrative or developmental	Clarity of process, purpose and outcomes of evaluation
Anxiety around evaluation Feeling lost Judgements Collaboration	Collaboration between colleagues Feelings of trepidation with the process and the outcomes	Acknowledging that evaluation brings with it a range of emotions	Evaluation is an emotion laden exercise	
Quality teaching	Quality teaching couldn't be articulated	Very little understanding of what quality teaching is or looks like	Vague understanding of what quality teaching is and what it consists of	
AITSL Standards	AITSL Standards were not know and could not be articulated	Minimal to basic understanding or knowledge of the AITSL Standards	No connection between quality teaching and how this is articulated via the Standards	The Standards

Learning styles Rapport with students	Rapport and learning styles were only mentioned as important to quality teaching	Learning styles and rapport with students were identified as important to Quality Teaching	Quality seen as understanding students foremost	
Self-evaluation/ reflection Peer observation Peer feedback Student feedback Parent feedback Lesson observations Student surveys Interviews Meetings	A range of data sources were collected to inform the evaluation process Much of it was informal No consistent data Parent feedback rated highly	Methods of data collection used to inform the evaluation process No clear process was being followed on any campus Peer feedback also featured regularly	A variety of data collection methods but nothing consistent or common	Sources of data to inform the evaluation process
Informal feedback General feedback Feedback frequency	Informal feedback was the dominant theme Peer feedback rated highly Frequency was adhoc	Informal feedback was the main source of feedback General feedback was the dominant mode rather than specific	Informal feedback as the dominant form General feedback rather than specific	
Evaluation leading to improvement Goal setting	Post evaluation personal development plan Some goal setting	Very little productive outcomes as a result of the process Some goal setting, but not linked to organisational goals	Creation of a personal development plan as a result of evaluation Professional goals established as a result of the evaluation process	Outcomes of the evaluation process
Personal development Evaluation outcomes		No personal development plan put in place	No professional development linked to goals	

Table 2: Phase One - Thematic networks – first set of interviews

Findings from the first set of interview data indicated a range of experiences with, and attitudes towards, teacher evaluation prior to the 2017 school year, and these are captured via the Global Themes. These experiences and attitudes include: the importance of trust between teacher and their evaluator; the absence of a sense of purpose towards evaluation as interpreted by teachers; the lack of rewards or consequences for either excellent or poor performance; a vague understanding of the criteria used to assess teaching performance, the narrow use of evidence to inform decisions and performance conversations, and the lack of any robust professional development plan post evaluation.

More specifically, findings from the first set of interview data suggest that those being evaluated had high levels of trust and respect for the person who was evaluating their performance. However, they had low levels of trust in the process and in the broader organisation for whom they worked. For example:

I've been here for fourteen years and I've seen a leader who I don't trust and I don't think is there to actually help you but more worried about their own personal well-being, and then you get someone like my boss here who obviously cares about his own well-being but he's massive on protecting the staff from unreasonable parents. (Respondent, Gavin)

Teachers expressed that they found their experiences with their evaluation had been largely an administrative exercise and had not contributed towards their improvement. They had only a vague understanding of the purposes of evaluation, as well as the process, and saw it as something that had to be done, like a compliance measure. Further to this, evaluators appeared to lack the skills to be effective in their roles. This is evidenced by the lack of robust conversations based on evidence, the lack of a broad range of evidence collected, and the narrow and superficial provision of feedback. For example:

Well I take it seriously in terms of how I approach it but I don't think it's ... I think it's treated as administrative exercise from leadership. (Respondent, Alison)

However, where the evaluator had the requisite skills, competence and where high levels of trust existed, there appeared to be a more fulfilling outcome for the teacher as evidenced by this comment:

I've been at the school since 2002. Initially we had no process for the first few years because we're very small, but as we've grown that's changed. Certainly our Head of Campus that's been here since 2006, she started to implement that process ... I would say that it's extremely effective. (Respondent, Lois)

In terms of the provision for, or inclusion of, rewards for excellent performance, or consequences for poor performance, these did not appear to exist as part of the teacher evaluation process at this school, as evidenced in the following comments:

I'm not aware of any additional remuneration in that sense or any penalty as such. (Respondent, Brian)

Of the teachers interviewed, most could only articulate a superficial and limited understanding or expression of what quality teaching means to them. They were all aware of *The Standards*, and had heard of them, and they had a sense that they provided an indication of what teachers are expected to know and do. However, they could not confidently articulate any of the seven standards. For example:

I couldn't rattle it off to you now, but I am quite familiar with it. Working is it? Is that the diagram? Sorry, I should say that I'm thinking that, is that that diagram or is something else? (Respondent, Alison)

There also appeared to be very little breadth of evidence collected to support developmental conversations upon which to base evaluator judgement. The evidence collected largely consisted of self-evaluation and infrequent lesson observations. Where

lesson observations did occur, there was also very little feedback provided or a post lesson conversation.

No, there was no other data apart from self-evaluation. (Respondent, Gavin)

There was also no structured post evaluation process implemented in terms of the creation of a developmental plan. Furthermore, those responsible for conducting the evaluation of teachers at this school did not set it as a priority and did not put time aside to provide sufficient feedback or to create a developmental plan for those they were supposed to evaluate.

Phase Two

Phase Two of the research was conducted at the end of the 2017 school year. A teacher evaluation process had been implemented at the school and *The Standards* were explicitly embedded as the criteria upon which to base judgements on performance, and upon which to structure conversations around improvement. The same questions were asked of the same six teachers on their experiences with this evaluation process over the course of the 2017 school year. As per Phase One, a thematic network analysis was conducted, and seven global themes were identified. These were in summary: trust; purpose of evaluation; rewards and consequences; quality teaching; feedback; sources of data, and the outcomes of evaluation. Table 3 shows the codes, basic themes, organising themes and global themes.

Codes	Issues discussed	Themes as Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Trust	Importance of trust	Trust in the evaluator more-so than trust in the organisation Importance of trust in the process	Trust between evaluator and those being evaluated is critical Lack of value from organisation	
Support Collegiality Value Open/Honest	Feelings of being valued – at a campus level and at a State level Positive relationships Respect for the evaluator	Relationships with evaluator and colleagues Feelings of being valued by evaluator and the organisation Feelings of not being part of the decision-making process	Respect in the process and between participants Building and maintaining professional relationships	Two points of trust – in the evaluator and the organisation
Culture	Turmoil Respect Uncertainty Change Distrust	Existing school climate and impact on evaluation Lack of communication Robust conversations – both had and not had Collegial support	The existing school climate towards evaluation and honest conversations	
Evaluation process Evaluation experience Tick a box Administrative exercise No evaluation done	Framework Past experiences Purpose or lack of Administrative exercise only No evaluation done No time for evaluation	General steps or phases of evaluation Seen as driven by the process rather than the outcome An administrative or management tool 50/50 administrative v growth	Clarity around the process of evaluation Purpose of evaluation Outcomes of evaluation – administrative or developmental	Clarity of process, purpose and outcomes of evaluation
Anxiety around evaluation Feeling lost Judgements Collaboration	Collaboration between colleagues See value in the process but acknowledge the anxiety around that comes with the process	Acknowledging that evaluation brings with it a range of emotions A fear that the process is being used for purposes other than professional growth	Evaluation is an emotion laden exercise The role of the evaluator	
Quality teaching Learning styles and rapport with students	QT couldn't be articulated QT exposure differs across campuses – no common understanding	Very little understanding of what quality teaching is or looks like	Vague understanding of what quality teaching is and what it consists of	

		Learning styles and rapport with students were identified as important to QT	Quality seen as understanding students foremost.	An understanding of what Quality Teaching is
AITSL Standards	AITSL Standards were not known and could not be articulated, or were superficial Survival only – no time to discuss QT	Minimal to basic understanding or knowledge of the AITSL Standards	No connection between quality teaching and how this is articulated via the Standards AITSL Standards not being referred to or used as part of the process	
Poor performance Fired/sacked/terminated Pay/rewards	Employment termination for poor performance No feedback given No extra pay given No constructive feedback	Pay increments as a reward	Poor performance leading to termination	
Consequences	No rewards and no consequences	Very little rewards or consequences built into the process Consequences lead to being terminated rather than supported	No rewards for excellent performance A mechanism to manage performance rather than growth	Rewards and consequences for poor or excellent performance
Informal feedback	Much of it was informal Informal feedback was the dominant theme	Informal feedback was the main source of feedback	Informal feedback as the dominant form	
Student feedback Parent feedback General feedback	Peer feedback rated highly – but informal	General feedback was the dominant mode rather than specific	General feedback rather than specific	Feedback
Feedback frequency	Frequency was adhoc	Peer feedback also featured regularly A lack of communication featured regularly	No feedback	

Self evaluation/reflection Peer observation Lesson observations AITSL online survey Folio evidence	A narrow range of data sources were collected to inform the evaluation process No consistent data	Methods of data collection used to inform the evaluation process – minimal No clear process was being followed on any campus	Narrow use of data collection methods	Sources of data to inform the evaluation process
Evaluation leading to improvement	Post evaluation PDP	Very little productive outcomes as a result of the process	Lack of a PDP as a result of evaluation	
Goal setting Personal development	Some goal setting An evaluator and an organisation that cares End of year review meeting Post evaluation personal development plan	Some goal setting, but not linked to organisational goals	Professional goals established as a result of the evaluation process	Outcomes of the evaluation process
Evaluation outcomes	No developmental plan post evaluation	No personal development plan put in place	No professional development linked to goals	

Table 3: Phase Two - Thematic networks – second set of interviews

As can be seen in Table 3, there were a number of similarities to teacher responses when compared to Phase One responses, however the differences were around the concept of feedback and sources of data to inform evaluation and developmental conversations. More specifically, findings from the second set of interview data at the end of the 2017 school year, following the application of *the Standards* within the teacher evaluation process, indicate that evaluator trust was high, but that organisational trust was low. There remained a lack of clarity around the purpose of evaluation, and there continued to be minimal provision of rewards, or consequences, for excellent or poor performance. Teachers continued to have only a superficial understanding of quality teaching, and feedback, when provided, was shallow and overly general in nature. Furthermore, sources of evidence to inform decisions remained narrow. Finally, there was minimal application of a professional development plan post evaluation.

While trust in the evaluator remained high, trust in the organisation was low. Teachers could see value in the process but continued to not feel valued by their organisation. There was, however, an increase in the clarity of purpose and process of evaluation among teachers. There also appeared to be a greater sense of ownership from the evaluators towards the process and the benefits it can provide to teachers around improving their performance. The process also appeared to have a greater connection to organisational goals as evidenced in the following text:

Elements of it are a tick the box administrative process. But it depends on how you manage it at your site, so we made a relatively big deal of it from the point of view of we opened it up to our staff, and my Head of Campus said, "This is what it needs to look like. This is the outcome, this is stuff you do all day every day. My focus in the next six months is going to be watching you grow and develop based on the school's goals. Choose 2 of those goals, not 50 of them, and do those well and achieve those well." (Respondent, Gina)

With respect to the inclusion or adoption of rewards or consequences for excellent or poor performance, there was no evidence that these had been included in the 2017 teacher evaluation process. For example:

Definitely nothing built into our system where we get any sort of bonus or any sort of incentive to ... We get plenty of feedback. If we're doing well, we get positive feedback, which is great. For a lot of us, that's a great benefit anyway. But yeah, nothing materialistic of any sort. Probably there's nothing really at the other end either, other than, obviously, the leader we have here will definitely follow up anything. (Respondent, Alison)

While the relationship that teachers had with their evaluator was strong, there did appear to be a lack of communication, a lack of depth of feedback, and a lack of honest, robust conversations around performance based on evidence. For example:

So in terms of evaluation I have been indirectly evaluated, I know no-one has said "you aren't teaching well" or anything... no one is coming to my classroom to say "oh look you are being terminated". We haven't had a formal evaluation and given the commotion and turmoil in the school, we haven't actually had like one person for the task. (Respondent, Patrick)

There was in fact very narrow sources of data collected, this being largely peer and self-assessments as per previous years. There did appear to be even less structured or formalised mechanisms to collect evidence on performance, as portrayed in the following comment:

I've had people often come in in my classroom, but that's been more unannounced. Sort of once again, that's my issue with this process, is I'm basically getting critiqued regularly but never under a controlled environment. Basically, people

sometimes coming in, who knows what they're doing or saying, I don't know.
(Respondent, Gavin)

As this comment suggests, there was not only less formalised mechanisms to collect evidence but less opportunities and avenues to both provide and receive feedback.

Despite *The Standards* being included, teachers still could not articulate a single one. Again, they were aware of them, but they could not accurately recall them. For example:

On a scale of 1-10 – I would give myself a 6. I can't recall them specifically.
(Respondent, Lois)

Teachers also elicited a superficial understanding of quality teaching with a focus on learning styles and student-teacher rapport. While it was encouraging to see that teaching as a practice was being discussed and shared, there did not tend to be in-depth discussions around the pedagogy of teaching. When asked whether they had an understanding of what quality teaching looks like, one teacher responded with:

Gosh I would hope so, we go on about it so much. And we actually do talk about things like that at staff meetings, so what worked really well, or somebody might say, "I did this in the class." (Respondent, Gina)

There was no evidence of a post evaluation professional learning plan put in place, as evidenced by the following comment:

Not to my knowledge anyway. I don't know. That's what it seems like. I asked where am I going, and basically they said, "Well, we haven't had anyone complain about you, so it must be going all right." (Respondent, Patrick)

A summary of the key findings from both Phase One and Phase Two is provided in Table 4.

Phase One – Pre 2017 school year	Phase Two – Post 2017 school year
Trust between teacher and evaluator is critical to the evaluation process.	Two points of trust – in the evaluator and the organisation. Trust in the evaluator was high, but trust in the organisation was low.
A clarity of the process, purpose and outcomes of evaluation is required.	Clarity of process, purpose and outcomes of evaluation remained ambiguous.
Rewards and consequences for poor or excellent performance were not embedded in the process.	Rewards and consequences for poor or excellent performance were not embedded in the process.
The Standards or criteria could not be articulated.	An understanding of Quality Teaching was superficial.
Sources of data to inform the evaluation process were narrow.	Feedback was shallow and vague.
Outcomes of the evaluation process were minimal.	Sources of data to inform the evaluation process remained narrow and minimal.
	Outcomes of the evaluation process remained minimal without any robust professional development plan post-evaluation.

Table 4: Summary of Findings

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives on the use of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, when used as part of their evaluation process, and to determine what other factors may need to be considered in the design and

implementation of such a process. Findings from this study suggest that the inclusion of *the Standards* within a teacher evaluation mechanism is not the critical element of the evaluation process. Rather, the findings of this study suggest that the mechanism itself is secondary to a range of other important factors. These factors include (a) the relationship that the teacher has with both their evaluator and the organisation for whom they work; (b) the skills of the evaluator including how they deliver feedback; and (c) the addition of a developmental plan post evaluation. More broadly, the existing level of trust and the attitudes surrounding professional growth and teacher evaluation are more important than the tool itself. The use of *The Standards*, while beneficial from the point that they are an articulation of what teachers are expected to know and do, are not what has the greatest effect. What matters most is that teachers know and understand the standards, criteria or benchmarks used to evaluate them. Further, this study concluded that the evaluator must have the ability to adequately interpret the evidence collected as part of the teacher evaluation process and have the skills and experience to deliver it in such a way that it resonates with the teacher. Finally, a variety of data collection methods from a mixture of audiences or sources should be used to provide evidence and inform feedback. This feedback must be provided in a timely manner, it must be regular, and it must have depth.

There are a range of implications arising from the findings of this research. These begin with a school culture that places an emphasis upon teacher improvement and where this is reinforced with regular dialogue around what constitutes effective teaching pedagogy. Trust between the teacher and their evaluator must be high. The evaluator needs to have the experience to interpret performance data, and to be able to deliver feedback to the teacher in such a way that it is useful and meaningful. Teachers need to know what is expected of them, and what they are being judged against. A post evaluation development plan must be created, where goals are established, where review dates are set, and which clearly identifies and provides ongoing professional growth opportunities for the teacher.

Conclusion

The inclusion of *The Standards* as part of a school's teacher evaluation process, by themselves, does not guarantee that the teacher will have an improved experience and better student outcomes. This study has provided no evidence to suggest that the inclusion of *The Standards* will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of an individual teacher, even when they are embedded within a tool to evaluate teacher performance, and to inform professional development.

In conclusion, this research reveals that the inclusion of *The Standards* as part of a teacher evaluation framework, is less significant to a range of other important considerations, these being: (i) the relationship that the teacher has with their evaluator; (ii) the skills of the evaluator; and (iii), the addition of a developmental plan post evaluation. A review of the literature suggests that teachers accept that evaluation of their work is necessary and when implemented in a collaborative manner, using a range of evidence, is a source of professional growth and development (Currie & Vidovich, 2000). However, in Australian schools, there has yet to be seen a successful implementation of a teacher evaluation process, due to a lack of consideration and planning as outlined in the six elements discussed in the review of the literature (Jensen & Reichl, 2012; Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997b). The documents and recommendations produced by AITSL provide a framework, however it is the way in which schools implement an evaluation process, which will determine the experience that teachers have with the process, and ultimately, their ongoing professional development.

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