INTEGRATED TEACHER EVALUATION MODEL (ITEM): A LIFT TO INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Prof Ada Sam Omenyi
NGOZI AGU
CHRISTY ODIMEGWU
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By

AGU, NGOZI, PhD
Department of Educational Foundations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
ngozi_uj@yahoo.com

&

PROF. OMENYI, ADA
Department of Educational Management & Policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
omenyias@yahoo.com

ODIMEGWU, CHRISTY O.
Educational Research Unit
Crystal Research Consult, Awka
Christiharris2001@yahoo.co.uk

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Abstract:

It is has been one of the nation’s greatest challenges to provide quality education for the populace being that she has taken education to be an instrument for national development. Having acknowledged that teachers are at the heart of education system, it is paramount that teacher quality is assured through effective evaluation. Teacher evaluation has been under some worrisome trend for a long time now. The annual ritual evaluation involving external supervisors’ and principals’ observations and ratings do not appear to address the problem of sieving the wheat from the chaff, a action necessary to lift education from its current abysmal level. The search for a more reliable assessment data for teacher evaluation has led the researchers to develop an Integrated Teacher Evaluation Model (ITEM). This model seeks to make teacher evaluation a process which involves all the stakeholders in an ongoing production of reliable data which will initially be used for teacher development and subsequently used for determining their fate. This

Introduction

The Nigerian government holds education as the cornerstone to any development and the bedrock of any democratic process (Osuji, 2004). Education is essential for economic growth and social development and for reducing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Education also interacts with other investments to raise productivity. Every additional year of schooling increases
a person’s productivity and increases earnings (Schultz 1997, 2002; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2004). Therefore, one may conclude that investments in education are a critical part of national development which any government tries to justify. Nigeria is currently aspiring to be among the world’s top-20 economies by the year 2020 and it is through quality education that this can be achieved.

Despite these valuable associations, the full benefits of education investments are realized only when certain conditions are in place: when there is an overall enabling macroeconomic environment, when education services reach the ultimate beneficiaries and improve learning outcomes; and when education is of good quality (Hanushek & Wößmann 2007; Hanushek & Kimko 2000 in Patrinos & Kagia, 2008).

The quality of education in our primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions is going down and requires re-engineering (National Policy Brief, 2005). The need for quality education has been receiving more attention now than ever before. Osuji (2004) observed that the emergence of new technologies and globalization have made the chase for quality education more relevant than ever before. The teacher has also been identified as the key actor in the education delivery process and the main instrument for quality education.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria has pointed poor curriculum delivery resulting in the lowering of performance level in school and public examination, as well as deficiency in educational monitoring, supervision and evaluation as some of the problems of education in Nigeria. This is an indictment on the type of teacher evaluation practices in the educational system. It would therefore not be out of place to state that the evaluation of teachers’ performance as it is presently practiced does not make for quality education across all educational levels in Nigeria.
The need to address the effectiveness of teacher evaluation in Nigeria hinges on the following:

Teachers upon recruitment were generally posted to areas where their services are needed. Induction was rarely organized for these newly recruited teachers; neither were they assigned to senior teachers (mentors) for guidance. Such problems as poor preparation of teachers in teacher preparation programmes and the reoccurring problem of teacher commitment to teaching, consistent poor performance of students and the madness called ‘special centres’ where examination malpractices are perpetuated, have constituted reminder of the need to develop strategies necessary to improve teacher quality. Research has shown that teacher quality accounts for considerable increase in the achievement of students.

To ascertain the level of competence and performance of teachers, evaluation exercises are usually conducted. Data from these evaluation exercises are expected to be used for improving teachers’ areas of deficiency (formative) and for determining the teachers’ fate in terms of promotion, demotion, award dismissal etc. (summative). It has been of general consensus that effective teacher evaluation is one of the major ways of effecting teacher quality. The work is aimed at developing a model for effective teacher evaluation across all levels of our educational system. It is organized in three short steps; (a) the relevance of teacher evaluation (b) the deficiency in the current evaluation practices (c) Models of teacher evaluation (d) A new model of teacher evaluation

**Relevance of Effective Teacher Evaluation**

Educators have recognized the role effective teacher evaluation can play, not only in assessing competence, but in strengthening collegiality and increasing teacher empowerment (Proteroe, 2002 in Hughes, 2006). Sawa 1995 identified six main relevance of teacher evaluation as stated below: 1.) It should strive to improve instruction by fostering self-development and peer
assistance. 2) Staff development activities can be rated and identified. 3) The selection process can be validated. 4) A well-designed, properly functioning teacher evaluation process provides a major communication link between the school system and teachers. 5) Personnel decisions such as retention, transfer, tenure, promotion, demotion, and dismissal can be enhanced through an effective evaluation process. 6) Teacher evaluation is capable of protecting students from incompetent teachers by bringing structured assistance to marginal teachers. According to Holland and Adams (2002), evaluations emphasized teachers’ abilities to individualize instruction, promote engaged learning, and effectively link standards to instruction. Teacher evaluation increases both administrators’ and teachers’ accountability through the elimination of feelings of inertia which is possible in the teaching profession.

**Deficiencies in Teacher Evaluation Practices**

Mechanisms that exist to ensure that teacher quality remains high are evaluation practices (Beall, 1999). The quality of the school is determined by teacher performance in the classroom more than by any other factor. It is therefore imperative that teacher evaluation be conducted correctly, efficiently, and fairly to determine the areas where further development and improvement of skills are needed. If done correctly, teacher evaluations could provide a vital step toward providing quality instruction.

In the Nigerian education system, the National Policy on Education (2004) and Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, Cap 104, 1990, are the major instruments for teacher evaluation. Under the said Act, inspectors are empowered to assess teachers on the following, among others: i) method of teaching; ii) use of continuous assessment (CA) of pupils/students; iii) correction of pupils’/students’ work; iv) scheme of work and lesson notes; v) work ethics; and vi) regularity and punctuality.
Of importance is the fact that modern inspection emphasizes inspection of education and not of the school, and the inspection of teaching and learning activities as well as all other activities in the school that facilitate teaching and learning and not necessarily the teacher. In other words, the emphasis of the inspector during inspection is not so much on assessing teachers but on assessing teaching and educational problems with the teacher in order to help him find solutions to the problems (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005).

It is very paradoxical that teacher evaluation which is a very vital element in determining quality education has been trivialized. Again many teacher evaluation systems continued to rely on annual observations and used outdated checklists with no alignment to the teaching standards expected to be used in the classroom. The external supervision (evaluation) usually conducted yearly, for all its good intentions, do not appear to address the problem of poor curriculum delivery. The haste with which it is done most of the time leaves one with the doubt of the reliability of the observations. The fact that schools are duly informed to enable them prepare and wait for the supervisions is another aspect of the matter. Samples of supervision reports show little or no information on the core areas of supervision but rather appear to address trivial matters. Scanty two-paged reports are usually what the external supervision comes to and eight out of every such ten reports, have statements as these: “All teachers were seen in the classroom very busy with their lessons. Teachers who did not present their lesson notes were asked to bring them to Zone. The front of the school environment is tidy …,” and such other statements which leave so much relevant matters unaddressed. It is also disheartening to note the level of deception that characterized these supervision visits. Teachers’ Lesson notes written years back need only to be copied and recopied to qualify for presentations to one supervisor after another.
The evaluation interviews were done in so much frenzy and flurry of activities that little is ever achieved. The practice of interviewing ten or more teachers in the same room, by the same panel and at a time coupled with the nature of questions asked; give no opportunity to identify areas of teachers’ deficiencies.

Further to that, administrators’ ratings done through the Appraisal Forms every year are seen to be mere routine. The resultant ratings do not depict the level of competence of teachers. Many other extraneous variables impinge on its reliability. Cases of administrators’ oral complaint of teacher’s inefficiency were normally not reflected in their ratings. Evidences from research have shown that this is the unfortunate truth. According to Peterson (2000) in Hughes (2006, p.27). “Seventy years of research on principal ratings of teachers show that administrators’ ratings do not work well”. A good number of studies in this method of teacher evaluation have acknowledged this deficiency (examples: Marshall, 2005; Ebmeir, 2003; Holland and Adams, 2002). The frequency of the evaluation is yet another problem. Marshall (2005) posited that these observations were conducted too seldom to provide suggestions that could be tried and then reevaluated by both teacher and supervisor.

Sloppy teacher evaluation programs, because they neither improve teachers' instructional skills nor permit the dismissal of incompetent teachers, rob children of the achievements, which when well-taught, would have the potential to obtain. Indeed far too many school administrators and teachers see evaluation as something extremely stressful, of little or no value, and a barrier to high staff morale. Rarely do they see it as a means of empowering the teacher teachers for better performance and improvement of students’ achievement.

Models of Teacher Evaluation: A Review of Literature

Education is dynamic such that societal changes in expectations influence, not only what is to be taught but also what the teacher does. It is therefore a valid argument to say that teacher evaluation
should take cognizance of the evolving nature of education. Brandt (1996) noted that administrators began to realize that they could not expect teachers to develop alternative, innovative strategies for teaching and assessing students and then continue to evaluate teachers as they were 50 years ago.

A number of teacher evaluation models have been in existence. Below are some of them.

**Differentiated supervision model**

Glatthorn (1997) developed a model for differentiated supervision that blends the old and new of teacher evaluation. He proposed that one does not need to be stuck in the lock step of tradition to effectively evaluate and supervise teachers. There is a place for the clinical model of evaluation, cooperative options that allow teachers to work with peers, and self-directed options guided by the individual teacher. An attractive attribute of the Glatthorn (1997) model is that, depending on needs, it gives the administrator different ways to evaluate different teachers. The nontenured teacher can be given a more rigorous evaluation while the tenured, experienced, department chairperson can be afforded more freedom. Glatthorn observed: Differentiated supervision operates on the belief that teaching is a profession. As members of a profession, teachers should have more control over their professional development, within generally accepted professional standards. As skilled professionals, they need both support and feedback, but from colleagues and students - not always from administrators or supervisors (p. 4).

**Collaborative evaluation model**

The collaborative evaluation model is being widely used by schools (Berliner, 1982; Wolf, 1996 in Hughes, 2006). The model centers on working with a mentor or colleague and can be directed at both the new teacher and the tenured teacher. Probationary teachers require a more intensive administrative involvement that may include multiple observations, journal writing, or artifact collections, plus a strong mentoring program.
More experienced teachers can be introduced to a growth track that is built around some form of goal setting. The evaluative processes can be more of a collaboration between administrator/mentor and teacher. At the end of the time frame, the two can sit down and compare notes, look at the data gathered, determine what has been accomplished, what needs work, and the direction that needs to be taken. There are no summative write-ups, no ratings, and no evaluative commentary.

Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation Model
A performance-based teacher evaluation model is critical to improving teaching, thus improving student knowledge and performance. Performance-based teacher evaluation is intended to assist administrators and teachers in creating a learning environment in which students acquire and apply knowledge and skills. A performance-based teacher evaluation system supplies information and feedback regarding effective practice, offers a pathway for individual professional growth, allows a mechanism to nurture professional growth toward common goals and supports a learning community in which people are encouraged to improve and share insights in the profession. The Performance-based teacher evaluation has the following principles amongst others: it should have processes that address teacher evaluation and professional development; the teacher evaluation phase serves organizational decision-making purposes while the professional development phase supports the teacher in improving performance on an ongoing basis; adequate time and opportunity should be provided for teachers to grow professionally by participating in activities such as mentoring, peer coaching, working on professional teams, etc.; criteria should address both student and teacher behaviors. The central focus in developing an evaluation system is to promote student success; the process of teacher evaluation and professional growth should allow for teacher reflection, teacher collaboration, and staff contribution to the learning community; A strong mentoring program, with proper funding and training, is essential for providing the
necessary support and feedback for first- and second-year teachers; Reliable evaluators are essential to the evaluation process. Evaluators should be trained in the skills of analyzing effective teaching, providing reflective conferencing, managing documentation, and providing leadership for teacher professional development (The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri, 1997). Performance-based teacher evaluation must emphasize conference between the teacher and the evaluator as well as personal reflections by the teacher. One of the basic principles of this method is that the school culture must be one of trust. Again for the teacher to be able to reflect and conduct personal critique of his or her performance, he or she needs to be aware of current research and best practices in teaching and learning.

**Multiple Evaluator Model**

In addition to classroom observations and evaluations by administrators, observations and critiques of teachers’ performances by other stakeholders are being seen more and more as a valuable part of a teacher evaluation instrument. Involving peers in the teacher observation process shows two possible advantages (Lengling, 1996). First, when a peer does the classroom observation, the observation is done in a less threatening environment when compared to an administrative observation. The second advantage may be that when properly done, this type of evaluation can foster communication and trust between both the teacher and colleague and the teacher and administrator. On the down side, for teachers to properly evaluate their colleagues, they must be trained in observation and feedback techniques. With teacher time at a premium, finding the opportunity to participate in this training creates a negative for involving teachers in the evaluation process. As a possible solution to this time dilemma, teachers could be offered evaluation training as part of a professional development package that satisfies division and state requirements for continuing education.
Along with peer observations, teacher self-evaluation has evolved as a component of a multiple evaluator package. Self-evaluation causes the teacher to reflect on his/her direction and methods. It causes the teacher to look at the long term. The belief is that this type of instrument promotes a sense of responsibility and encourages higher standards. While this method is excellent for professional development, it has been found to be unreliable and not accepted for administrative decisions (Lengling, 1996).

**Portfolios**

Wolf (1996) in Isaac (2003) defined teacher portfolios as a collection of information about a teacher's practice. Portfolio assessments tend to comprise pieces of evidences of teacher classroom performance, including lesson and unit plan, video of classroom teaching, reflection and self-analysis of teaching practices, examples of student work, and examples of teacher feedback given to student (Andrejko, 1998 in Mathers, Oliva & Laine, 2008, p.6). Review of literature has shown that the use of the portfolio model of teacher evaluation has gained popularity in the recent past. While it is gaining popularity, not much consensus has been reached on what should be contained in the teacher portfolio. However some authors concluded that the contents of the teacher’s portfolio are limited only by the creativity of the teacher. Portfolio assessment has been identified as useful tools because they enable teachers reflect on their own practice, allow evaluators identify teachers’ instructional strengths and weakness and encourage professional growth. They also promote the active participation of teachers in the evaluation process (Danielson, 1996; Attinello, Lare, and Source, 2006)

**Students’ Ratings**

Students’ ratings have been one of the largest traditional means of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process during this century and are growing in popularity in the western world. Unfortunately, it has received little recognition in Nigeria. Maiwada (2001) in Joshua and Joshua
(2004) is of the view that the inability of stakeholders in education to evaluate the standard of lessons has contributed to the falling standard of education in Nigeria. A research carried out in this area by Joshua and Joshua (2004) shows that teachers substantially accepted the idea of students evaluating their classroom teaching effectiveness for formative purposes than for summative purposes. This is understandable because of the fear of using students’ ratings to determine the promotion, dismissal and demotion of teachers. Although these evaluations are easy to administer and provide insights into teacher communication, rapport, and effectiveness, it should be used over time with other evaluation tools, to determine its reliability particularly when it is not to be used for taking personnel decisions. However some researchers found students rating more reliable than self-assessment of teachers (eg. Imhanlahimi & Aguele 2006). This is not surprising as students spend greater number of time with their teachers and as such are better equipped to accurately rate their teachers’ performance. Although some scholars found that students’ rating have been very significant in modifying teaching method and approach, a large number of teachers in this country have negative attitude to their students’ evaluating their teaching.

**Integrated Teacher Evaluation Model (ITEM) – A New Model**

Considering the problem of teacher evaluation in Nigeria, there is the need to ensure reliability of teacher evaluation. This can be achieved, to a very large extent, through the use of multiple sources of data and multiple evaluation tools. The researchers therefore developed the Integrated Teacher Evaluation model with three basic constitutive elements. These elements include; evaluation by external supervisors, school head/departmental head and students using multiple evaluation tools. These tools include; teacher portfolios and classroom observations to be used by External Supervisors and School Heads; and rating scales to be used by students. The inclusion of portfolios in this model is very crucial at this period in our education era when creativity is being
highly advocated. Teacher’s ability to assemble such works as previous works of his/her students, teacher-assisted-projects, teacher’s peer-reviewed publications and many others, is a testament of his creativity and innovativeness. This will, in no small measure, improve students learning as the teachers would be gingered to apply their ingenuity in organizing students’ learning.

Obviously, this model integrates not only the major stakeholders in education (the government – external supervisors, the consumers – students and the academic leader – the school head), but also utilizes multiple data to yield reliable information on teacher’s performance. Undoubtedly, reliable data on teacher’s performance help address weaknesses observed in some teachers and so offer opportunities for improvement programmes. While using evaluation result for teacher development (i.e formative), is also necessary to address the summative aspect as “ongoing formative evaluations without any consequences (summative) provide minimal incentives for teachers to act on the feedback” (Mathers, Oliva & Laine, 2008, p.1).

Subsequent re-evaluation of the teachers against a stipulated standard can be used to take decisions on teachers’ promotion, demotion, transfer, amongst others.

This model can be represented diagrammatically as shown below
Fig.1: Diagrammatic representation of Integrated Teacher Evaluation Model (ITEM)

Education is a means of projecting the principles of democracy in Nigeria, as such the Integrated Teacher Evaluation Model would successfully improve instruction and quality education if it is practiced under a democratic environment. Indeed, i) Students should be allowed to make their contributions without harassment and intimidation by their teachers and the school authority. ii) Transparency should be practice by administrators and supervisors. The old tradition where administrators and supervisors are usually reluctant to point out teachers’ weakness would adversely affect any teacher improvement programme. iii) Only evaluators duly trained in classroom observation should evaluate to ensure accurate observational record.

**Conclusion:**

One of the major determinants of the quality of education in any country is the quality of its teachers. Teacher evaluation is mechanism designed to ensure that students receive quality instruction. A number of problems have been associated with the different evaluation methods used in Nigeria. The integrated teacher evaluation model which aim at deriving multiple data from external supervisors, the students and the school administrator was posited by the researchers. This model ensures the provision of reliable data on teacher evaluation. This reliability is necessary to know the areas of teacher deficiencies in order to sufficiently address them for instructional improvement. The model has basic constitutive element grounded on the belief that major stakeholders in education should be involved in providing evidences necessary to measure teachers’ performance or non performance. The condition necessary for the thriving of the integrated teacher evaluation model were also outlined.
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