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Principals' Perception on Teacher Evaluations during the 2020-2021 School Year

Luke Mosiman
qu3339js@go.minnstate.edu

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Principals' Perception on Teacher Evaluations during the 2020-2021 School Year

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the Department of Leadership Education

College of Education

of Winona State University

by

Luke Mosiman

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Abstract

The reason for this qualitative study was to understand principal's perspective of their teacher evaluation tool effectiveness during the 2020-2021 school year. Schools in this study were all from the same upper Midwestern state. The districts these schools were in had learning models range from full in person to full distance learning for most of the 2020-2021 school year. The participants were asked through surveys and an interview how they felt their evaluation tool was able to measure teacher performance in the areas of class atmosphere, classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement. Results indicate the evaluation tool was able to perform just as well as during previous school years. Principals felt the challenge was the teacher's ability to adapt to the new learning models. The study was strictly qualitative, focusing only on principal perception, further research is needed to measure the effectiveness of these evaluations. Quantitative research is needed to understand if student success is being achieved because of these teacher evaluation tools.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The school years of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were different from other years in K-12 education (Craig, 2020) due to a global pandemic. Every position in the school district had to learn how to work differently (Pincus, 2020) because of the shift to distance learning. The 2020-2021 school year administrators still needed to conduct evaluations of new and veteran teachers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). New teachers in Minnesota are on probation for three years. In these first three years administrators need to conduct three observations per year, typically done in person. After completing the probation period, administrators conduct evaluations, including an observation, once every three years (MN Stat. 123A.40, 2020). Even during the new hybrid models used in 2020 - 2021, teachers still were observed. Administrators pivoted to remote observations of remote teaching, yet evaluations via video are not new (Quinn et al. 2018). What was new was the immediate pivot to remote observations of teachers, while teachers themselves were involuntarily conducting class via web-based video platforms.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers have the single greatest impact on student achievement out of any staff member in a district (Bergin et al. 2017). For this reason, it is important to know how teachers perform. Evaluating instruction and teachers has been around for many decades (Bergin et al. 2017). Education has changed in the past two decades and a push for better teacher accountability has driven improved evaluation methods (Marzano, 2012). Teacher evaluation has two main purposes, evaluation for measurement and evaluation for growth (Marzano, 2012). Evaluation for measurement can give the district a snapshot of how teachers compared to others in the district and others around the state. This can be used for promoting districts to the public. Evaluation for growth provides individual teachers with tools needed to ameliorate in their

profession. This helps districts retain teachers and make gains in student achievement (Young et al. 2015).

Administrators have used direct classroom observation for most evaluations (Bergin et al. 2017). Video evaluation has been administered more recently, and some data has been collected about how evaluators feel about remote evaluations (Quinn et al. 2018). In the two school years of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 more teachers taught remotely than at any point in history (Brown, 2020). This has caused the need for administrators not only to evaluate remotely, but evaluate remote teaching.

Young (2015) reported administrators' perspectives on remote or online evaluation methods. Online instruction is shown to need different evaluation criteria (Tobin, 2004). Before COVID-19, administrators had the choice to evaluate remotely. During the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, with the switch to distance learning, administrators had no choice but to evaluate remotely. The goal of this research was to gather perspectives from administrators who conducted teacher evaluations during the 2020-2021 school year. The researcher is interested in how principals perceived their teacher evaluations measured teacher performance during hybrid or distance learning. This research can be used to help develop best practice in evaluations as administrators continue remote evaluations in the future.

Background of the Problem

Evaluations are an important part of measuring teacher ability, and how principals perceive the effectiveness of evaluation tools impacts teacher growth and measurement (Bergin et al. 2017). Administrators have been evaluating teachers using a combination of evaluating for growth and evaluating measurement for decades (Marzano et al. 2011). Throughout many of those years' administrators needed to use direct observation. Video technology has given some

the ability of remote observation (Gotwals et al. 2015). At the secondary level, administrators overwhelmingly use in-person observation as an evaluation tool (Quinn, 2014). The school years of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 saw a shift in learning models. These new learning models required administration at every level of education to evaluate educators differently. Learning model requirements were not uniform across the country, the study focuses on principal's perceptions in Minnesota. The evaluation tool and method are important because effective evaluations impact student achievement (Grissom et al. 2021). Principals' ability to remotely evaluate teachers expands opportunities for more effective ways to obtain student achievement (Quinn et al. 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to gather information on how administrators perceived their evaluation tools were able to evaluate teacher performance during the 2020-2021 school year. Schools across the Midwest had different learning models throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Evaluation tools were used in each of these districts. This research aimed to start collecting perspectives of the people who conducted these teacher evaluations. This understanding can be used by current and future school leaders when making decisions about teacher evaluations during future learning models.

Research Question

The primary focus of this research was the perception of principals on their teacher evaluation tool. To narrow the field of study down, the four pedagogical areas focused on are classroom management, content delivery, student engagement, and class atmosphere. For understanding of principals' perceptions, the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: How do principals perceive their teacher evaluation tools measured teachers' performance during hybrid or distance learning?

Significance of the Study

The switch to distance learning in March of 2020 forced schools to conduct education differently. Some schools in the study created the ability for students to attend high school fully online. Student achievement is an important part of any learning model. The input from principals on teacher evaluations during distance learning could help schools create and conduct effective teacher evaluations as new models become permanent.

Definition of the Terms

Distance learning: The way districts conduct learning when students are not physically in the classroom. This can happen by students picking up or being mailed worksheets to work on at home, watching lessons pre-recorded by teachers, using online materials specified by the teacher, or watching the teacher in real time via a video-conference platform. Remote learning can also be used to describe how students are receiving content. Distance learning was used in this research because the schools in the study use the vocabulary of “distance learning” to describe what students were doing (Rochester Public Schools, n.d.).

Administrator: A school’s head principal, assistant principal, or other school or district leader who officially conducts teacher evaluations in accordance with the Minnesota Department of Education’s teacher evaluation guidelines (MN stat. 179A.03, 2020).

Evaluation: The process of collecting and reporting data on how teachers conduct classroom management and content delivery (MN Stat. 123A.40, 2020).

Direct Observation: When administrators watch a teacher conduct class in real time or recorded lectures. This can be done virtually or in person. It can be done during a teacher's lectures or student work time. Any time the principal was watching what the teacher did can be considered direct observation. (Marzano, 2012).

Limitations

This study was limited to the perspectives of administrators. Relationships formed between administration and staff can influence evaluation outcome (Bergin et al. 2017). Because the research question was limited to perception, the research's conclusion was limited to how participants felt. The research was only focused on the 2020-2021 school year. Out of the 40 principals emailed eight participated in the multiple-choice section of the survey and four participated in the open-ended questions section of the survey. One administrator chose to participate in a virtual interview. With so few numbers the overall perspective of principals was very limited.

Summary

Chapter One began with the importance of the study. It looked at why evaluations are important and how administrators have conducted them in the past. The background of the problem touched on the evolution of teacher evaluations. The next chapters will lay out in detail the progression of teacher evaluation throughout recent history. A review of the literature will be presented, and the theoretical framework will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research was to gather information on how administrators perceived their evaluation tools were able to evaluate teacher performance during the 2020-2021 school year. The literature review will start with a historical review of teacher evaluations, and continue with modern evaluations, the recent rise in education reform and accountability, a theoretical framework, evaluation tools, and conclude with a technology discussion.

Historical Path of Teacher Evaluations

The US Constitution does not directly mention education. For most of United States history, education was dictated by the states. The *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954 was the first big influence of the federal government in school reform (Superfine, 2014). In 1979, the Federal Department of Education started down the path of a more involved federal government in education (Rippeth, 2017). Money was dedicated to education through the decades of 1960, 1970, and 1980. In 1983 “*A Nation at Risk*” was published by the National Commission on Education in Excellence. This brought student achievement across the nation to the forefront of the education world (Rippeth, 2017). Along with student achievement, teacher evaluations became a hot topic in education. States such as Tennessee created their own reform based on this national conversation. It was not until the 2000s that the federal government made significant changes (Paige, 2019).

In 2001 President Bush's administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It brought major reforms, including establishing a standardized testing culture (Rippeth, 2017). Schools and districts across the country were rated. To rate a school the state needed data to determine success. Standardized tests were the answer to this need. The NCLB was the first national act to link student success with teacher performance. According to the NCLB, all

students should be taught by a “highly qualified teacher”. This quickly changed to “highly effective teachers” (Rippeth, 2017).

President Obama’s administration further reformed education in the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This in turn led to the creation of Race To The Top (RTTT). RTTT established grant programs in which states could voluntarily participate in. If a state or district chose to apply for the grant and was awarded this grant, certain criteria had to be met. The criteria included reforming teacher evaluation methods. Prior to RTTT, few states directly linked teacher effectiveness to student achievement. After 2015 more than 28 states added ineffectiveness to the grounds of teacher dismissal. making it easier to dismiss tenured teachers based upon unsatisfactory student test achievement (Superfine, 2014).

The wave of reform from the 2000s and 2010s changed teacher evaluations dramatically. Local school district no longer held complete control over how teachers were evaluated. States needed to show their teachers were effective. Some states such as Colorado allowed districts to monetarily incentivize teachers to increase student assessment performance. By 2003, nine states had policies in place providing pay for student test achievement (Rippeth, 2017). States such as Florida turned to value-added evaluations (Rippeth, 2017). In 2011, Florida passed the Student Success Act. Performance evaluation conducted by administrators needed to be based at least 50% on student learning growth assessed annually on student assessments. By 2012 20 states required student assessment achievement to be a part of teacher evaluations (Rippeth, 2017).

State policy makers and teacher unions’ perspectives differ widely on the effectiveness of models created from the aforementioned reforms. Unions have launched multiple legal battles to dismantle new regulations on teacher evaluations. Over the past 20 years, many lawsuits filed on

behalf of teacher unions have addressed the use of Value-Added Models (Paige, 2019). These models seek to connect student test achievement to high-stakes employment decisions.

Theoretical Framework

Intrinsic incentive theory or Self-Determination theory (Ryan et al. 2000) is the foundation for the teacher evaluation process reviewed in this study. Intrinsic incentive theory explores the internal motivation of the teachers (Firestone, 2014). At its heart Self-determination theory seeks to understand individual's inherent growth tendencies to perform their duties well, without any outside force. Instilling this motivation is the job of the principal (Firestone, 2014). The principal needs to form relationships with individuals to understand how each person is intrinsically motivated. Internal motivation can come from several factors such as autonomy, competence (Ryan et al. 2000), growth, self-efficacy, and expectancy (Firestone, 2014). As school leaders conduct the evaluation process it is their goal to provide feedback to encourage those factors to produce intrinsic motivation (Martinek, 2019).

The four elements focused on in this study were class atmosphere, classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement. Each of those elements require high understanding of teaching pedagogy to perform well. Intrinsic motivation theory is a foundation for teacher evaluations that produce teachers who have a deep understanding of these teaching pedagogies (Martinek, 2019). The motivation for success in class atmosphere, classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement rely on the expectancy of the teacher (Firestone, 2014). Evaluating for growth asks the principal and teacher to create goals and outcomes that will motivate the teacher to perform better for the sake of internal satisfaction (Firestone, 2014). Goal setting and successful outcomes contrasts with external motivation, such

as higher pay for better student performance (Firestone, 2014). External motivation does exist in evaluation development; however, these evaluation practices were not included in this study.

Evaluation

Districts need to develop or adapt evaluation processes (MN Stat. 123A.40, 2020). At the end of three years, when a teacher is rehired for the fourth year that teacher is considered tenured. Following tenure, an evaluation process with the principal needs to be completed every three years (MN Stat. 123A.40, 2020). The evaluation process can be involved. These evaluations often include in-class observations of the teacher.

Reasons for Evaluation

History shows professionals, governments, and citizens care about education. Principals are important in upholding the values we as society put on education. It is teachers, however, that have the greatest impact (Hidayat et al. 2020). The impact a teacher has is not always positive. To ensure teachers are creating the best environments for students, meaningful evaluations are important. There is ample research informing the evaluation process (Marzano et al. 2014). For evaluations to be successful, principals need to be well trained (Bergin et al. 2017) and accurate (Marzano, 2012). Bergin, Wind, Grajeda, and Tsai (2017) go into detail on the accuracy of teacher evaluations. They find that principals can have consistency in evaluations, but not accurate ones. Personal relationships with teachers and historical bias are the main factors in inaccurate evaluations. To help with accuracy, the lead teacher can be called upon to round out the evaluation process (Bakx et al. 2013). When principals or teacher peers are working through the evaluation process there are two main reasons evaluations are being conducted; growth and measurement (Bergin et al. 2017).

Growth.

Teacher turnover is a problem (Kim, 2019). Hiring new teachers can drain resources and has negative effects on student learning (Kraft, 2016). To mitigate the problem of teacher turnover, evaluation for growth is essential (Young et al. 2015). Evaluating for growth means the principals will show the teacher areas of improvement. The most common way of identifying such areas is through direct observation (Quinn, 2014). Scales developed by Marzano can have up to 41 elements related to classroom behavior and strategy (Marzano, 2012). Not all schools will use the scales mentioned above, but the strategy is the same. After a principal has identified an area of improvement, training, coaching, and peer involvement can be used to help improve the teacher's performance. It is a demanding time commitment for the principal. In 2018, Derrington and Campbell released an article speaking to this point. A new evaluation system was implemented in a certain state due to RTTT. Some principals stated they were working 70 hours a week to meet the requirements of this system. After that time, principals stated they had managed to create a system for efficiency, but still working more hours on evaluations than prior to the new evaluation process (Derrington et al. 2018).

Measurements.

In the previous section, it was stated that evaluation for growth can be time consuming. In contrast, evaluations for measurement are less time consuming and a simpler process (Marzano, 2012). When principals evaluate for measurement, the scale usually is in numbers (Quinn, 2014) and the results are used more for comparative purposes (Marzano, 2012). The results may be used to show the public how their teachers contrast with other district teachers. States may use this information to distribute resources. The teacher who is evaluated will know their score, but there is not necessarily a follow up or path to improvement (Marzano, 2012).

Evaluations for growth and evaluations for measurement are rarely used independently of each other. On the contrary, it is most beneficial for these methods to be used in tandem (Bakx et al. 2013). When asked, teachers and principals prefer most of the evaluation to be focused on growth (Thomas et al. 2018). When used together, evaluations can give guidance to new and veteran teachers, as well as give principals a snapshot of how teachers in their building compare to other buildings or districts (Marzano, 2012).

Technology in Evaluations

Teacher evaluations are enhanced by video and microphones during the observation portion of evaluations (Quinn et al. 2018). When faced with observation using video, principals and teachers expressed appreciation for the time it saved, flexibility, and quality of the sound (Gotwals et al. 2015). The quality of sound refers to the ability to listen to conversations between teacher and students in which an observer in the classroom might not be able to hear. Recording lessons to review later can also allow principals to view multiple classrooms at the same time.

Evaluation of Teacher Performance

There are many parts of a teacher's job that can be evaluated for growth and measurement (Marzano, 2012). Depending on what is being evaluated different elements of evaluations can be used. If a teacher is being evaluated for measurement only, the administrator may only choose to rate student engagement (Marzano, 2012). If the administrator is interested in measuring for growth, the administrator may evaluate classroom flow and student practice time (Heineke, et al. 2018). This research focused on four elements of evaluations. These elements are used to measure how principals perceived their evaluation tool measured teacher

performance. These elements are class atmosphere, classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement.

Class Atmosphere

Class atmosphere is one of the hardest to measure (Sorenson et al. 2011). This measurement requires the principal to “feel” the room (Marzano, 2012). The teacher has a lot of control over this area (Sorenson et al. 2011). To measure actions such as maintaining a lively space, demonstrating enthusiasm or intensity, using friendly controversy, or demonstrating “with-it-ness” (Marzano, 2012). How the teacher engages with the students creates atmosphere (Hattie, 2012). If the teacher provides a lecture, and then expects silent practice on a worksheet, the atmosphere can be lethargic or boring (Moore, 2014). If the teacher provides engaging activities with guided conversation, the atmosphere can be fun or exciting (Quinn, 2014).

Classroom Management

Classroom management focuses on how the teacher guides students through the class time (Danielson et al. 2000). Students come to class with different backgrounds, home life, friendships, and life experiences (Heineke, et al. 2018). One of the tasks of the teacher is to use these backgrounds to guide students in learning (Heineke, et al. 2018). Some students have a loud home life. Talking during any point in a conversation might be a part of the students’ cultural background (Hollie, 2017). Being skilled in classroom management means the teacher can use the cultural norms of the students and make it a positive experience in the classroom (Sorenson et al. 2011).

Content Delivery

At the secondary level, the teachers usually train in a specific content area. A teacher will be granted a license based on the content area (MN stat. 122A.187, 2020). This license assumes

the teacher has enough understanding of the content to create lesson that guide students to mastery of the content. When administrators evaluate for content delivery, they are looking for how well students are can display what they learned (Danielson et al. 2000). Teachers may use exit tickets, turn-and-talk, or short quizzes to see how well content delivery was administered (Hattie, 2012).

Student Engagement

Student engagement is tied to content delivery but focuses on the time students are on task during the lesson (Marzano, 2012). Teacher may use lectures, worksheets, guided notes, group work, and so on to deliver the content. Principals will measure the time students are engaged in each task to evaluate for student engagement (Danielson et al. 2000).

Summary

Chapter two provided a historical review of teacher evaluations, modern evaluations, the recent rise in education reform and accountability, evaluation tools, and concluded with four elements principals score in evaluations. Chapter three discusses the methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather perspectives from administrators about teacher evaluations during the 2020-2021 school year. This chapter will provide a detailed explanation on why a qualitative research method was used in conducting the research. Setting, population, data collection, and data analysis will be addressed. The research was guided by an overarching question which was: “how do principals perceive their evaluation tools measured teachers’ performance during the 2020-2021 school year?” A survey was designed to support the research question. This survey covered teaching pedagogies of class atmosphere classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement. All four are traditional parts of evaluation tools used to measure teachers for growth and measurement (Marzano, 2012)

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative research design to gather data for analysis. The goal of the research was to gather perceptions from administrators on how evaluations went during the learning models of the 2020-2021 school year. To gather data a Qualtrics survey was sent by email to 40 administrators. A follow up email allowed respondents to participate in a virtual interview covering the same questions from the survey. There were three multiple choice questions collecting demographic information and six open-ended questions designed to allow the respondent to give flexibility in how the question was answered. The researcher allowed survey data to drive theory development which is an important characteristic in qualitative methodology (Milliken, P. J., & Milliken, 2010). Qualitative research allows the researcher to gather data by observation and people’s perspective (Staller, K. M., & Staller., 2010). Education went through a change during the 2019-2021 school years. Qualitative methods are important in understanding and analyzing this change (Bourgeault, al et. 2010). Discovering how people

experience an event and being able to explain group thinking is the essence of qualitative research (Leedy, 1993). The researcher asked people to look back at the school year of 2020-2021 and describe experiences. The researcher wanted to know what administrators were thinking when evaluations happened. Diverse and even contradictory results needed to be analyzed; therefore, a qualitative methodology was used (Bourgeault al et. 2010). The survey allowed for participants to express ideas without being confined to multiple choice answers.

Setting and Sample

The research focused on nine districts from the Midwest. From the nine districts 12 high schools were selected to participate. Districts involved in this study included urban and rural. All districts had regular contact with each other through participation in the same sports conference. Districts chosen were all from the same state, this allowed the guidance for learning models to remain consistent. There were 40 administrators who were asked to participate in the study. Because participants in the research were being selected due to their job position, the researcher used purposive sampling (Sampling, 2008). Three survey questions were used to gather data on the participants and their learning models during the 2020-2021 school year. Data was not rejected based upon an over sampling or under sampling of a certain learning model. All data was collected through Qualtrics and Zoom software.

Data Collection

To gather data, a Qualtrics survey was sent by email to 40 administrators. There were three questions asking participants about their schools learning model, how long they have been in their position, and how many teachers they evaluated. There were six open-ended questions designed to allow the respondent to give flexibility in how the question was answered; see Appendix A. Qualitative research, being a form of naturalistic inquiry (Milliken al et, 2010),

drove the creation of the six open-ended questions. After participants were invited to fill out the survey, an additional email was sent out inviting respondents to participate in a virtual interview. The interview questions were the same three demographic questions and six open-ended questions used in the Qualtrics survey. The participants who chose the virtual interview did not fill out the Qualtrics survey.

Data Analysis

The researcher gathered responses through both a Qualtrics survey and interviews with participants. Using open-ended survey and interview responses the researcher created codes with an inductive approach. An inductive approach means the researcher allowed the responses to drive the creations of codes and themes, the researcher did not have pre-created categories the responses should fit into (Vogt al et, 2014). The codes were created from survey responses and transcripts, then used to form themes. This thematic coding was used to create common narratives based on the research questions. Subcategories could have been created for farther analysis of the data (Leedy, 1993).

Summary

Chapter three gave descriptions on the research design. To fulfill the research design, a discussion was had on how participants were chosen, participant demographics, and how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four will provide a description of the results from the date.

Chapter 4: Results

The data was collected through an open-ended survey distributed to 40 principals in 12 high schools. Each open-ended question asked the principal to describe their perspectives on how their evaluation method measured four different pedagogies. These were: class atmosphere, classroom management, content delivery, and student engagement. There were two questions asking for insight about what worked well and what needs to change in teacher evaluations. The process the researcher used to code the data was thematic coding which included detailed review of each survey question response, a search for commonalities, and codes categorized into themes. The analysis created a picture on how principals felt their evaluation tools measured teacher performance during the 2020-2021 school year.

Demographics

Five (13%) of the invited participants completed the survey. All principals are from the Midwest and during the 2020-2021 school year worked at high schools. Years of experience as an administrator range from zero to more than 11 years, with two of participants having less than five years of experience, one having 6-10 years, and two having more than 11 years. Three learning models were represented, three participants worked at a school in full distance learning, one at a school in a hybrid model, and one was full in-person with an option to distance learn for most of the year. Two principals were responsible for evaluating 11-15 teachers, and three were responsible for evaluating more than 21 teachers.

Data Analysis

To understand how teacher evaluation tools measured teacher performance during the 2020-2021 school year the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: How do principals perceive their teacher evaluation tools measure teachers' performance during hybrid or distance learning?

Survey Questions used to answer the research question were:

Survey Question 1 (SQ1): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure classroom management during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 2 (SQ2): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure content delivery during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 3 (SQ3): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure student engagement during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 4 (SQ4): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure class atmosphere during the 2020-2021 school year.

To help support the research on principals' perception on evaluation tools, two survey questions asked the participants to give thoughts about what worked well during evaluations and what could be improved. These two survey questions were:

SQ5: What parts of the evaluation process do you think worked well during the 2020-2021 school year?

SQ6: What parts of the evaluation process could be changed to improve the evaluation process for future learning models similar to the 2020-2021 school year?

In responding to SQ1 the ability of the teacher to get students to engage in the learning was seen as the most important piece of classroom management by all participants. Two respondents indicated their measurement tool still worked with the learning model. Two respondents felt it was difficult, particularly when students were in breakout rooms. One respondent felt the best way to understand how classroom management was going was in the

post conference with the teacher. In the post conference, the teacher was able to explain frustrations or successes about classroom management in more detail. The last respondent felt this was the most important part of their evaluation. Overall, three respondents felt their evaluation tool performed well for evaluating classroom management.

In response to SQ2 three respondents felt their tool measured content delivery adequately. One respondent stated teachers needed to be “creative” with their content delivery. One respondent felt “Google Chat” was the best way to indicate if students were understanding the content. Overall, all respondents felt comfortable with their evaluation tool’s ability to measure content delivery.

In response to SQ3, four respondents felt this was difficult to measure in their learning model. Two respondents explained the only way to measure engagement was when students participated in the “chat”. One of these respondents stated, “student engagement needed to be measured through active participation. With cameras turned off, this meant student participation in the chat was the only way to measure engagement.” Another respondent had similar perceptions saying, “Google Chat was the most useful tool in measuring student engagement.” One respondent stated their tool was able to measure student engagement “normally”. Overall, four of respondents felt this was difficult to measure.

When responding to SQ4 four of respondents felt this was difficult to measure using their evaluation tool. One of these four stated, “Between masks and the hybrid environment, this was another one that is difficult. I am not sure that any tool could have accurately measured this.” One respondent stated their tool was able to measure class atmosphere “normally”. Overall, four felt this was a challenging area to measure using their evaluation tool.

When responding to SQ5 three of the respondents felt their ability to have quality conversations with teachers was a benefit during their learning model. With one of these principals saying,

This year the focus was more on the conversations around goal setting and the post-conference conversations. I liked that we did not score teachers this year as I think it took some of the pressure off and allowed for richer conversations in the conferences.

One respondent felt their evaluation tool was able to “adjust and adapt to the current situation with relative ease.” A respondent whose school was in full distance learning for most of the year felt it was easier for teachers to perform better on the evaluation tool when only one form of instruction (i.e., only full distance learning or full in-person) was happening. If the teachers needed to teach in-person students at the same time as online students, then teacher performance suffered. Overall, all the respondents felt their measurement tool worked well or was able to adapt to fit the learning model.

In response to SQ6 one respondent felt nothing needed to be changed if the learning model was continued in the future and one felt there needs to be more time in the learning models to know what should change, saying,

You need to use the tool for a longer period, not just when things are new, to know if it should be changed. After more time in the learning model then we will know how to tweak the evaluation tool.

Three respondents felt there was at least one thing that needed to be changed. The first of these three respondents felt more input from teachers and students needed to be gathered. The second of these three respondents felt there should be a section in their evaluation tool to measure how teachers assess student leaning. This respondent feels this should be added

regardless of the learning model. The last of the three respondents feels the rubric needs be modified to fit the learning model, saying, “if we knew we were going to continue in a hybrid model, I think we need to modify, and possible add things to our rubric that would better reflect the instructional practices to be effective in that model.”

Research Question 1 asked, “How do principals perceive their teacher evaluation tools measure teachers’ performance during hybrid or distance learning?” The survey results indicate a majority of the principals felt there was challenges using their evaluation tool but were still able to adapt and make their tool work. One felt there their evaluation tool worked normally during the 2020-2021 school year, four thought there were challenges when using their evaluation tool during the 2020-2021 school year.

Summary

Chapter 4 gave information about the demographics of the respondents. Each survey question was analyzed, and a breakdown of the data was shown. Chapter 5 will discuss the researcher’s response and give farther recommendations for research.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusions

The past four chapters discussed the reason for this qualitative study, the background of teacher evaluations, reason for the methodology, data collection, and data results. Chapter Five will present a connection between the data and literature, a conclusion of the data results, discuss implications in leadership, and provide recommendations for future research.

The research used a qualitative methodology. This study sought to gather principals' perspectives on how their teacher evaluation tools performed during the 2020-2021 school year. This research design allowed for the observation of shared perspectives of principles. The research question guiding the study was:

RQ1. How do principals perceive their teacher evaluation tools measure teachers' performance during hybrid or distance learning?

Data collection was performed through an online survey as well as a phone interview. The phone interview covered the same questions as the online survey. The researcher used thematic coding to analyze the data. Three themes emerged from RQ1: (1) using the evaluation tool worked, (2) educators struggled to adapt, not the evaluation tool, (3) the adaptation of the evaluation tool was challenging but possible in each learning model.

Theoretical connection

Part of the drive for the research was the importance of teacher evaluations. Internal motivation theory connected the importance of evaluation to the principal's roll in conducting these evaluations. During the 2020-2021 school year, principals in the study had the opportunity to conduct evaluations focused strictly on growth. This focus on growth allowed principals to communicate strategies and goals aimed at building teacher expectancy. Expectancy is a main contributor for internal motivation (Ryan et al. 2000).

When administrators are evaluating for growth, the follow up conference with the teacher is critical to the evaluation's success (Marzano, 2012). The principal used this conversation to build competence, another driving factor for internal motivation (Firestone, 2014). Two participants said this year there was no requirement to give teachers a number score for evaluations. Both participants enjoyed the freedom to focus on just the conversations with teachers in the post-observation meeting. These conversations revolved around ideas to make the learning method work better for the teacher and students. Focusing on growth and excluding measurement took pressure off the teacher and principal.

Based on the responses to the survey and interview questions, three themes were identified. There are three themes created from RQ1: (1) using the evaluation tool worked, (2) educators struggled to adapt, not the evaluation tool, and (3) Using the evaluation tool was challenging but possible in each learning model.

Research Question 1 Discussion

Theme 1: Using the evaluation tool worked.

Every participant stated that content delivery was an area the evaluation tool had no issues. Teachers were still able to display content or talk about content in any learning model. One participant said evaluating content delivery was "normal." another said, "Our curriculum evaluation benchmarks were equally applicable in a distance learning model," with a third saying there was "no issue" for content delivery.

Two out of the five participants thought not giving a number score in the evaluation was helpful. The year was so different that these participants thought it was more productive to have conversations without the added pressure of scoring teachers. One of these participants said, "We didn't need to use any numbers for the past two school years; all we needed to do was put

information in the evaluation we thought was valid for the teacher's performance." The second said, "I liked that we didn't score teachers this year; I think it took some of the pressure off and allowed for richer conversations."

In teacher evaluations there are two areas principals can focus on: evaluating for growth and evaluating for measurement (Marzano, 2012). Growth focuses on areas the teacher can improve and the conversations are usually private. Measurement uses some sort of rubric or scale, so teachers know how they compare to other teachers. These numbers can be used publicly, though they are not associated with individual teachers (Marzano, 2012). The school year of 2020-2021 allowed the participants to focus on conversations around growth, a key creation of theme one.

Theme 2: Educators struggled to adapt, not the evaluation tool.

Participants rarely experience issues with evaluation tool. In fact, one participant said, "We were able to adjust and adapt our tool to the current situation with relative ease." It was the teachers who found it difficult to adapt to the new learning models. The principals were still able to use the evaluation tools to measure and talk about the pedagogical areas, but the teachers struggled to adapt their skills in those areas during the different learning models. One participant speaks to this saying, "I think it was difficult for teachers to deliver content this year, they all had to be as creative as possible." It was not that the tool needed to be adjusted, but the teachers needed to perform differently to receive the same outcome.

The principals were able to employ the use of technology during the lesson to evaluate, similar to any other school year. Three of the participants indicated it was through Google Chat that they were able to gauge the level of student engagement. Student engagement is an indicator of an effective class. The tool was still useful for measuring student engagement. It was the

teacher who needed to encourage students to engage differently during the different learning models. This was also seen in classroom atmosphere with one participant saying, “The level of engagement was perhaps the best indicator,” engagement being student use the of the chat feature.

Theme 3: Using the evaluation tool was challenging but possible in each learning model.

There were three areas that most of the participants indicated challenges in conducting evaluations. In each of these areas the possibility of adaptation was present. In classroom management, three participants discussed this area is being difficult to manage or important, but still able to evaluate effectively using their tool. “While it did not represent a typical classroom environment, our evaluation tool still fit the situation,” was a statement made by one of the participants that sums up the feeling of all who participated. One participant did add that, “it was difficult to measure classroom management during instances such as breakout rooms.” Again, it was not the ineffectiveness of the evaluation tool, it was how the breakout rooms were utilized by the teacher.

Measuring student engagement had similar sentiments as classroom management. One participant said student engagement was “tough to gauge.” Another stated, “Google Chat was often the only way to measure student engagement.” Even with student engagement being the most difficult to measure according to four of the five participants, the evaluation tool still had the ability to be used. One participant did not think any changes to the tool were needed, even if similar learning models continue in the future. This participant said,

You need to stay with the evaluation tool you have for more than just a year. After a year or two in the same learning model then you can begin to make changes that need to be

made. There was too much change this past year to know if the evaluation tool should be changes or not.

Classroom atmosphere was another challenging area to evaluate, but the tool still was able to adapt. The challenge was with the use of technology. One participant said, “Most cameras were turned off, so class atmosphere was difficult to measure.” Another added, “Between masks and a hybrid environment I’m not sure any tool could have accurately measured class atmosphere.” A third summed up the sentiment of the majority by saying, “This was challenging, the level of student engagement was the best indicator.” The evaluation tool was able to evaluate student engagement, however, the principal needed to look for engagement through participation in chat or breakout rooms.

None of the participants could have conducted their evaluations during the 2020-2021 school year without a web-based platform for learning. Two of the participants indicated the only way they could measure classroom management, student engagement, and class atmosphere was through the chat feature in the web-based platform. Students used devices with cameras, but one participant stated that all the students in the class being observed had the camera off. With cameras off, the only way for the principal to see participation during discussions was through chat. One participant also indicated they measured student engagement through online activities presented by the teacher.

Conclusion and leadership implications

The school year of 2020-2021 was different in many ways, and evaluations were no exception. Principals needed to adapt their evaluation tool to fit the changing learning models. Teachers needed to change their practice to adequately manage the classroom, deliver content, engage students, and provide a positive classroom atmosphere. Evaluation tools were able to do

the job. Principals were able to use the information gathered from evaluations and have meaningful conversations with teacher about improvement. Without the use of numbers to score teachers, it shifted the evaluation strictly to growth. Principals and teachers felt less pressure during evaluations because it was focused on growth and what could be done better if similar learning models happen in the future.

Conclusion 1: The evaluation tools used during the 2020-2021 school year had the ability to adapt and continue to be useful in any learning model. Most districts in the study were in some kind of learning model that allowed or forced students and teachers to conduct learning from a distance. This did not prevent traditional pedagogy of classroom management, content delivery, student engagement, or classroom atmosphere playing a vital role in the success of learning. The findings from the literature agrees with this conclusion, showing classroom management is the process of guiding students through the content (Danielson et al. 2000), content delivery requires the teacher guide students to mastery (Danielson et al. 2000), student engagement is the time students are on task (Marzano, 2012), and classroom atmosphere still is created by how the teacher engages with students (Hattie, 2012). The continued importance of these practices means evaluation tools of the past could be used effectively during the learning models of 2020-2021. It was not the evaluation tools that needed to be changed, but the methods teachers used to conduct learning. In-person observation of the past for evaluations were not possible in many cases, but principles could still observe through online learning platforms. The language of the evaluation tools allowed for principals to still have meaningful conversations about how teachers could improve their practice within the learning model.

Leadership implications: How principals conduct evaluations and what effective pedagogy is will need to change. After the school year of 2020-2021 districts will continue to offer online

schooling options. Some students thrived in the learning models conducted during the 2020-2021 school year and families want the ability to choose the learning model that best fits their child's needs. More teachers will need to adapt to the possibility of teaching in different learning models indefinitely. In turn, principals will also need to adapt to conducting evaluations in different learning models. Just like the evaluation of 2020-2021 that had the ability to focus to growth, school leaders in the future should have a growth mindset in evaluations. As seen in the literature, growth is an important part of retaining and training teachers (Young et al. 2015). The scoring system may come back for future school years, but the changes teachers need to make to conduct learning in any model will continue to happen. Principals need to be prepared to have conversations that help teachers improve in any learning model.

Conclusion 2: The effectiveness of the evaluation tools used in 2020-2021 was not the issue. The issue was the ability of the principals and teachers to adapt to the changing landscape. The premise of the study was to gather principals' perspectives on the effectiveness of evaluation tools during the 2020-2021 school year. It was thought, due to changes in learning models, evaluation tools would not have the ability to effectively conduct meaningful evaluations during this time. The data suggested otherwise. It was not the evaluation tool that needed changing. It was the performance of the teachers and principals. This aligns with the literature; the data is suggesting the teachers are still the most important part of student success (Hidayat et al. 2020), not the evaluations. In-person observations by principals was the norm. Principals needed to adjust how they observed. One participant mentioned there needs to be more time with the current learning models to know if the evaluation tools need to be changed. As seen in the literature, for evaluations to be successful, principals need to be well trained (Bergin et al. 2017) and accurate (Marzano, 2012). Being well trained takes time, and the data suggests time and

training are needed. Observations moved to virtual observations of lectures or observing online class platforms. This did not inhibit the evaluation tool. The tool still asked the principals to judge the effectiveness of the teacher's ability to conduct learning which is a central part to evaluations (Heineke, et al. 2018). The four areas of pedagogy talked about in this study were still relevant, but the teacher needed to change how they conducted classroom management, content delivery, or created student engagement and a positive classroom atmosphere. In post observation conferences principals needed to address what could be improved so best practice in the new learning model was achieved.

Leadership Implication: Discussion on growth should be the focus of school leaders. What growth involves will depend on the learning model, but there needs to be a focus on best practice in the new learning models for all areas of teacher pedagogy. Classroom atmosphere largely depends on how the principal "feels" in the room. Factors can include student attentiveness, conversations from student to teacher or student to student, and levels of student willingness to learn. In the new learning models this area was difficult for teachers to perform well. School leaders should understand classroom atmosphere is still an important part of any learning model, but how the teacher creates positive atmosphere must change. As indicated in the study, the use of chat features or breakout rooms will need to be incorporated.

Classroom management was seen as the teacher's ability to guide students in a physical classroom. In new learning models, school leaders will need to understand what productive classroom management means. A teacher who can focus all students on a group project in person may need more guidance when focusing a group of students who are all distance learning. The evaluation tool will still be useful, but the practice of the teacher needs to change.

Content delivery is the ability of the teacher to present information in an understandable and meaningful way. In a physical classroom this meant the teacher could watch faces as a lecture was happening or observe student work during a project or in a group. In different learning models the ability of the teacher to walk around a room and observe all students is taken away. School leaders should understand content delivery is vital in any learning model. They should be able to provide best practice to teacher in evaluation conferences or at any time.

Student engagement is the measure of how much time students are on task during a class period. When conducting observation in person the principal can see if a student is on their phone or talking to a peer. This ability becomes much more difficult in different learning models. The importance of student engagement is not diminished; therefore, the evaluation tool is still relevant. It is the practice of the teacher that needs to change. Creating the ability to view student engagement in a distance learning model is challenging. School leaders needs to be prepared to guide teachers in creating engaging opportunities for students in all learning models. Principals then need to know what it looks like for students to be engaged during these models.

Recommendations for Future Research

The evaluation tools used by the principals in the study had the ability to measure each of the four pedagogies. Best practice is needed in each pedagogy for any learning model. The first area of recommended research is best practice of teaching pedagogy for distance or hybrid learning models. Each area of pedagogy should be researched. Leaders in education need to understand what it means to effectively conduct learning.

This study focused on perceptions of principals. The conclusions and leadership implications saw a need for understanding best practice in the new learning models that arose out of the 2020-2021 school year. As more schools are now offering families choices for learning, it

will be important to understand what evaluation tools are effective. Effective evaluations should produce student success. The second recommendation for future research should focus on the effectiveness of evaluations qualitatively. Qualitative research might include a question such as, “Is there a correlation between positive classroom atmosphere and higher student test score?” School leaders need to conduct evaluations, but those evaluation should have meaning. This meaning ultimately is connected to the success of the students. The research should guide school leaders in providing effective teacher evaluations.

Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the connection to the literature and three themes derived from the research. There were two conclusions discussed. Each conclusion had leadership implications. The final section gave recommendations for feature research.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Multiple choice Question 1 (MQ1): How long have you been in your role as an administrator?

Multiple Choice Question 2: (MQ2): How many teaching staff are you responsible for evaluating?

Multiple Choice Question 3 (MQ3): What type of learning model was your school in for most (more than one semester) of the 2020-2021 school year?

Survey Question 1 (SQ1): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure classroom management during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 2 (SQ2): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure content delivery during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 3 (SQ3): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure student engagement during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 4 (SQ4): Explain how you perceive your teacher evaluation tool was able to measure class atmosphere during the 2020-2021 school year.

Survey Question 5 (SQ5): What parts of the evaluation process do you think worked well during the 2020-2021 school year?

Survey Question 6 (SQ6): What parts of the evaluation process could be changed to improve the evaluation process for future learning models similar to the 2020-2021 school year?