

Education and Personnel Evaluation: A Review of Leading Journals for the Period 2003-2004

Nadini Persaud

This literature review highlights interesting research during the period 2003-2004, based on the Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education (last issue produced June 2003), Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Teacher Education, NASSP Bulletin and Education Administration Quarterly.

Psychological and Contextual Influences on the Teacher Selection Interview: A Model for Future Research by D. A. Delli and E. M. Vera

The article “Psychological and Contextual Influences on the Teacher Selection Interview: A Model for Future Research” suggested that psychological influences can bias the interview process. According to the authors, research suggests that variables such as *attractiveness, likeability, expertness, and similarity* can influence interviewers’ perceptions of prospective employees and applicants’ perceptions of the interviewer and the job itself. The article notes that interviews, not paper qualifications, have been rated as the most important criteria in making hiring decisions; therefore education administrators need to be aware of these issues to ensure that the selection process is not biased by psychological influences. The authors suggest that in certain professions such as teaching and nursing where the ratio of candidates to jobs is very low, selection processes may deviate from the norm and be subject to contextual influences (interview structure, interview format and the influence of local and federal policies on interview outcomes) as well as psychological influence. The authors conclude by noting that

awareness of both the psychological and contextual issues that can influence the hiring of teachers can help ensure that the best qualified teachers are recruited.

Summative Evaluation of Student Teachers: An Enduring Problem by J. Raths and F. Lyman

The article “Summative Evaluation of Student Teachers: An Enduring Problem” noted that education faculty are not taking sufficient care to prevent weak and incompetent student teachers from attaining state licenses. Factors contributing to the problem include:

- *Conflation of summative and formative evaluation:* As defined by Scriven (1967), summative evaluation involves decisions such as final grades, promotion to the next class, acceptance to a university, granting a license, giving merit pay increases and other similar performance incentives. Formative evaluation is akin to coaching and is designed to improve student performance or improve the products on which students are working. According to the authors, in the mode of formative evaluation, teachers rarely issue overall judgments about the quality of a performance or a product, but instead point out particular strengths and/or weaknesses, suggest how weakness might be addressed, and encourage reflection. The authors also note that there is an inevitable conflict of interest when coaches make summative evaluations of the performances of their students, because initially they start out acting as a coach but later become the evaluator.
- *Minor roles within the larger teacher education profession:* Teachers may not be full time, may not be faculty and may not have received adequate coaching. They have their own duties and see the supervision process of student teachers as secondary.

- *Uncertainty*: There is no clear distinction between what constitutes competent and incompetent student teachers. This makes it difficult to make a high-stakes judgment about an individual student teacher armed only with vague decision criteria, and administrators want to avoid the threat of lawsuits and grievance petitions.
- *Rhetoric of excellence*: Language on evaluation forms give emphasis to “excellence” and “high quality” in teaching, but provides minimal guidance to enable supervisors to determine what constitutes incompetence and what is really excellence and high quality.

Responding to incompetence clarification, the authors make two distinct contributions: (a) they place incompetence in a continuum of teaching behaviors from criminality and malpractice through best practice and (b) the teaching acts in specific settings are pronounced as indicators of teacher incompetence. The article concludes with suggested caveats that need to be taken into account as the definitions of incompetence are shared or adopted.

International Comparisons of the Relationships among Educational Effectiveness, Evaluation and Improvement Variables: An Overview by C. Teddlie, S. Springfield and J. Burdett

This study focused on teacher effectiveness research, school effectiveness research, teacher evaluation, staff development, teacher improvement and school improvement in five countries: Cyprus, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, UK and the USA. The study concluded that teacher evaluation is used for three major purposes across the countries, accountability, promotion and staff development. It noted that links between teacher evaluation and other constructs, such as staff development and educational improvement, are undeveloped in all five countries and that there

is substantial room for strengthening the links among teacher evaluation, teacher improvement and school improvement in all five countries.

The Effects of Chronological Age and Information Media on Teacher Screening Decisions for Elementary School Principals by I. P. Young and F.P. Chounet

The article “The Effects of Chronological Age and Information Media on Teacher Screening Decisions for Elementary School Principals” was an experimental study that examined traditional versus modern methods of screening decisions made by elementary school principals. The study failed to detect any statistically significant multivariate effects for chronological age of teacher candidates; however, it did show that principals may well overlook many qualified teacher candidates who choose to use electronic mediums to communicate teacher credentials to organizational representatives, at the screening stage of the selection process.

Continuing Assessment of Teacher Reactions to a Standards-Based Teacher Evaluation System by H. G. Henemann III and A. T. Milanowski

“Continuing Assessment of Teacher Reactions to a Standards-Based Teacher Evaluation System” was a study that provided a description and evaluation of the first two years of district-wide implementation of a standards-based teacher evaluation system in the Cincinnati public schools. The authors concluded that many of the teachers viewed the four performance domains and accompanying standards as highly relevant to their job and consistent with their conceptions of good practice. However, others became dissatisfied and left the district because of fear that the evaluation results would be linked to pay increases in the future.

The Impact of Teacher Training on Student Achievement: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from School Reform Efforts in Chicago by Brian Jacob and Lars Lefgren

This study used a regression discontinuity strategy to estimate the effect of teacher training on math and reading performance of elementary students in 20% of Chicago's lowest-achieving elementary schools. It concluded that marginal increases in in-service training have no statistically or academically significant effect on either reading or math achievement. This suggests that modest investments in staff development may not be sufficient in increasing the achievement of elementary school children in high-poverty schools.

The Efficacy of Portfolios for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development: Do They Make a Difference? by P.D. Tucker, J. H. Stronge, C. R. Gareis and C. S. Beers

This study, conducted in a small school district, introduced the use of portfolios as part of a new evaluation system to determine the efficacy of portfolios in evaluating teacher performance both for accountability and professional development purposes. The conclusion was that the portfolio system was found to be particularly useful in documenting teacher performance in the areas of assessment and professionalism. However, survey and focus group data indicated that while teachers and administrators viewed portfolios as fair and accurate measures of performance, both had concerns about their feasibility given the time demands of portfolio development.

Evaluating the Evaluators: Teachers' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in Professional Evaluation by S. Zimmerman and M. Deckert-Pelton

Eighty-six educators from five northwest Florida counties were surveyed to examine their perceptions of their principals as effective evaluators. The results suggest that teachers' perceptions of an effective evaluation process involve a focus on their principals' knowledge, skills, and abilities as both an experienced educator and as an educational leader. From the respondents' comments, four key domains emerged as pivotal components to a successful professional evaluation process: interactions between principal and educator; consistent evaluations; principal commitment to effective professional evaluation; and a principal knowledgeable in pedagogy, content, and evaluation.

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