

Teachers' Perceptions Of Performance Appraisal In A Secondary School In South-East Asia:

A Case Study

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Abstract

This research investigated the perceptions of teachers working at a secondary school in South-east Asia with regard to the performance appraisal system in place at their schools. The main purposes of the study were (a) to report an investigation into the teachers' views of appraisal in detail, (b) to identify the key features of their perspectives, and (c) to develop a "theory" of effective appraisal that considers the numerous variables involved in its operation. This research employed a qualitative case study, wherein teachers were interviewed with a focus on their perceptions of the purposes, processes and impacts of the appraisal system. The findings of the study suggest that an open school culture, combined with a transparent appraisal process that encourages communication and collegial sharing of best practice, is very likely to result in performance appraisal systems that yields positive outcomes for teachers, students and schools.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Performance Appraisal is recognized as an important multipurpose management tool for school leaders. It allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers' skills, the identification of their strengths and weaknesses, the development of training strategies, the assistance in making staffing decisions, and ultimately the improvement of learning outcomes for students. Hence, school policy makers and academic researchers continue to be interested in finding the best ways to structure and implement appraisal systems to achieve optimal outcomes for students, teachers and school communities. This is because effective teachers are widely acknowledged as critical for achieving high-quality educational outcomes for students, and thus implementing teacher evaluation is seen as a priority for school management (Elliot, 2015; Hallinger et al., 2014). Performance appraisal is a systematic process that involves "identifying, measuring and developing" the performance standards of individuals within an organisation (Aguinis, 2009, as cited in Elliot, 2015, p. 102). It can be used for management purposes such as allocating bonuses and salary increments, justifying promotion decisions or for implementing punitive measures, or as a quality control instrument for ensuring accountability and overall improvement of the school, management, teaching and learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Hallinger et al., 2014; Tutyens & Devos, 2012).

Previous research has shown, understanding the factors that impact the success of appraisal systems and developing methods to accurately measure teachers' performance is an extremely challenging task. This is because schools must decide whether the appraisal system's purposes are intended to be summative or formative. They also need to establish a common understanding of the qualities and characteristics of an effective teacher and how best to accurately measure and appraise these qualities. Not only that, but school management should also consider the school culture and the background of the teachers and their characteristics involved to ensure that the overall impact of the appraisal process on staff and students is positive and developmental rather than negative and punitive. Therefore, issues regarding fairness and transparency, clarity and communication, classroom observations and feedback, teacher involvement, and general fitness for purpose (e.g., validity and reliability) should all be taken into account. Finally, the feelings of participants and the stakeholders involved in a performance appraisal system can also have a significant impact on the ultimate success of the system in achieving its desired goals

(Reddy et al., 2018).

This research study focuses on teachers who are employed in the secondary section of a school located in South-east Asia. The school had been operating an annual performance appraisal system for around four years, and in recent years had moved to a facilitated teacher self-appraisal approach. Through a qualitative case study approach, it was intended to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers perceived the performance appraisal system in terms of its intended purposes, fairness and impact. Through identifying how teachers felt about various aspects of the appraisal process, the school could pinpoint specific areas to modify and improve. Ultimately, this research aimed to understand how teachers perceived different aspects of the appraisal process and to identify critical factors for designing and implementing effective Teacher Performance Appraisal systems.

To address the objectives of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of the purpose(s), uses, benefits and limitations of the Teacher Performance Appraisal in the school?
2. How do the teachers perceive and respond to the content and processes of Teacher Performance Appraisal?
3. Is the Teacher Performance Appraisal beneficial or not?
4. What recommendations can be made for improving the Teacher Performance Appraisal system and its operation in the school, and why?

Given the central role that teachers play in providing high quality education and the continued interest in developing the best structure for the appraisal system, research into this field is of great importance. Furthermore, stakeholders' perceptions can shape behaviour and affect the appraisal system's success in achieving its desired outcomes. Therefore, understanding how stakeholders perceive Teacher Performance Appraisal is critical to the system's success.

There is very limited research in schools located in South-east Asia on this topic,

particularly in schools with a diverse cultural and international mix of teaching staff. Hence, investigating perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal within a specific cultural context can provide valuable insights into how these systems are viewed by key stakeholders in a specific region. This, in turn, could serve as the basis for further research in other countries and regions, providing an opportunity for a comparative analysis of the results and findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent decades, evaluating and appraising teacher effectiveness has become a growing focus of researchers, school administrators, and policy makers. As the education sector has become more competitive, stakeholders, particularly parents and policy makers, have demanded more accountability and transparency from schools. Consequently, the notion of what constitutes an effective teacher and how to determine and measure teacher effectiveness, has become increasingly topical. Simultaneously, the importance of effective teachers in improving student outcomes has become better understood and accepted, resulting in increased focus on evaluating teacher performance. A review of the research into the area of Teacher Performance Appraisal to date, provides a foundation for a subsequent qualitative case study into how teachers perceive the appraisal system in place.

Firstly, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of effective teachers in producing high-quality educational outcomes. Hallinger et al. (2014) noted that “A growing body of international research confirms a direct relationship between teacher quality/effectiveness and student learning”. Weisberg et al., (2009) further emphasised that student achievement depends significantly on the quality of teachers. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) has identified the quality of teachers as “the single most important school variable influencing student achievement” (p. 26). Furthermore, Barber and Moushed (2007, as cited in Elliott, 2015) contend that “the main driver of the variation in student learning at school is the quality of the teachers” (p. 106). The importance of improving teacher performance through performance evaluation is highlighted by another report from the OECD (2009), which notes that “the institution of teacher evaluation is a vital step in the drive to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning and raise educational standards” (p. 3). Moreover, well-implemented “appraisal, coaching and feedback, leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2012, p. 3). Given the central role that teachers play in determining educational outcomes for students, as well as the demand for accountability and transparency, it is not surprising that there is an increasing interest in how best to appraise teacher effectiveness.

Performance appraisal is broadly defined as “the ongoing process used for

identifying, measuring, and developing an individual's performance in accordance with an organisation's strategic goals" (Aguinis, 2009, as cited in Elliott, 2015, p. 102). In the context of teacher performance appraisal, Beach and Reinhartz (1984) note that the process "seeks to collect information about the teaching act and codify that information in a systematic way so that decisions can be made about a teacher's level of instructional performance" (p. 31). Danielson and McGreal (2000) view teacher performance appraisal as a mechanism for quality assurance, emphasising both accountability and classroom performance improvement. Appraisal can serve as an important "communication link" between school management and teachers, helping teachers understand their role and improve their skills while providing the school with a system for managing and rewarding staff (Wise et al., 1985, p. 61). Furthermore, Isore (2009) highlights two major purposes of appraisal: monitoring teacher performance to improve student outcomes and identifying strengths and weaknesses to improve teacher practice. According to Hallinger et al. (2014), teacher evaluations and subsequent appraisal can be viewed as an overall strategy for school improvement, serving both formative and summative functions. Summative appraisal can be utilised as an administrative or personnel management tool to primarily measure teaching performance to make staffing decisions, while formative appraisal can be a part of the human resource strategy to develop teachers' skills and abilities to ensure that they are working to their optimal levels.

One of the main challenges for evaluating teacher effectiveness is initially identifying and defining the characteristics of a "good teacher" in order to establish standards for teacher assessment. Schools need to determine what skills and qualities they value most in their teachers in order to establish clear standards upon which teachers are to be evaluated. In making this determination, it is also appropriate to take into consideration the complexity of teaching as a profession and the numerous factors that can impact student educational outcomes that may not be within the control or influence of individual teachers (Mockler, 2015). Teachers often have to address a wide variety of learning needs of children in different classrooms, schools and social environments, as well as effectively managing interpersonal relationships with their students, parents, colleagues and school administrators. Therefore, Campbell et al. (2003) argue for a "multi-dimensional concept of teacher effectiveness" (p. 354), given the complex nature of the profession. They note that

in a modern context, teachers are expected to fulfil a wide range of duties and responsibilities that include elements of “social, pastoral and welfare” (p. 354), beyond their traditional instructional roles. They suggest that any model of effectiveness may need to consider these roles, rather than just being limited to a teacher’s in-classroom skills and formal qualifications.

Several studies have identified key elements that are important for a Teacher Performance Appraisal System to deliver positive outcomes. As both the practice of teaching and assessing teaching are highly complex tasks, it is always essential to consider both the content of the appraisal system and the context in which it occurs, in order for it to successfully achieve its goals (Flores, 2010). According to the literature, some of the key characteristics for a successful Teacher Performance Appraisal system include: having clearly defined purposes and standards; effective communication between key stakeholders; using a standards-based assessment; well-trained appraisers/assessors; conducting effective classroom observations; using multiple measures of teacher performance; providing useful feedback to the teachers; offering professional development opportunities; encouraging teacher participation; self-appraisal and an inquiry-based culture; and ensuring procedural justice (Cardno et al., 2017; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; de Lima & Silva, 2018; Elliott, 2015; Flores, 2010; Hallinger et al., 2014; Isore, 2009; Liu et al., 2018; Mockler, 2015; Reddy et al., 2018; Skedsmo & Huber, 2018; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Tuytens & Devos, 2012; Weisberg et al., 2009).

While acknowledging the complexities and challenges of designing and implementing Teacher Performance Appraisal systems, there is broad agreement within the literature that such systems can be beneficial to students, teachers, and schools. When implemented well, the use of the appraisal process allows school administrators to identify weaker teachers and poor teaching methods, and then proceed to guide, support, and instruct those teachers on how to improve (Avidov-Ungar, 2018). These systems can serve the dual function of providing developmental support to teachers and creating a framework for accountability when a wide range of criteria are met (Cardno et al., 2017). Providing frequent, actionable feedback to teachers, together with ongoing support and professional

development opportunities, that can ultimately lead to more effective pedagogical practices and learning outcomes (AITSL, 2012; Hallinger et al., 2014). Moreover, when teachers perceive the evaluation process to be fair, efforts by the principal to support and develop teachers can lead to a greater trust in the relationship and an enhanced feeling of self-efficacy for teachers (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018). When appraisal systems encourage the active participation and involvement of the teachers, this can create a positive culture of critical self-reflection and inquiry, trust, and a shared commitment to improving teaching methods and learning for students (Cardno et al., 2017). Such a school environment can help to create “professional communities in which teachers share goals, work, and responsibility for better student outcomes” (Vescio et al., 2008, as cited in Hallinger et al., 2014, p. 22).

Well-designed appraisal systems help to establish a common understanding of what it means to be a “good” teacher, set clear standards to which teachers should adhere, and provide expectations for what educational outcomes need to be achieved (Huber & Skedsmo, 2016). Appraisal systems can also be a useful management tool for school administrators and principals in terms of ensuring accountability to stakeholders and providing objective, quantifiable information for decision-making (Cardno et al., 2017). They can assist in differentiating between poorly performing teachers, effective teachers and excellent teachers for high-stakes outcomes such as determining which teachers receive contract renewal, tenure, advancement, or increased salary compensation. They can also provide a basis for punitive measures and ultimately, dismissal (Weisberg et al., 2009). Thus, it is important for schools to consider all of the characteristics of best practice in terms of performance appraisal to obtain as many of the above-mentioned benefits as possible.

When discussing Teacher Performance Appraisal, it is crucial to consider how the actual stakeholders perceive the appraisal process. Reddy et al. (2018) note that understanding “teachers’ needs, experiences and perceptions” (p. 49) of the evaluation systems is important for more effective implementation of these systems. They further add that how teachers “interpret, interact with and are affected by” (p. 49) policies related to appraisal will be decisive in terms of whether appraisal systems succeed or fail. Teachers’

perceptions of the appraisal process are informed by key areas such as whether the appraisal is focused on formative or summative outcome; it is based on a clear, well-defined assessment criteria; that is transparent; reliable and valid; and encourages teachers' self-reflection on their teaching skills and methods; thus promotes and results in professional development and improved quality of teaching; and leads to better collegial relationships (Avidov-Ungar, 2018; Flores, 2012; Kelly et al., 2008; Smith & Kubacka, 2017).

Ultimately, the characteristics of the appraisal systems and how they are perceived by teachers can affect feelings about job satisfaction and determine whether or not teachers are motivated to make positive changes to their teaching methods (Deneire et al., 2014; Skedsmo & Huber, 2018). Smith and Kubacka (2017) found that the more student test results were emphasised in the Teacher Performance Appraisal, the less useful teachers found the feedback for improving their pedagogical practices, and the more the process was considered to be just an administrative exercise with few or no consequences.

Clearly, how performance appraisal systems are designed and implemented can significantly affect outcomes. The perceptions of stakeholders with regard to Teacher Performance Appraisal can be mixed and, in many cases, negative. Previous research on this topic lends weight to the argument that, in order to generate positive outcomes for teachers, students, and schools, it is critical to consider how the process is perceived by those involved, and to design and develop appraisal systems in such a way that it avoids creating negative perceptions. These findings further add weight to the importance of this present research on teachers' perceptions.

Beyond the issue of negative perceptions of performance appraisal, research on the topic of teacher evaluations over the years has resulted in critical findings regarding certain aspects of appraisal processes. For example, if classroom observations occur too infrequently, are only cursory, or are conducted by untrained assessors, teachers are likely to question the validity and usefulness of the results produced (de Lima & Silva, 2018; Skedsmo & Huber, 2018). Lei et al. (2018) argue that classroom evaluations may not provide an accurate measure of a teacher's ability if only a single classroom performance

is observed. There is also the risk of subjectivity and bias on the part of assessors, especially if classroom observations take place without clearly defined teaching standards and measurement criteria determined in advance of the observation exercise (Hallinger et al., 2014). Moreover, an overemphasis on using appraisal for summative purposes, particularly when linked to career advancement, salary increases, and other high-stakes managerial decisions, is likely to lead to lower levels of staff morale, weaker job satisfaction and poor motivation, and can have a detrimental impact on teaching practices and student outcomes (Cardno & Robson, 2016; Grootenboer, 2000). Furthermore, a bureaucratic, management-focused approach to appraisal can create anxiety and stress for teachers and principals alike, and can be viewed as a threatening process that creates emotions of fear and suspicion, and can cause teachers to question their self-efficacy (Grootenboer, 2000).

Overall, research on Teacher Performance Appraisal reveals a complex field of study that raises many questions with regard to what constitutes effective teaching, how to best quantify and measure it, what factors impact student learning, how to establish well-designed appraisal systems, the significance of student outcomes in this process, and the importance of stakeholder involvement. It also shows that this is an area of research that is of great relevance to teachers and school principals and deserves ongoing focus and attention.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this empirical case study was to understand how secondary-level teachers at one school in South-east Asia perceived the Teacher Performance Appraisal system as it operated in the school. The research focused on a secondary high school in a major city, primarily due to convenience (e.g., ease of access); however, the school's multicultural environment and staffing offered an interesting opportunity to investigate diverse views and opinions on Teacher Performance Appraisal. The school served both local and international students in the city and employed teachers from both the local area and other countries. The school was also selected as it had been running a Teacher Performance Appraisal system for several years. Finally, it was also identified as an appropriate case study because the teaching medium was English, and the teachers were all able to communicate in English, facilitating face-to-face interviews with the researcher.

The Teacher Performance Appraisal system at the school generally operated in the following manner:

1. Teachers were provided with the performance self-appraisal instrument and asked to assign themselves a score between 1 and 5 against three categories and nine sub-categories of assessment criteria.
2. Over an announced time period, the head of the secondary school and the relevant subject head conducted at least one classroom observation each, usually lasting between 10-20 minutes.
3. The head of the secondary school and the subject head then met with each teacher to provide feedback and comments based on the classroom observations. During this time, the teachers presented their self-appraisal scores and had an opportunity to discuss their self-assigned scores. Once agreement was reached, the performance appraisal scores were finalised and an official performance appraisal document was generated.
4. The discussion/feedback sessions were designed to be followed up by training and development sessions based on any areas of weakness identified for further development and improvement.

A case study approach was chosen for the purposes of conducting this research, as it

was deemed to be the most appropriate design for answering in-depth “how” and “why” questions (Hamel et al., 1993; Yin, 2009). The intention of the research was to explore and report the detailed, context-rich experiences of secondary school staff involved in appraisal, particularly as the literature indicated that the effectiveness of teacher appraisal is contingent on the school-level context and circumstances in which it takes place, and on the sensitivity of teacher appraisal to its participants.

As a single-case design, the school can be considered a “unique case” rather than a “typical case” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 384). Nonetheless, the findings and conclusions could still help lead to similar research in other school settings, and the development of wider theories on the implementation of effective Teacher Performance Appraisal. To embrace the complexity of the issues operating in this case study required “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10) – details and in-depth data of the context and views of the participants, relying on their authentic, credible, sincere, legitimate, trustworthy, plausible, honest, accounts of the situation and their reactions to it (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were determined to be the most appropriate method for data collection.

Permission was obtained from the school to conduct the research, and the research was approved by the researcher’s university. Informed consent was obtained from interviewees by having them sign a formal consent form prior to the interview. They were assured of the non-disclosure of their personal details and the non-traceable nature of the written findings. Several steps were taken to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, non-traceability, and protections of the participants’ identities. The non-traceability of the school and the research subjects, as well as the protection of their identity, were of the utmost concern during the research process.

A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling was used to embrace a wide range of teachers from different backgrounds, biographies, and cultures to be faithful to the composition of the case study teachers more widely. Based on the research design, 10 respondents participated in this research. The respondents were all teachers employed at the school at the time of the research and came from a range of subject

backgrounds and cultural backgrounds, with teachers of various nationalities being represented. Further details are not disclosed to protect identities.

In order to gather data on the research questions, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with these 10 teachers, which enabled the respondents to answer in their own terms and to raise issues at their own will. The interview questions covered a range of areas relating to the perceived purposes, process, usefulness, fairness, advantages and disadvantages of the appraisal system, as well as particular aspects of the system, including appraisal criteria, classroom observations, self-appraisal, feedback sessions, and related training opportunities. Interviewees were asked 16 interview questions, with follow-up questions asked when necessary or appropriate. Finally, the interviewees were asked questions related to perceived job satisfaction, motivation to improve pedagogy, impact on student learning outcomes, other benefits and outcomes of the appraisal process, and their recommendations for areas of improvement (See Appendix 1).

Ultimately, the researcher conducted 10 in-depth face-to-face interviews lasting approximately one hour each, at which point data saturation was reached. Each interview transcription was carefully reviewed to identify key responses relating specifically to each of the interview questions. Coding was conducted in order to facilitate the organisation of responses received. A general pattern-matching and coding technique was employed to categorise the data into a total of 14 themes. Codes were assigned to the data in an iterative, recursive process. The codes were derived from the researcher's prior concern to include data that would answer the research questions (pre-ordinate coding) and in response to the issues that were reported in the transcribed interviews (responsive coding). Following the initial coding, axial coding was conducted to organise codes into groups of related issues. Key themes emerged from these groups. Some of these themes had been anticipated, relying on theoretical propositions arising from in-depth research into existing academic literature on the topic of Teacher Performance Appraisal (e.g., concepts of fairness and transparency). Other themes emerged from the data as the transcriptions of the interviews were revised and reviewed. Pattern matching and coding were undertaken to arrive at a final 10 categories of information. These themed responses were then matched to one of the four

relevant research questions, which ultimately formed the basis of the organising principle for the data analysis and reporting (see Appendix 2).

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

During in-depth interviews, participants described their perceptions of and experiences with the Teacher Performance Appraisal system implemented in the school. The discussions revolved around the system's relationship with their professional development, job satisfaction, motivation to improve their teaching skills, and communication and collegial relations between colleagues and school leadership. They also provided recommendations for enhancing the system. Appendix 2 visually showcases the process of data analysis and categorisation, from pre-ordinate categories established on the basis of key areas identified in the literature, to emergent themes that were identified in the responses of the interviewees, to the final four categories utilised to present the findings of this research.

Research Question 1. What do teachers in the school regard as the purpose(s), uses, benefits and limitations of Teacher Performance Appraisal in the school?

Respondents identified many purposes, uses, benefits and limitations of teacher appraisal. Teacher appraisal was generally recognised as a useful management tool for a range of applications, empowering leaders and senior managers to monitor teacher performance, identify staff development, improvement and performance needs, provide evidence for promotion or releasing underperforming staff, check that teachers were working in accordance with what the school wanted, ensure that school policies and action plans were being put into practice, and to meet external education department requirements. Some teachers mentioned that the appraisal system had previously been linked to salary increments, but most felt that this was not desirable and were pleased that this was no longer the case. Overall, there was a general consensus among the teachers that performance appraisal had practical school management applications, and that the school leadership was moving in the right direction in this regard.

The respondents also noted formative purposes for the appraisal system relating to teacher improvement and development, including: to self-reflect and identify strengths and weaknesses; to provide and receive feedback, constructive criticism, and guidance; to provide encouragement, recognition, and affirmation of teachers; and to develop self-reflective practices. The teachers expressed positive views on how the appraisal

.process provided them with a sense of affirmation and recognition of their efforts and skills. They felt that this was a strength of the appraisal system, which could motivate them to work harder and improve their professional skills. However, some respondents expressed the view that sometimes the focus on providing affirming, positive feedback detracted from opportunities to provide more constructive criticism and advice that would be more likely to help them genuinely improve their teaching skills and methods.

One prominent theme that emerged throughout the interviews was regarding how the appraisal related to providing opportunities for training and professional development. The respondents generally indicated that the school did try to provide opportunities for training and development; however, not all of them saw a strong link between these opportunities and the appraisal process. While informal, collegial-based training was perceived positively, and some respondents saw a link between the initiation of these sessions and the conducting of appraisal, it was clear that the appraisal process did not always facilitate or encourage these sessions.

The teachers interviewed also expressed the belief that the appraisal system should ultimately lead to improved student learning outcomes; however, there were mixed responses as to whether this was actually the case under the current system.

Research Question 2: How do the teachers regard and react to the content and processes of Teacher Performance Appraisal?

The appraisal process involved self-appraisal, classroom observations, and discussion/feedback sessions to arrive at a final determination. To address this research question, the data here are set out under these three main headings.

Self-appraisal and reflective practice

The appraisal system at the school required teachers to self-appraise their performance, rating themselves on a scale from 1 to 5 against a set of criteria relating to their professional duties. Throughout the interviews, respondents expressed the view that

they were generally comfortable with this process and willing to be reflective and self-evaluative practitioners of their profession. They commented that they valued the opportunity to express, evaluate, and judge themselves as part of the appraisal process.

However, they expressed an awareness that their self-appraisal judgements should be honest, yet admitted that at times they were either too harsh or self-critical, and at other times too generous in the marks they graded themselves. Several reasons were cited for this, including self-protection, modesty, and humility, as well as a lack of clarity in the criteria used for self-evaluation.

Regarding the self-appraisal criteria that accompanied the awarding of marks, some teachers noted the need for more concrete criteria and more guidance on how to award/self-award a mark in the five levels of marks (1-5) and what factors to consider when awarding the mark. There appeared to be some confusion about exactly what constituted a mark of 5 or 4, etc., on the grading scale, which led to some hesitancy about what mark to assign during the self-appraisal process.

Classroom observations

A key aspect of the appraisal system involved classroom observations of teachers by the appraisers. Typically, these observations were - conducted by the head of subject or department and the head of the secondary school, and were a key contributor to providing feedback to the teachers during the appraisal feedback sessions. Teachers were notified that the classroom observations would be taking place during a certain period of time in the semester; however, they generally did not know the exact date and time of the observation. According to the teachers interviewed, the appraisers spent around 15 to 20 minutes observing the class, though they might stay longer if they had any concerns. Given the critical role of classroom observations in assessing teacher performance and providing feedback, it was important to ask the respondents how they perceived these observations.

Many staff recognised the benefit of classroom observations when accompanied by constructive feedback, and they appreciated the positive, non-threatening approach used

during class observations. However, some did note that classroom observations caused them some level of stress, due to having a senior/middle manager in the classroom observing them, and disrupting the natural/normal class dynamics.

Some teachers felt that the number, duration, and frequency of classroom observations were too few and too short, and gave an unrepresentative, unreliable picture of their teaching skills. In particular, some teachers commented that observing just one or two lessons was not always sufficient in terms of providing a comprehensive understanding of a teachers' abilities. Furthermore, given that the scheduling of the classroom observations was not a complete surprise, some teachers noted that the observed lessons could be atypical of everyday practice and would be rehearsed or "safe" lessons (e.g., "show and tell" lessons) that fail to demonstrate or reflect their true abilities. They believed the lessons would be unrepresentative of their real skills. Some teachers suggested that regular, unannounced, informal visits and more observations would be a more appropriate means of accurately assessing teachers' skills and work, but they also acknowledged that this might be more stressful for the teachers involved. Overall, it seemed that the respondents were generally in favour of more frequent, less formal, unannounced classroom observations, in order to obtain a more authentic picture of teachers' strengths and areas for improvement.

Discussion / feedback sessions

A significant component of the appraisal process were the discussion / feedback sessions between the teacher (the appraisee) and the appraiser. Respondents indicated several key points about these discussions, frequently noting that the sessions were conducted with considerable professionalism, fairness, transparency, and honesty. During the sessions, the appraisers provided positive and constructive comments and feedback, and recognised teachers' achievements. This, in turn, boosted teachers' confidence and provided them with an improved sense of job satisfaction. The feedback sessions allowed for the teachers' voices to be heard and listened to, making a difference to the outcome of the appraisal. Ultimately, the feedback sessions promoted open communication and discussion, reinforcing collegiality and leading to better communication between colleagues and a sharing of best practice. There was also a general perception that during

the appraisals, teachers were encouraged to speak freely and openly, and had an opportunity to communicate their thoughts and ideas. The topics of open communication, politeness, and respect, and listening to the teacher's voice were frequently addressed when teachers reflected on the appraisal feedback sessions, thereby strengthening the feeling of being in a collegial community.

Research Question 3. How impactful is Teacher Performance Appraisal?

Respondents were asked for their views on the outcomes, impacts and consequences of the appraisal. Many teachers agreed that it was beneficial to have an appraisal system, and that the current system was overall fair in nature and had beneficial impacts. On the other hand, some respondents expressed negative views when discussing whether they perceived the system to be consequential and impactful. For example, some respondents commented on the "tick the box" nature of the process, and others noted the lack of follow up or consequences.

Responses regarding the impact of appraisal on training and development opportunities for individual teachers at the school were also mixed. Based on the responses, it is evident that some teachers perceived the link between appraisal and training and development to be somewhat lacking, although there was agreement that the appraisals had encouraged a sense of collegiality and sharing of best practice.

Responses on whether the appraisal system had an impact on job satisfaction and motivation varied widely, from a lot to a little. The positive affirmation and praise provided during the feedback sessions resulted in a sense of job satisfaction for some, but others noted that the appraisal system needed to have more consequences. Some teachers noted that the appraisal system had limited impact on their motivation to improve because it did not offer any rewards or incentives. They argued that the system could be more impactful if linked to rewards, promotions, or remuneration. However, overall, linking the appraisal results to salary increments or bonuses in order to make it more consequential was not a widely supported idea amongst the respondents. For some teachers, the self-reflective nature of the system and the positive praise led to higher levels of motivation to change and

improve their teaching methods; however, for others, a lack of follow up and consequences resulted in negative views about the system's impact on motivation.

Respondents were also asked whether they felt the appraisal process had led to any improvements in student learning outcomes. Here, again, a range of responses indicated that whilst this was important and there was potential to help improve student outcomes, it was largely not occurring or was uncertain.

Overall, views on the impact of appraisal were mixed, with most positive perceptions related to an improved sense of job satisfaction, but perceptions were more negative in terms of the impact on improvements in pedagogy or student outcomes. While appraisal intentions were benevolent, the practical consequences varied.

Research Question 4. What recommendations can be made for improving the Teacher Performance Appraisal system and its operation in the school, and why?

At the end of each interview, the respondents were asked to suggest ways the appraisal process could be improved in the future. Respondents provided a range of suggestions summarised in this section.

Classroom observations

Overall, the responses indicated several areas for improvement in regard to classroom observations. Some teachers recommended more frequent and longer observations. Opinions differed on whether classroom observations should be announced in advance or conducted in a "surprise" manner. The idea of peer observations was also brought up by some teachers. While teachers viewed classroom observations as an important aspect of performance appraisal, many indicated that the number of observations should be increased along with a more standardised approach.

Feedback and follow up

Key recommendations from the respondents were for improved feedback from the

appraisers, and greater follow up, action, and consequential impact. Some teachers suggested that the appraisal should provide more constructive feedback for improvement beyond an overall judgement, praise or affirmation. It was recommended that the appraisal be more consequential, with more regular follow-up sessions with teachers, both after and in between the formal appraisal process. Targeted professional development and training opportunities tailored to teachers' needs were important for the uptake of new skills and ongoing growth. One teacher suggested appointing specific staff to be responsible for following up on professional development plans and implementation. Coupling constructive feedback with a clear action plan for development goals that were followed up on was the main recommendation in this area.

The appraisal pro-forma instrument

Several recommendations were received for revising the appraisal pro-forma instrument including making the appraisal criteria clearer and more detailed, and broadening the range of factors assessed on the appraisal form. Teachers also expressed the need for more direction on assigning self-appraisal grades or marks, by providing clearer descriptors. Feedback recommended expanding the input into the appraisal process, such as incorporating peer evaluations. Several teachers also recommended adding student evaluations, in order to account for the learners' perspective.

Key Findings

A striking feature of the appraisal system in the school was its multipurpose and complex nature. The respondents raised important issues related to fairness, validity, reliability, transparency and benefits, as well as questions regarding its impact, outcomes, follow up action and consequences. Though the respondents acknowledged the appraisal system's significant potential to influence many spheres of the school's operations, they also commented that the actual impact on intended improvements was limited across several areas.

Respondents consistently recognized the dual nature of a variety of issues relating to

performance appraisal – benefits and problems, strengths and weaknesses. This underlines the point made in the literature review, that the effectiveness of teacher appraisal depends on a wide range of factors. In the present case, there was quite widespread agreement that whilst appraisal had brought benefits in areas like recognition, having a voice, feeling valued, discussion, collegiality, motivation, job satisfaction and openness, namely the “soft” areas of teaching, its impact on the “hard” areas of teaching- like student outcomes, improved pedagogy, and professional practice and development- was not so strongly felt. There was a perceived need to follow up on the processes and outcomes of the appraisal in greater detail and more concrete terms.

Overall, the findings for this research confirm and underline the importance of appraisal:

(a) being for formative purposes, for improvement; (b) being “consequential”, and that the consequences should include targeted development provisions; (c) being conducted in an open, collegial manner, as part of an open and collegial culture in the school. The interviewees were supportive of, and saw clearly the pros and cons of appraisal, and the context of the school was seen as important here. It is also noticeable that there was general consensus around many of these issues.

DISCUSSION

In reviewing the findings of this research, a number of themes and issues can be identified. Firstly, the responses of the interviewees clearly indicated that they believed that the purpose of the Teacher Performance Appraisal system at the school should be, and in general was, formative in nature, rather than summative. The interviewees commonly noted that the appraisal system aimed to help them develop and improve their teaching skills, by encouraging self-reflection and receiving constructive feedback from the appraisers, as well as providing opportunities for training and professional development. Overall, the teachers viewed this formative approach to appraisal in a positive manner and expressed a preference for formative uses of the system over summative. These findings are aligned closely with those of Flores (2012), Kelly et al. (2008), and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2012). Mockler (2015) notes that formative appraisal systems are more common in schools with less hierarchical organisational structures, which appears to be the situation in this case study school, where a generally open culture was reportedly present.

There was also general agreement among the respondents that appraisal was handled in a professional manner by the school management, and the process was clearly explained, transparent and fair. The teachers understood how the appraisal process operated and what was expected of them. They felt that the appraisers carried out their duties in a professional manner. Previous research on appraisal has found that appraisal systems are most effective when the stakeholders have a clear understanding of the process, a common view of the goals, and trust in the procedural fairness and the professionalism of the appraisers (AITSL, 2012; Cardno & Robson, 2016; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Isore, 2009; Tutyens & Devos, 2012; Weisberg et al., 2009).

The respondents highlighted a number of perceived benefits of the Teacher Performance Appraisal system at the school. Many of the teachers commented on the beneficial nature and outcomes of self-reflecting on their teaching practices and classroom performance, noting that this was very helpful in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. The overall perception of self-appraisal was a positive one, with many of the respondents expressing the view that they preferred self-assessment to a more “top-down” approach. The findings of this case study confirm the research on self-appraisal, which

suggests that the use of self-reflection in Teacher Performance Appraisal can encourage teachers to have an attitude of self-enquiry that drives improvement, and when combined with a robust focus on professional development opportunities, schools are more likely to see positive outcomes from appraisal processes (Beach & Reinhartz, 1984; Cardno et al., 2017; Deneire et al., 2014; Elliott, 2015; Flores, 2012; Huber & Skedsmo, 2016; Isore, 2009; Mockler, 2015). Furthermore, schools that have a formative approach to appraisal and encourage a culture of openness, continuous self-enquiry, and collegial collaboration are more likely to generate a positive perception of appraisal amongst the teachers (Beach & Reinhartz, 1984; Cardno et al., 2017; Deneire et al., 2014; Elliott, 2015; Flores, 2012; Isore, 2009; Mockler, 2015).

Despite the overall positive perception of self-appraisal, some respondents expressed concerns with regard to the tendency to either underrate or overrate themselves against the criteria. Some teachers said they found it challenging to assign a performance grade accurately because they felt that the marking criteria were too vague and the scoring system of 1 to 5 was not adequately defined, further suggesting that more detailed descriptors, and instructions on how to use them, might be required. The importance of standards-based assessment in appraisal systems in order to minimise potential bias, and the need for these standards to be well-defined and clearly communicated is evident in the literature on this topic (AITSL, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Elliot, 2015; Tuytens & Devos, 2012).

Another benefit perceived by the respondents was a more collegial and cooperative environment within the school fostered with the help of the appraisal system. They also highlighted the best practice sharing sessions, which had been implemented in response to the appraisal system. The positive and professional manner in which the appraisal was conducted, reflective of a more open style of organisational culture at the school, fostered a greater sense of community and collegiality. Some respondents recommended creating a system that would facilitate peer-to-peer classroom observations and encourage a culture in which teachers and school management felt comfortable moving around the school and visiting classrooms for regular informal visits. This recommendation also aligns with previous research that suggests it is highly desirable for schools to develop appraisal systems that encourage teachers to engage in continuous self-inquiry and reflection on their

pedagogical practices, as well as to collaborate with their colleagues to improve their pedagogy and student learning outcomes (Cardno et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2008; Mockler, 2015).

The positive collegial impact of the appraisal system was further enhanced by the feedback sessions. Participants reported that these sessions were conducted in a friendly and positive manner, with feedback that was constructive and helpful. The sessions also fostered open and honest discussions and expression of ideas, providing teachers with adequate opportunities to justify the results of their self-appraisal. The teachers also noted that the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, providing them with a sense that their work and efforts were valued, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and motivation to improve. The provision of meaningful and useful feedback is a critical part of an effective appraisal system (AITSL, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Hallinger et al., 2014).

Furthermore, well-designed and implemented appraisal systems have also been shown to have positive impacts on levels of job satisfaction and motivation among teachers (Deneire et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2018). While acknowledging the positive impact of praise given in the feedback sessions, some teachers expressed the view that constructive criticism and advice for improvement was lacking. Smith and Kubacka (2017) indicated that when teachers feel that feedback is not useful, they will be less motivated to improve their pedagogical practices and will have a lower sense of job satisfaction. Reddy et al. (2018) also note that a lack of specific or useful feedback is a common concern for teachers. A number of teachers suggested the possibility of including student feedback in the appraisal, with some teachers indicating that they had already informally sought such feedback from their students, and had found it to be very useful in helping them to identify areas of improvement. Scholars agree that comprehensive appraisal should include multiple measures of teacher performance, and multiple sources of evidence, in order for appraisal systems to be perceived as credible and reliable in accurately and fairly determining teacher competency (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Elliott, 2015; Mockler, 2015; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Tuytens & Devos, 2012).

Regarding classroom observations, most teachers agreed that the current practice of

conducting just one or two observations, once or twice a year, was not sufficient for obtaining a realistic view of their classroom performance. They felt that having their annual appraisal based solely on this limited number of observations was unfair. A number of teachers, therefore, suggested that classroom observations should be conducted informally on a more regular basis throughout the year, in order for the appraisers to develop a more complete, comprehensive, and fair picture of teachers' abilities. Most teachers also acknowledged that forewarning of the observation sessions could lead to highly prepared "show" lessons that did not genuinely represent an accurate depiction of a teacher's pedagogy or classroom management. On the other hand, some teachers felt great pressure and stress when classroom observations were conducted in an unscheduled "surprise" manner. Research on this issue suggests that conducting classroom observations on multiple occasions over an extended period of time is the most effective and fair approach for appraisers to provide useful and actionable feedback (Beach & Reinhartz, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; de Lima & Silva, 2018; Mockler, 2015; Skedsmo & Huber, 2018; Tuytens & Devos, 2012).

In terms of the impact that the system has on actual pedagogy and student outcomes, the opinions from the respondents showed more variation. A number of teachers questioned the value of the feedback in relation to improving their teaching skills or motivating them to engage in professional development and training. The responses were more diverse with regard to whether the appraisal system led to relevant training and development opportunities. While some teachers saw a direct link between the appraisal process and subsequent training, others expressed the view that the training provided was more general and failed to address their individual needs. In contrast, some teachers felt that the appraisal did not lead to any training and development, and expressed the concern that there was a lack of goal setting, planning and follow up on behalf of the appraisers. Some even expressed the view that it was more of a "tick the box" exercise, rather than a system for genuinely helping teachers to improve their pedagogy. When teacher appraisal systems lack a clear and definite link to professional development opportunities, their effectiveness on improving pedagogy will be significantly limited (OECD, 2013, as cited in Elliott, 2015). Appraisal must lead to the provision of concrete development opportunities, and that greater attention should be given to its impact on students' learning and student

outcomes (Cardno et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Moreover, it is important for appraisal systems to provide actionable individualised feedback combined with ongoing support and professional development opportunities (Deneire et al., 2014; Flores, 2012; Hallinger et al., 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009).

Regarding links between the appraisal system and student learning outcomes, some teachers expressed the view that since the appraisal system was focused on teacher improvement and development, and the self-appraisal criteria had a strong emphasis on classroom instruction, the system would naturally have a beneficial impact on students and their learning. Indeed, Hallinger et al. (2014) argue that appraisal systems which provide useful feedback and opportunities for professional development can ultimately lead to better pedagogical practices and student learning outcomes. However, others commented that they did not perceive a significant impact on student outcomes as a result of the performance appraisal system at the school. It is challenging to assess this claim because establishing a clear relationship between teacher appraisal and student outcomes can be highly complex and problematic (Aldeman, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Hallinger et al., 2014).

Overall, analysis of the answers provided to the research questions both confirm and extend the existing literature on this topic. The richness of the teachers' responses demonstrate that many variables affect each other in contributing to the effectiveness of teacher appraisal, and the impact and success of a system may be dependent upon the existence and operations of an open and collegial culture in the school (Hoy et al., 1991). Indeed, teachers' awareness of the pros and cons of each issue, singly and in combination, is a testament to the open and collegial culture of the school.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher Performance Appraisal is a complex and challenging initiative for school management, leadership, and teachers to undertake, yet potentially useful if schools aim to provide transparent staffing decisions, evaluate teachers' skills, and develop training programmes to enhance the pedagogy of their teachers. How teachers perceive appraisal systems in terms of purpose, fairness, and impact is a critical factor in determining whether such a system can achieve its desired goals and outcomes; therefore, seeking to better understand these perceptions is an important and significant area of research. Perceptions are important; they both influence, and are influenced by, behaviour and attitude.

The results of this research reveal a range of opinions and ideas, and mixed views on how the system currently operates and how it could be improved in the future. Overall, the teachers interviewed for this research held and expressed generally positive perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal in principle, with all acknowledging its importance and potential to drive improvements in teachers' pedagogy and student learning outcomes. They all expressed a strong preference for the focus of appraisal to be formative rather than summative, while noting that it could also serve a useful school management function. The teachers commented that this approach enabled them to self-reflect genuinely on their strengths and weaknesses and to consider ways to improve their performance. They appreciated the professional and open conversations facilitated by the appraisal system with school managers during the feedback sessions, and the positive affirmation and recognition that they received during these sessions. And they also appreciated the way in which the appraisal system fostered, and built on, a greater sense of collegiality between teachers, and encouraged communication and sharing of ideas on best practice. There was a general sense that the fair, professional, and transparent manner in which the appraisal system was conducted led to higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation to improve.

On the other hand, the teachers interviewed also commented on several issues that concerned them, and areas where they felt improvement could be made. These included the limitation of the "tick the box" approach, the need for more constructive and formative feedback, the need for greater consequential staff development coming out of the appraisal, greater attention to the number, frequency, weight and announcement of classroom observations, greater clarity in appraisal criteria and their interpretation, increased attention

being given to ensuring that appraisal would benefit student outcomes, and attention to purpose, fairness, transparency and impact.

Effective appraisal is linked closely to a culture of openness and collegiality within the school community which is characterised by cooperation, support, open discussion, professionalism, trust, autonomy, self-reflection and academic excellence, together with teacher self-reflection and self-critique, encouraging teacher voice and contribution in an atmosphere of recognition, respect and positivity rather than threat, and respecting individual differences.

Effective teacher appraisal, then, suggests that detailed attention must be paid to the contextual variables of the school and to securing an open culture within the school, together with sensitivity to the professional interactions, biographies, personalities, views, and behaviours of the participants, as appraisal is complex, multifactorial and hinges on people. A key finding here was the necessary attention to detail at all stages of the appraisal, and this was reflected in the high level detail of the responses from the participants.

Limitations

The case study, while only investigating a small sample, obtained a representation of teachers from different backgrounds working in a multicultural school environment. Nonetheless, the sample size of only 10 teachers, while sufficient for the purposes of this case study, was small. However, all but one of the teachers interviewed were expatriates / non-local employees. Thus, there was a limited sampling of data from local teachers, which might have resulted in a lack of diverse viewpoints as their perspectives may differ from those of the expatriate teachers.

The research focused on the perceptions of teachers employed in the secondary section of the school, and not the whole school. It did not specifically or deliberately seek to investigate the views of the appraisers or of the school leadership. This research also did not specifically focus on the efficacy of the various stages and processes involved in the appraisal system, nor did it attempt to determine whether the appraisal system was actually

achieving its stated goals, or to substantiate the impact that the system had on teacher's pedagogy or student learning outcomes. These aspects were beyond the scope of the research, which was an initial exploration only. Another limitation of this research relates to how much can be taken from perceptions and opinions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this case study, and given the generally positive perceptions of the teachers towards self-appraisal, it was recommended that the particular school at the centre of this research, should continue to implement this approach to performance appraisal. The open nature of the school culture, the professional approach to implementing appraisal, and the emphasis on formative rather than summative outcomes, were all factors that were likely to lead to successful outcomes in the future. The school leadership was also advised to take note of the concerns highlighted by the teachers in this study, and to consider ongoing amendments to the appraisal system to optimise its effectiveness.

Evaluating the efficacy of performance appraisal systems, investigating what factors contribute to their success, and understanding how they are perceived by stakeholders are all important areas of study for researchers, educators and school management. There is room for more research to be done in this area, using not only different and larger samples, but also different methods. Future research could investigate further the relationship between context and school culture and effectiveness of performance appraisal systems, this could include how to develop and implement effective performance appraisal systems, including the value and usefulness of self-appraisal, within the context of schools in South-east Asia. These are interesting fields of investigation for researchers in this area.

Understanding how to develop and implement effective performance appraisal systems, and appreciating how they are perceived by stakeholders, can assist schools in their efforts to improve the professionalism of management, pedagogy of teachers and learning outcomes of students. Establishing and fostering an open school culture, implementing professional and transparent processes, and encouraging communication and

collegial sharing of best practice, can result in Teacher Performance Appraisal systems that achieve positive outcomes for teachers, students and schools.

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APPENDIX 1 - CASE STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.What does your school use teacher appraisal for? How do you feel about this?
- 2.What do you think teacher appraisal should and should not be used for? Why is this?
- 3.How does the performance appraisal process operate in your school? What happens in the teacher appraisal? How do you feel about this?
- 4.What are the outcomes of teacher appraisal in the school? How do you feel about this?
- 5.What kinds of discussions between the appraiser and the appraisee take place as part of the appraisal process? How do you feel about this?
- 6.What benefits, if any, has the teacher appraisal brought to you?
- 7.Do you feel there are any downsides of teacher appraisal in the school? Why is this?
- 8.What are your views on the criteria against which you are rated during the TPA process?
 - a)Are they fair?
 - b)Are they well communicated and explained?
 - c)Are they appropriate and sufficient to evaluate your performance?
- 9.What are your views on the appraisal process in terms of fairness and transparency?
 - a)Is the purpose and process clearly explained?
 - b)Are teachers involved in the design and implementation?
 - c)Do you have an opportunity to discuss the results?
- 10.How do you view the role and performance of the appraiser?
- 11.What are your views on the amount and quality of the feedback provided during the appraisal process?
 - a)Is it helpful in terms of improving your teaching practices?
 - b)Is sufficient time given to discussing the feedback?
 - c)Is it provided in a professional and constructive manner?
- 12.To what extent does the appraisal process motivate you to change or improve your teaching methods? Why is this?
- 13.Does the TPA process lead to training and development opportunities? Are they adequate?
- 14.What impact does the TPA process have on your level of job satisfaction?
- 15.To what extent and in what areas do you think the appraisal process leads to better student outcomes?
- 16.What aspects of the TPA process do you feel could be improved in future?

APPENDIX 2 - CATEGORISATION OF DATA

Pre-Ordinate Categories	Emergent Themes	Final Categories
Purpose of TPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of Teachers Multipurpose Management Tool 	Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving Teaching and Teachers Identifying professional development needs
Fairness and Transparency of the process	Reflective Practitioners: Self-reflection and self-appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School management Benefit to students
Classroom observations	Sufficiency and Frequency of classroom observations	
Appraisal Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of appraisal criteria Tendency to overrate or underrate 	Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-appraisal and reflective practice Classroom observations Discussion / Feedback Sessions
Feedback sessions	Openness and Professionalism	
Role of the appraiser	Professionalism	Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes, follow up actions and consequences Training and Development Job Satisfaction Motivation Student Outcomes
Impact on Job Satisfaction	Affirmation and recognition	
Impact on Motivation	Consequential	
Impact on student learning outcomes	Student Feedback	
Training and Development Opportunities	Appropriateness of T&D / ongoing follow-up	
Benefits	Communication and collegiality	Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Observations Feedback, Follow-up and Impact Professional Development Appraisal Pro-forma instruments Inputs into appraisal
Suggestions for improvement	Drawbacks and Limitations	