



Validity of Teacher Evaluation Criteria: a Qualitative Investigation

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research investigation was to examine conceptions of teacher evaluation criteria used for the summative evaluation of secondary school teachers. The theory of evaluation and exercise of authority was the basis for the hypothesis that conceptions of criteria vary across groups with unique points of reference in an organization □Danielson, 2008; see also Peterson, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Dornbusch & Scott's, 1975□. The focus of the inquiry was to identify, define, and describe salient properties of instructional performance criteria from the vantage point of the stakeholders in one school culture. This is a departure from past practice of articulating conceptual definitions of criteria extrapolated from theory-driven research on teacher effectiveness. Conceptions were garnered from eight organizational groups (teachers, students, and parents with 9th or twelve grade affiliations, school administrators, and members of the Board of Education). Data collection involved focus groups, individual interviews, a rank-order task, a demographics questionnaire, a reliability of ratings form, classroom observations, and a collection of summative evaluation documents as artifacts. Data and methodological triangulation, a confluence of results from multiple sources and methods, increased the probability of credible findings. Comparisons were made within and across groups to determine if the participants had similar or disparate conceptions of teacher evaluation criteria. The findings can be summarized as follows: (a) conceptions of teacher evaluation criteria were related to the role of the stakeholder in this organization, and (b) conceptions shifted as the developmental exigencies of students shifted, from ninth grade students in early adolescence to twelve grade students in late adolescence. There were similarities in the identification and definition of indicators within groups and distinctions among them related to the organizational roles and grade-specific experiences. The validity of universal criteria to represent effective teaching across grade levels is questioned.