



Independent Education Union of Australia

IEU Policy – Teacher Appraisal

Context of Teacher Appraisal Schemes

The area of teacher appraisal is characterised by competing agendas, confusion and a history of ineffectual practices. Discussions of system and school accountability often focus in a limited way on the issue of teacher performance review as a key component of school and system improvement. However performance management is a broad concept. While teacher appraisal can have a range of summative purposes, such as for promotion selection, advanced salary classifications and complaints procedures (due process), teacher appraisal can also be a formative process involving ongoing professional development and career development, review and planning.

Research supports the view held by the Independent Education Union (IEU) that teacher appraisal in this formative approach is the most effective model for building teacher capacity and achieving school improvement goals.

It is important that appraisal models are fit for purpose. However, many models of teacher appraisal confuse summative performance review and formative development approaches. While a model may claim to be 'formative', the processes used often attempt to make 'summative' evaluations of teachers' performance, usually by the use of subjective and highly inaccurate and invalid instruments of assessment.

The IEU believes that teacher appraisal is most effectively placed within a context and framework of *building quality teacher capacity*. Building quality teacher capacity requires comprehensive, systematic and sustained focus and government, system and school support in a number of essential areas such as:

- acknowledgement, development and

refining of the skills and knowledge necessary for the highly complex work of teaching, including curriculum design and implementation, assessment, pedagogy and leadership;

- ongoing access to quality and relevant professional learning;
- school structures that support professional learning teams and access to cutting edge educational research and support;
- well-resourced and supported beginning teacher induction programs and mentoring; and
- comprehensive pre-service teacher training.

Guidelines for teacher appraisal – a professional development model

Introduction

The term 'teacher appraisal' should be used in a limited way to describe a process of reflection and review designed solely to professionally develop those taking part in it.

Processes of review and evaluation of teachers' work designed for other purposes should be described by terms such as 'performance review' or 'performance management'.

The use of 'teacher appraisal' in this prescriptive way is intended to clearly distinguish the different teacher review purposes in order to emphasise that teacher appraisal designed for professional development should not be used for any other purpose.

Teacher appraisal in this form is the most effective model for building teacher

capacity and achieving school improvement goals.

Any models of, or guidelines for, teacher performance management, appraisal and due process should be negotiated and contained in industrially registered agreements.

The School Context

Teacher appraisal should be viewed as a structured process of self-evaluation, shared reflection and collaborative planning designed to assist teachers in their professional development within the context of a school's directions and goals.

Where teacher appraisal processes are introduced into a school they should be integrated into the school's professional support structures, its professional development programs and its whole school plan.

Good teacher appraisal processes are most likely to emerge in schools which have a collegial ethos, encourage reflective practice, respect individual rights, have a climate of democratic collaborative decision-making, have effective support structures for all staff, show commitment to the professional development of all staff, provide satisfactory working conditions and are properly resourced.

Planning for the introduction of appraisal processes should include a review of the values, policies, structures and organisation of the school in order to identify those elements which either facilitate or inhibit the professional growth of teachers.

The development and implementation of appraisal processes should always involve a comprehensive process of teacher consultation, involvement and agreement at all stages.

Self-appraisal within a collegial context

The basis of any teacher appraisal process should be self-appraisal. Teachers professionally develop (active) rather than are developed (passive). The target audience is the teacher themselves.

Appraisal processes should be designed to encourage a commitment by teachers to their own professional growth. This means that the appraisal should be owned and controlled by the teacher being appraised.

Teaching is also a collegial profession and appraisal processes should be seen as part of the professional support structures for teachers which help to break down professional isolation.

All appraisal models should promote professional discourse, collaborative enquiry, shared problem solving and teamwork.

Effective teacher appraisal therefore has a focus on self-appraisal within the context of the inter-relationship and interdependence of the individual, their colleagues and the school as a whole.

The rights of teachers

Appraisal processes should recognise that teachers are professional workers whose rights include:

- to be treated and respected as professional people engaged in a significant national enterprise, by their employer and the wider community;
- to be provided with adequate time and resources to effectively carry out their professional responsibilities;
- to teach in areas consistent with their professional training and experience;
- to work in a safe, healthy and non-discriminatory environment;
- to be included in appropriate decision making processes, through participation in, or representation on, committees and other forums;
- to be provided with support and opportunities for professional development both within and without the school in accordance with their individual needs and career goals and the goals and priorities of the school;
- to be provided with all information relevant to their teaching role and status by the employing authority; and

- to be provided with the challenge of a suitable career path.

Where a staff developed and controlled appraisal program, consistent with these guidelines, is implemented, all staff should be encouraged to participate in it.

Appraisal processes should be voluntary, unless involvement in a formative development process is required as part of a negotiated industrial instrument. Any negotiated process should be consistent with the principles articulated in this policy.

An agreed protocol or code of practice should be developed regarding the confidentiality of all appraisal processes. The protocol should cover the ownership and use of any material produced and the dissemination of any information the processes generate.

Effective Appraisal Models

Effective models of teacher appraisal will benefit:

- the individual teacher through their professional development;
- the school as a whole through improvements in the collective morale, harmony and effectiveness of the teaching staff as a whole; and
- student learning outcomes through improvements in teaching practice.

A range of teacher appraisal models can achieve these aims if they:

- are formative and developmental;
- are supportive and provide positive feedback;
- are based on an assumption of the competence of the teacher undergoing appraisal;
- encourage reflective practice, critical enquiry and continuous improvement;
- focus on the work and not the person;
- encourage honesty and openness;
- recognise the complex and contestable nature of teaching and learning;
- acknowledge the context within which teaching takes place;
- avoid adding to the workload or

- stress of teachers;
- address the potential for conflict in appraisal systems;
- ensure that everyone involved has a clear idea of the purpose, processes and potential outcomes;
- foster collegiality and a collaborative culture;
- are based on sound professional development and adult learning principles;
- take account of disparate teacher needs which may arise through differences in age, gender, experience in teaching, ethnicity, etc;
- ensure that all of those involved are provided with adequate programs of induction and training; and
- are regularly reviewed.

Teacher appraisal processes which are based on hierarchical relationships or involve the potential for a conflict of interest on the part of those taking part in the appraisal process do not fit into the professional development model.

Appraisal, accountability and performance review

Material and information arising from teacher appraisal processes must not be used for any other purpose including promotion, staff selection, transfer decisions, complaints procedures, pay increases or any other career or management purposes.

The contamination of teacher appraisal by its use, either by school administrations or an individual teacher, for other purposes will undermine the confidence of staff in its integrity and destroy its value as a professional development process.

Teacher appraisal processes consistent with these guidelines will reinforce and enhance existing accountability procedures within schools. They promote an educationally valid view of accountability rather than one which is politically expedient and based upon a negative competency agenda.

All teacher appraisal processes operating

in a school must have the agreement of the local union sub-branch.

Resources

Teacher appraisal programs require proper resourcing.

Schools which introduce teacher appraisal programs must provide all of those involved with sufficient time to:

- effectively participate in the agreed process;
- undergo relevant induction and training; and
- take part in ongoing professional development programs identified through the appraisal process.

Use of Appraisal Tools

As with any form of appraisal, the tools and methods used in a professional development model of appraisal must be valid and useful for purpose. The use of one-off classroom observations, unless as part of a collegial support process and simplistic student surveys to measure or evaluate performance, are inappropriate and inadequate.

The Use of Student Surveys

The use of student surveys to assess teaching practice is particularly dubious and raises serious professional and ethical concerns. Students should not be put in a position of making subjective judgments about a teacher's performance, out of context and isolated from other factors such as the subject matter, the learning environment, the behaviour and maturity of the student.

Surveys should not involve students attempting to evaluate or rate a teacher's performance on various pedagogical elements. Students are not trained observers who understand the full breadth and relevance of effective teaching practices or the particular teacher's planning and objectives for that class/unit, etc.

Student feedback surveys should focus on the students' learning itself and the environment which fosters that learning. The design and focus of student survey

questions should be negotiated and agreed with the teacher concerned. This will ensure that they are as relevant as possible to the specific learning context and be useful for both the teacher's ongoing professional development, as well as planning for student learning purposes.

Survey findings should not themselves be part of a formal teacher appraisal system. Ways of seeking feedback on student learning is an important part of the teacher's toolkit. Teachers will have no problem with using well designed surveys for informal feedback regarding student learning. In a reflective exercise, teachers might well discuss together how they use the feedback on students' learning to inform their planning. Student feedback is a means to an end, not the end itself.

Classroom Observation

The use of classroom observation can also be problematic. In many cases the stated purpose of the classroom observation is to provide constructive feedback in a developmental sense. However, the manner in which the observer is imposed, who the observer is (often regardless of the identified focus of the observation), and the ownership and use of documentation arising from the observation are inconsistent with the intent and purpose of developmental models.

Classroom observation should only occur in a peer support context, with the focus of the observation negotiated and agreed by the teacher being observed. Any written material associated with the observation should be kept by the teacher being observed.

Classroom observation should not involve rating performance on separate, individual 'standards' or tasks. This practice is generally subjective and superficial. If individual stand-alone standards (or competencies) are used, they should be used as a reflective tool between peers, that is, as a stimulus to reflection on practice, and not a tool of measurement.