The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman

Author's Names and Affiliations

Dr. Alyahmadi, Hamed

hamedalyahmadi5@gmail.com

Administrative Expert in the Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

Dr. Al-kiyumi, Amal

kiyomi@squ.edu.om

Assistant Professor at College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone #: +967 95827010

Corresponding Author

Dr. Al-kiyumi, Amal

kiyomi@squ.edu.om

Phone #: +967 95827010

Abstract

Teaching as a complex profession entails ongoing attainment of a number of characteristics and qualifications for as long as the teacher's career life. Theoretically, teacher evaluation has a potential to promote teacher professional development. However the implementation of this process is not always straight-forward. Teacher evaluation in Oman plays a fundamental role in promoting teacher professional development. This study investigated the consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development in Oman. A systematic qualitative approach was utilized by means of document analysis and interviews. For data analysis, the researchers used NVivo qualitative data analysis software. A coding scheme was developed based on the two research questions.

The findings clearly indicated a common belief among the study's participants that is positive impact was less recognized in terms of teacher evaluation on the development of teacher performance or on teacher career's life in general. The level of satisfaction and motivation regarding the teacher evaluation process was down with many teachers and evaluators. Their dissatisfaction was grounded by several reasons such as: low of evaluation process's confidentiality, vagueness of standards and criteria, and the overreliance on classroom observation practice. Most of the teachers interviewed believed that the existence of teacher poor performance in schools largely indicate the lack of efficient implementation of the evaluation process in their schools.

Key words: Teacher evaluation, Oman, professional development.

Introduction

In an era which appreciates excellence in education and standards-based teaching reform, the necessity for high-quality professional development has emerged as one of the most essential arenas for research in education. Teacher evaluation plays a prominent role in this regard. The contemporary perspective regarding teacher evaluation suggests a shift in the main purpose of teacher evaluation from merely addressing school needs to include more collaborative processes focused on teacher professional development. Thus, according to a number of scholars such as), Glatthorn (1995), and Duke (1995), Danielson and McGreal (2000), Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995, teacher evaluation has two main purposes: ensuring accountability and promoting teacher professional development.

The link between the purposes of teacher evaluation and its impact is quite logic but it must be borne in mind that "effects may or may not be related to the initial purposes of the process, but they are always related to the activities or practices undertaken as part of the evaluation process" (Natriello, 1990, p. 35). These effects may manifest at the organizational level, at the environmental level, and at the individual level. The former two levels are beyond the scope of this study. The last level where the teachers themselves experience the evaluation process and practices will be the range of this paper.

Objectives of the study

Teacher evaluation, if done well, has numerous positive consequences and impact on teacher professional development. Darling-Hammond (1990) asserts that the impact of teacher evaluation may take many forms on teacher careers. She elaborates that, "evaluation may affect teacher motivation, knowledge, satisfaction, communication, consensus, level of trust, and community confidence, as well as decisions by both evaluators and teachers themselves about what enters and remains in teaching" (p. 21).

Based on that, this study aims to investigate the actual consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development in Oman. More precisely it seeks to answer the following two questions: 1) What are the teachers' perceptions of the consequences of teacher evaluation process and practices on teacher professional development in Oman?2) What are the factors that improve or constrain teacher evaluation process on provoking teacher professional development?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is divided into its two principal themes: evaluation of teacher performance, and teacher professional development. These themes are illustrated in the following sub-sections.

1. Evaluation of Teacher Performance

Teacher valuation is largely regarded as a vital process in improving teacher performance (Allemann, 2006). Having said this however, effective evaluation only result when the evaluator clearly sets out the criteria to be used in the evaluative process and ensures that, even if the final assessment is a negative one, the teacher benefits from the process and leaves with his or her self-esteem intact (Goldhammer et al., 1993; Brennen, 2007). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) declare that evaluation is fundamental in teacher performance growth with three main purposes: monitoring quality control of teaching and learning, developing professional development of teachers, and building teacher motivation and commitment to teaching.

Teacher evaluation has two dimensions (which are referred to as formative and summative) that are both critical to ensuring accountability and teacher effectiveness. The formative component is "designed to monitor and improve instruction and enhance professional growth" (Sousa, 2003:

139). Summative evaluation, on the other hand, is judgmental and is "concerned with the purposes of the organization rather than the individual" (Murray, 1997: 211). Its main purpose is "to assist [evaluators] in making personnel decisions, such as who stays, who goes, and who changes assignment" (Sousa, 2003: 139). The evaluator rates the adequacy of the performance as it relates to professional duties within the classroom.

Conflict between the two components of evaluation, according to Sousa (2003), is inevitable, but it can be prevented if the evaluator uses a supportive rather than a punitive approach. By drawing in teacher strengths and assisting them in positive and non-threatening ways to strengthen weaknesses, evaluators can create a climate conducive to improvement (Heble, 2006). In order to achieve instructional enhancement, the purpose of the evaluation process must be clear. A trusting relationship should be developed and nurtured between the evaluator and the teacher, and evaluators must engage teachers in reflective thinking prior to and after the classroom observation (Glickman, 1990).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) warn evaluators about what they call "possible evaluation land mines". Many of these 'land mines' concern facile and unsupportive assumptions that can 'explode' if not carefully examined and avoided. Five examples of these assumptions are:

1. There is *a clear set of criteria* or standards understood and accepted by everyone with which a teacher performance can be evaluated;
2. Sporadic, *unannounced classroom visits*, with no prior conversation and no subsequent discussion, are a legitimate and an acceptable way to assess teacher performance;
3. Student achievement of course objectives is the only way to evaluate teacher performance;
4. Evaluation of teacher performance should only deal with observable classroom behaviors;
5. One or two class visits are all that is required to make judgments about the quality of a teacher performance to make decisions about retentions, tenure, and promotion (p. 377-378).

Sousa (2003) adds another concern about the use of a checklist approach in evaluation. He suggests that a major criticism of the observation-checklist approach "is that it treats all teachers alike" and that "there is seldom any connection between the teacher behaviors noted in the observation report and …teacher professional development" (p. 143). Descriptive reports, in which a fair account of the teacher actions, behaviors, and activities during his or her teaching, should be explained and later discussed with the teacher. This can then lead the teacher and evaluator to agree upon certain suggestions for sustaining good practices and improving or changing other practices. Such an approach is more appealing to evaluators and teachers alike (Sousa, 2003; Glickman, et al., 2007).

In summary, evaluation of teacher performance is considered by many to be an integral and complementary part of teacher professional development process, though others see these in conflict, particularly in relation to summative judgmental evaluation. To ensure the effectiveness and balance between the formative and summative evaluation, a supportive, collegial, and reflective approach to evaluation process is required. According to Allemann (2006), for an effective approach to evaluation, policymakers and educational leaders must thoroughly define teaching quality, and implement evaluation procedures that focus on improving teaching practice and incorporate student learning. They should create professional accountability, provide appropriate training for evaluators, and invite a broad range of participants in evaluation design.

Teacher Professional Development Teacher professional development, as generally conceived, means the improvement of teacher performance. More specifically, according to Glatthorn (1995), teacher professional development is "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of

gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically" (p. 41). In traditional educational systems, teacher professional development was thought of in terms of a number of workshops that a teacher attends or lectures that teachers listen to in order to foster his or her knowledge. This narrow perspective constrains teacher growth and, consequently, student achievement. Fortunately, this viewpoint of professional development as in-service training that consists of workshops or one-shot participation represented by short-term courses has recently begun to shift.

The new perspective is to consider professional development as a continuous, life-long process that comprises systematic experiences aim to develop the teacher's opportunities to grow in his or her profession. This change in view provides an original perceptive of teacher learning and a new paradigm of teacher education as an adult learner.

Consequently, professional development has attracted significant interest throughout the world. Villegas-Reimers (2003) identifies several key indicators of that interest:

- The extensive literature on modeling and practicing professional development, which includes documents, essays, reports, and many published studies.
- International and national donor agencies have acknowledged the importance of teacher professional development.
- Many national and international organizations have supported the implementation of initiatives which aim to improve the professional skills and knowledge of teachers.
- Most educational reforms currently being designed and/or implemented include a component of professional development as one of the key elements in the reform process.

Moreover, professional development does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs within a complex environment, the school, and is associated with the daily school activities of teachers and students (Ganser, 2000; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2007) suggest that teacher professional development prospers in an environment that teachers collaborate together. Some manifestations of that; teachers are paired off in teams, observing each other, sharing reflections on practice, and developing professional development plans together. In this paradigm, the peer review, peer evaluation, and classroom observation are the main concerns of teacher evaluation policy and implementation.

According to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), this new paradigm of teacher professional development has distinct features that can positively affect the educators' perception of the whole education system. That is demonstrated via:

- engaging teachers in practical tasks and providing opportunities to observe, assess and reflect on new practices;
- being participant-driven and grounded in enquiry, reflection and experimentation;
- being collaborative and involving the sharing of knowledge;
- directly connecting to the work of teachers and their students;
- being on-going and intensive;
- providing support through modelling, coaching and collective problem solving; and
- being connected to other aspects of school reform (p. 598).

Theoretically, schools are the factor that most influences student achievement. Elmore (2004) believes that "the fundamental unit of accountability should be the school because that is the organizational unit where teaching and learning actually occurs" (p. 4). This attitude toward accountability has become a deep-seated part of educational policies across the world. This situation requires schools to organize themselves to cope with the requirements of the professional development process.

There is acknowledgement among educators that no single model of professional development can ever be likely to match the requirements of every teacher and are suitable for their schools (Zepeda, 2007). Thus each school has to compare the various theories and practices in order to decide which professional development model would be more beneficial to their particular situation. Zepeda asserts that "there are ways to bring together supervision, professional development, evaluation, and other activities such as peer coaching and mentoring. The real charge for principals and other evaluators is to unify these efforts (p. 12)".

In spite of the recognition that no one model can be considered the ideal model for promoting teacher professional growth, Sparks and Horsley (1989) advocate five models of staff development that they claim are popular and helpful in assessing teacher professional development. They are:

(a) Individually-guided staff development: by which teachers read professional publications, converse about the teaching and learning process with colleagues, and try new teaching techniques and pedagogies.

(b) Observation/assessment: by which each teacher can perform a vital role in assisting his or her partner in school. Experienced teachers can supervise new teachers or engage in mutually respectful observation (peer coaching) programs in order to supply suggestions to improve classroom behaviors consistent with individual or school goals.

(c) Involvement in a development/improvement process: since the duties of teachers in the modern school include developing or acclimatizing the curriculum to their context, designing new activities and involvement in systematic upgrading processes.

(d) Inquiry: The inquiry model is based on a belief in teachers' capacity to formulate valid questions about their own performance and to pursue objective answers.

(e) Training: this model can comprise examining theories, demonstrating skills in certain situations, getting performance feedback, as well as worksite coaching.

In fact, integration of all these approaches is needed to achieve the desired results in teacher professional development. These five models emphasizing the consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development, and they can be used as a foundation for the investigation takes place in this study. The researchers expect that, employing these models as a base for this study will facilitate understanding the real consequences of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development.

The Omani context
Since 1970, when Sultan Qaboos assumed power, education in the Sultanate of Oman has been marked by admirable and vast accomplishments. The quantitative period (1970-1990) achieved a giant successful surge in all educational aspects. In 1995, the Ministry of Education announced its intention for comprehensive reform by introducing the all-new 'Basic Education System', which gradually replaced the 'General Education System'. The key aim of this system is to provide school graduates with considerable numeracy and literacy skills as a foundation for further education and vocational training (Ministry of National Economy, 2003). The pedagogies utilized by teachers are also intended to "develop [in students] skills and attitudes such as autonomous and cooperative learning, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, research and investigative techniques, creativity, innovation and the development of an aesthetic sense" (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 16).

As the curriculum content and pedagogy have been upgraded, a need has arisen to change the way teachers are supervised and evaluated. The policy-makers in the Ministry of Education recognize that educational reform requires them to implement comprehensive performance assessment of schools as well as teachers (Ministry of Education, 2006). Seeking to obtain this goal,

the Ministry in School Year 2002/2003, adopted a project called 'The System for Enhancement of School Performance'. Thus, there are external and internal committees evaluating the three aspects of school performance: learning, teaching, and school administration.

This system, according to the Ministry of Education (2009), aims to achieve several educational goals, including:

- Improving the outcomes of the educational system;
- Developing the school as an individual organization;
- Emphasizing the culture of self-evaluation among teachers, administrators and other school staff;
- Emphasizing the roles of senior teachers as resident supervisors in schools;
- Developing cooperation and teamwork among the school staff;
- Diagnosing the current school performance in order to improve it;
- Assisting schools to benefit from their material and non-material possibilities;
- Creating a culture of learning among the school staff; and
- Planning and designing professional development programs in light of actual training needs of school staff.

Teacher evaluation in Oman is normally conducted in two main stages: formative and summative evaluation. During the school year, the evaluators, i.e., school principal, supervisor, or senior teacher, evaluate teacher's performance regularly. This type of teacher evaluation is considered formative and is aimed at promoting teacher professional development. It is conducted via regular classroom visits and post-observation conferences. The intent is to identify the teacher's training needs, based upon his or her current performance.

Summative evaluation, by contrast, delivers judgment about the overall performance of a teacher during the school year, and consequently takes decisions regarding teacher career life such as; hiring, promotion, sanction, or fire. Article (28) of the Civil Service Law issued by Royal Decree Number (120/2004) states: Promotion shall be based on both factors of worthiness, efficiency and seniority, as follows: 70% for efficiency and 30% for seniority".

Another characteristic of Omani teacher evaluation policy is that it urges the evaluators to use multiple sources in collecting data pertaining to teacher performance. The Ministry of Education recommends evaluators and teachers to employ a number of other data sources for gathering information. therefore, besides classroom observation, they can also utilize sources such as mutual visits and self-evaluation (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 33).

Based upon these multiple data resources, a professional development plan is prepared that identifies particular points for enhancement as well as means to achieve the desired goals. This plan is jointly created by the teacher and his/her evaluator. It aims to ensure that the teacher is aware of his/her weakness areas. Teacher should understand "what behaviours need to be improved, what behaviours are expected, and what the consequences will be if the teacher does not [do so] in the specific time period" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 44). The plan suggests some other activities and tasks besides training sessions such as: "mutual visiting, reflective practice, self-learning, individual meeting, and action research" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 33).

Methodology

This study was conducted by the means of qualitative research. It has been acknowledge that, properly employing the qualitative data gleaned from face to face interviews, field observation and document analysis can lead the researchers "to get to the heart of the problem in ways that large scale survey data do not" (Malakolunthu, 2007, p.31). For this end, this study was conducted in Sharqia (North) Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman.

Analysis of formal and informal documents and face to face interviews with teachers and evaluators (supervisors) were the data sources of this study. Formal documents comprise of official Ministry's documents, such as decrees, reports, teacher-guide, administrator-guide, and the Ministry's online educational portal. Informal documents comprise of the documents collected by the researchers from teachers, supervisors and school principals such as e-mails and handwritten responses aimed to analyze the questions.

As for the interview, purposive sampling strategies of interviewing considered critical for achieving the research intention (Maxwell, 2005). Multiple strategies were adopted in this study for identifying possible informants. They include convenience sampling, snowball sampling and extreme case sampling. Eleven key informants (two school principals, three supervisors, and six senior teachers and classroom teachers) with direct contribution and rich information of the implementation of teacher evaluation system. The interviews were digitally-recorded and transcribed then translated into English.

For data analysis, the researchers used NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis software. A coding process was guided by the two research questions. This way eases the development of the concepts, categories and themes, as well as going further with narrative and discourse pertaining to the study. In developing coding categories, the researchers identified relevant themes appeared during this stage. After reading the transcripts, field notes and documents several times line by line, key terms and repeated phrases were highlighted and categorized in order to be formulated. The analysis of data was conducted by employing the technique of *constant comparative method*. Corbin and Strauss's (2008) constant comparative method of data analysis was found to be well-suited to this study's purposes, although this method of analysis was originally developed for theory building.

Because of the nature of this type of research, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole country. However, the data yield would be enough to provide rich information regarding the evaluation system in general and the evaluation methods that are implemented in it in particular.

Findings
The information gleaned from this study provide some interesting issues pertaining to the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher professional growth. The very first interviews revealed that the participants doom that they practice teacher evaluation in the way that can promote professional development and ensure accountability. However, the situation steered differently while the researchers went further in conducting the interviews. The data revealed that the teacher evaluation process has minimal influence in teacher classroom performance and teacher professional development. Moreover, the data indicated that there are some common contextual, organizational, and technical factors that affect participants' perceptions regarding the real impact of teacher evaluation process.

Research Question 1: Perceptions on the consequences of teacher evaluation process
The first question seeks the perception of teachers toward the real impact of teacher evaluation system on teacher professional development. Presumably, teacher professional development can be promoted if the evaluator diagnoses the teacher performance problems, provide feedback on such problems and develop professional plans for remedying the problems. To shed light on the impact of the evaluation process and practices on the teachers' professional development, teachers were probed about the consequences of the evaluations practices distilled through the evaluation dialogue, feedbacks provided and the following procedures aimed to enhance his or her teaching practice.

Teachers in general believe that teacher evaluation should have positive impact on certain aspects of teacher performance. Their expressions straightforward indicated that there is a visible and tangible impact of teacher evaluation on their performance. They believe that the classroom observations and feedback have noticeable consequences on their improvement, however they doubt if this improvement is worth the effort and budget allocated for it in the evaluation processes. To clarify this situation, the investigation on teacher professional development is categorized according to the five models of Sparks and Horsley (1989) mentioned earlier. The following sections elaborate more about this matter.

1) The effect of teacher evaluation on teachers' knowledge and pedagogies

Pertaining to the role of teacher evaluation in helping teachers to understand the content knowledge and pedagogy appears to be medium to some extent. A percentage of sixty-one of the participants believed that teacher evaluation played a vital role in improving teacher understanding of the content knowledge successfully. Those teachers acknowledged the importance of teacher evaluation in their career life. They realized that the main impact of classroom observation is the assistance they received in their daily teaching practices. They pointed out that the evaluator provided them with a lot of knowledge and skills about their subjects and how to demonstrate it. They confirmed that the feedback observations helped them to recognize their weaknesses in subject knowledge, content, skills and pedagogy.

However, few teachers (26%) had some negative perceptions regarding the impact of teacher evaluation in improving teacher's understanding of the subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. More often, those teachers considered the evaluator as merely an error-hunter. One teacher, for example, pessimistically expressed this point of view saying, "*I see that the supervisor is coming to collect mistakes and go away not to assist teachers to get better in his performance. Indeed I never benefit from his visit in improving my practices*".

Teachers among this category had almost similar, unenthusiastic perspectives and sentiments regarding teacher evaluation practices. They considered the teacher evaluation as a routine practice rather than being an effective means aimed at promoting teacher performance, and consequently, enhancement of students' achievement. In short, those interviewees contended that the teacher evaluation process deviated from its main goal, so it was perceived as a waste of time and resources. That is to some extent indicates the inconsistency of the evaluation procedures during the evaluation sessions.

2 The effect of teacher evaluation on assisting teachers in developing the curriculum

In Oman, the curriculum is characterized by its heavy centralization in which the schools adhere to the same curriculum; hence the room to develop new lessons is very limited. However, the philosophy of basic education is based on encouraging teachers to develop some related activities and exercises. Regarding the role of teacher evaluation in encouraging teacher to participate in developing curriculum, nearly third of the teachers confirmed that both the school principal and the supervisor essentially request them to develop their own supplementary activities in order to exemplify some lessons to their students. One female teacher, for example, indicated that she prepared some activities related to her subject. In her words "*I developed three types of activities in geometry for grade 8. I showed them to my supervisor, and he encouraged me and promised to send a copy of them to the Ministry*". Moreover, some interviewees indicated that they participated in some way in preparing some activities related to curriculum such as preparing exam

questions and items. For instance, one of the participants indicated that he was engaged for several years in preparing central and regional exams for students in grade 12.

The researchers managed to exert a few meaningful comments by browsing the teachers' feedbacks, ambitions or attitudes towards their roles in promoting their professional development as it is appeared in teacher self-evaluation inquiries. Bearing that in mind, the teacher's self-evaluation is considered as part of the evaluation instrument employed in classroom observation.

Amazingly, English teachers have more participation on developing the curriculum. That is partly because of the nature of the English subject, and also because of the encouragement that teachers receive from their evaluators (supervisors). One of the teachers commented that *"in this semester, I did my best to add some extra activities and teach them to my students besides the syllabus. I also attended the orientation program for new teachers. Next semester, I plan to start the English club with other teachers and pay more focus on weak pupils"*. Another teacher expressed her involvement on teaching/learning process and portraits her role in promoting herself as well as enhancing her students' achievements. She described her job by saying, *"personally, I want to focus on the importance of games as a technique of teaching. In fact I want to put into consideration how "Games" can be part of warming up process of students and therefore, a crucial part of the lesson. In other words, some games can be used as a tool of preparing students psychologically and physically for the new lesson"* (Evidence obtained from school A).

The third teacher from the English department stated that he was going to conduct a presentation at the teacher's conference in his Educational Directorate. He mentioned that he would present a paper titled *"English through songs"*. A fourth teacher explained his struggles for professional growth by saying:*"I started to use different ways of teaching in my classes. I worked with other teachers to conduct some school activities like the English club. I do peer observation and plan to attend teachers' conference in the Directorate. I Also attended the orientation program for the new teachers"* (Evidence obtained from school C).

All in all, interviews with teachers revealed that the teacher evaluation process in Oman has little effect on urging teachers to participate on the curriculum development. This is despite the fact that research has shown that teachers who participate effectively in developing the curriculum content and pedagogy have more potentials to build up more cooperative teaching/learning atmosphere or environment. He or she can also develop a comprehensive understanding of his own classroom practices which leads ultimately to enhance student learning and achievement.

3 The effect of teacher evaluation on teacher's individual improvement

The majority of teachers interviewed in this study confirmed that their evaluators played efficient role in encouraging them the teacher external reading in order to improve knowledge and skills. The impact of teacher evaluation reflected to some extent on the teachers' enthusiasm towards promoting their own professional development. One teacher articulated eloquently his efforts in advancing his professional development saying:

> *During this semester, I tried to improve my different skills so I joined the website www.iEarn.org and I asked my students to also join and participate in the website, so I registered them in the website. In addition, I presented a workshop about using drawing in teaching. For the first time, I ran speaking competition between students in grade 9 in the morning assembly. Students were assessed by my colleagues in the school. Furthermore, I attended the annual conference at SQU:'Oman International ELT Conference'. In addition, I attended two workshops presented by my colleagues in the school. One was about assessment in exams, and the other was about assessing students speaking. Also, I participated in the open day in the school and my students presented a drama in English which was addressing the state of new teacher".*

135

These citations and others, articulated directly that some Omani teachers are excited regarding promoting their professional development as much as they enthusiastically get involved in evaluating their performance via self-evaluation. These findings suggests that teachers can set their own professional goals for development based on an evaluation results and in relation to the high-performance standards.

The researchers managed to exert a few meaningful comments by browsing the teachers' feedbacks, ambitions or attitudes towards their roles in promoting their professional development as it is appeared in teacher self-evaluation inquiries. Bearing that in mind, the teacher's self-evaluation is considered as part of the evaluation methods employed in classroom observation.

4) The effect of teacher evaluation on teacher's participation on the school improvement

A relatively acceptable number of teachers raised the merit of teacher evaluation policy in helping them participating in promoting the entire school performance. Many teachers are involved in school activities such as social activities, sport activities, cultural activities and managing the school canteen. The role of teacher evaluation in encouraging teachers to participate in school activities was indicated by many interviewees. One of them said: "*Despite the fact that I am a new teacher, immediately when I was appointed to work in this school, the principal assigned me to manage the Arabic club. My colleagues in the school informed me that if I refused this assignment, this may affect my performance report*".

Teachers who had reservations toward this point asserted that the principal and supervisor both deviate from evaluating the core work and performance of the teacher in favor of evaluating administrative matters such as school records and activities, which were, from their perspective, a "*waste of time, money, and effort*". They perceived those school, administrative activities as constituting a heavy burden on teachers, and as a result they failed to do the core teaching work. Hence, one of them appealed for a "*comprehensive review of these [administrative] activities*" in order to confine teachers to their core responsibilities and work.

Interviews indicated that teachers acknowledged the effect of teacher evaluation in urging them to participate in school activities positively. Most of them appreciated this role of teacher evaluation. However, some teachers made a negative link between teacher participation and engagement in school activities and the low level of teaching/learning attainment in their school. In this case, it can be inferred that those teachers did not perceive the positive effects of these activities in raising their competencies in teaching, or in promoting their students' learning. Consequently, they considered these activities as a heavy burden they were obliged to carry on their shoulders.

5) The effect of teacher evaluation on teacher's participation in training courses

According to the study's results, teacher evaluation, to some extent, was acknowledged to enable teachers to participate in training courses. That is what had been mentioned by several study participants interviewed. This participation took several forms such as paper presentation, school-based workshops arrangement and attending training courses.

Some teachers (26%) has some hesitation regarding the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher's participation in training courses. As a result of this perception, those teachers were not willing to attend the training sessions. That was partly "*because of the way that the workshops or seminars are organized, such as lack of trainer's ability or lack of time*". Another reason was that those teachers "*feel that attending training sessions does not make any difference in their professional lives, whether in terms of their performance level or in terms of career-life position*". Some teachers also complained that most of the training programs and courses were general in

nature and were not related to their desired topics and needs. Moreover, the topics of the training themes were pre-determined by the central level of the Educational Directorate. Consequently, teachers sometimes tended to conduct workshops by themselves in schools, but they deem that those workshops were not efficient because of their lack of experience in training.

Research Question 2:   The factors constraining or promoting teacher professional development
This section attempts to answer the second research question: "What are the factors that develop or constrain the impact of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development?" From the data collected, three sub-themes were generated in this regard. The interviewees' serious concerns came from some issues that impeded the teachers and evaluators from participating effectively in the evaluation process. These barriers according to the interviewees included:

1) Overreliance on Classroom Observation
Most of the teachers interviewed asserted that classroom observation was the only technique utilized in their schools. In one teacher's words:
"Our evaluation system rely merely on the classroom observation which makes the *evaluation defeated a large part of its credibility. I am wondering why we do not consider some tools such as portfolio, action research and student achievement. These are very powerful tools".*

Some schools have implemented peer coaching programs as a way to improve the quality of teaching, however, this implementation is limited and depends on the initiatives of the school principal. Many interviewees asserted that they wished for the evaluation system to recognize and adopt other resources and methods in the evaluation system besides the practice of classroom observation such as self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, students' achievement, parents' opinions and perceptions, portfolios, and action research. The diversity of these tools according to them would support, strengthen, and authenticate the judgment regarding teacher's performance, which in turn confer the evaluation process the needed trustworthiness.

2) The Confidentiality of the Summative Report
The majority of the interviewees were reluctant to keep the summative evaluation report secret. Those interviewees had a reservation concerning the fact that, how would a teacher know recognize his strengths and weaknesses if he did not know his own level of performance? Teachers also acknowledged that the openness of the summative evaluation could cause some social problems and embarrassment since the society is still not open to the culture of transparency. Yet, the main purpose of the teacher evaluation is to improve the performance of the respective teacher and this cannot be achieved unless that the teacher is informed about his or her performance level. The majority of the interviewees stressed that the teacher must know the results of his evaluation report in order to improve his performance accordingly, and this would certainly motivate him or her to strive for improvement. One teacher said: "*In my opinion, the teachers' consideration of the low importance of the evaluation process is because teachers cannot openly know their performance ratings".*
In addition, it is vital to note that the feedback provided by the evaluator via the performance reports allows high-performing teachers to be proud about their outstanding performance which will further encourage them to be more creative in their teaching. Thus, according to most interviewees' opinions, teachers should be informed about their evaluation results .
Bearing that in mind, the Omani educational system has undergone a tremendous change and reform in order to cope with the regional and international contexts. The perceptions of teachers

also changed dramatically. Teachers are no longer considered as conveyors of knowledge but as leaders and directors for students to discover knowledge and develop their own skills. It was shown by the study findings that most interviewees demonstrated their unenthusiastic attitudes towards the implementation of teacher evaluation policy in the Sultanate. Many interviewees called for urgent amendment of the evaluation process and practices to properly tackle these confronting barriers.

3) The Evaluation Standards

Pertaining to the evaluation standards, more than half of the interviewees revealed that some standards are broad, general and unclear. One female teacher said: *"some [evaluation] criteria are very broad [and therefore, not clear]".* Commenting on some specific criteria, a senior teacher said: *"There is a substantial debate among teachers and evaluators regarding criteria statements: What do they mean? What are their indicators? How could they be assessed? None of us has a precise answer to those questions"*. This vagueness makes a considerable confusion among both teachers and evaluators alike. Some interviewees also asserted that, there were generalities in some standards especially those standard addressing the areas of "professional development" and "teaching techniques". Moreover, some teachers indicated that they were not familiar about some of these standards and their indicators. Some interviewees suggested that the evaluation standards were too many and difficult to implement during a single classroom lesson, thus impossible to be assessed in one classroom observation visit. Many interviewees stressed that they wished that the evaluation standards should be made more specific, simple, and clear to "*avoid vague generalities*", since their aim is to judge and improve the performance of the teacher and that is a "*critical issue in the teaching/learning process*".

In fact, policy makers ought to endow regular reviews of evaluation standards and criteria involving input from both parties interested with, and affected by, the evaluation process such as principals, supervisors, senior teachers and teachers, in order to create shared understanding of those standards and criteria. It should be assumed that when the entire education system change, as it happened in the Omani educational system, it is essential that the teacher evaluation standards are updated to reflect those reforms.

Discussion

Teachers in Oman are being asked to focus on high level skills, inspire critical thinking, and encourage students to participate effectively in school activities (Ministry of Education, 2008). Achieving these promising initiatives require (a) promoting institutional activities required to enhance lifelong teacher learning (b) evaluating the current teacher evaluation policy to determine its compatibility with new visions of teacher learning and (c) appreciating teachers' perceptions on their own professional development and its significance on addressing their teaching difficulties (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Teacher evaluation, if executed as intended, should assist teachers to promote their performance and enhance their professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Goldhaber and Anthony, 2007; Natriello, 1990; Stronge, 2006). In Oman, although the teacher evaluation process serves as a tool to gauge teachers' performance, it is alos anticipated that it improves teaching practice and performance via offering constructive feedback to the teachers. Evaluators should seek to provide teachers with the opportunity to pursue professional development that is aligned with teaching process.

The reality, however, is that teacher evaluation in Oman has little impact on teacher professional development. Interviewees recognized some improvement in their performance in some aspects of their profession , as a result of their evaluation process, but this improvement did not worth the time, money, and effort exerted. Only two aspects of teacher evaluation were proven

to have mid-level influence on teacher performance ; i.e., Teacher evaluation helps teacher to understand subject knowledge and pedagogy and the role of the evaluator in encouraging the teacher to participate and engage in the school activities. From the participants' perspectives, evaluators must recognize the individual characteristics and needs of each teacher in order to precisely and authentically evaluate his/her performance. This goal can be reached by implementing multiple means of data collection resources in the evaluation process.

Conclusion

A study of the consequences and impact of teacher evaluation on teacher professional development is vital to knowing how well the evaluation system is working. In Oman, the Ministry of Education has responded to the external and internal demands for advancement of teaching quality by focusing on teacher evaluation as a means to promote overall teaching and learning performance and to develop each school as the essential unit of accountability.

The study's interviews revealed a spectrum array of perceptions on the current state and implementation of teacher evaluation in the schools within the Sultanate of Oman. A major finding of the study was that positive impact of teacher evaluation on teacher performance was less recognized. The level of satisfaction and motivation regarding the teacher evaluation system was low according to many teachers and evaluators. Their dissatisfaction was grounded by several reasons such as: confidentiality, vagueness of standards and criteria, and the overreliance on classroom observation. Most of the teachers interviewed believed that the existence of the poor-performing teachers in schools was mainly caused by the lack of efficient implementation of the evaluation process.

On the whole, this study's review of the Omani situation regarding teacher evaluation system has made it clear that implementation is a complex process involving many variables. Particular organizational, technical and environmental factors may need to be considered before successful execution of this system can take place. A primary challenge is to understand the complex range of factors involved in a successful teacher evaluation system.

REFERENCES

Allemann, J. (2006). *Links between teacher evaluation/supervision and student achievement: A case study of a successful urban elementary school.* Unpublished Ed. D., University of Southern California, United States -- California

Brennen, A. (2007). Clinical supervision and case study. Retrieved 16/05/2008, from Educational Administration and Supervision: http://www.soencouragement.org/clinical-supervisoin-case-study.htm

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Danielson, C., & McGreal, T. (2000). *Teacher evaluation to enhance professional practice.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1990). Teacher evaluation in transition: emerging roles and evolving methods. In J. Millman & L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *The New Handbook of Teacher Evaluation: Assessing Elementary and Secondary School Teachers* (pp. 17-32). Newbury Park, CA: Sage publication.

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(8), 597-604.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wise, A., & Klein, S. (1999). *A license to teach: Raising standards for teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Duke, D. (1995). The move to reform teacher evaluation. In D. Duke (Ed.), *Teacher evaluation policy: From accountability to professional development* (pp.1-12). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Elmore, R. (2002), *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional development in education.* Washington D.C. Albert Shanker Institute.

Ganser, T. (2000). An ambitious vision of professional development for teachers. *NASSP Bulletin, 84*(618), 6-12.

Glatthorn, A. (1995). Teacher Development. In Anderson, L. (Ed.) *International encyclopaedia of teaching and teacher education* (pp. 41-46). Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd. *leadership*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Glickman, C. (1990). *Supervision of instruction: a developmental approach* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Glickman, C., Gordon, S., & Ross-Gordon, J. (2007). *SuperVision and instructional leadership: a developmental approach* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.

Goldhaber, D., & Anthony, E. (2007). Can teacher quality be effectively assessed? National Board Certification as a signal of effective teaching. *The Review of Economics and Statistics, 89*(1), 134-150.

Goldhammer, R., Anderson, R., & Krajewski, R. (1993). *Clinical supervision: special methods for the supervision of teachers* (3rd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Heble, G. (2006). *A model of expert instructional supervision: a descriptive cross case study.* Unpublished Ed. D., Wilmington College (Delaware), United States -- Delaware.

Malakolunthu, S. (2007). *Teacher learning in Malaysia: problems and possibilities of reform*. Kula Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd Edn.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ministry of Education. (2003). *Philosophy and Objectives of Education*. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Ministry of Education. (2006). *From access to success: Education for all (EFA) in the Sultanate of Oman 1970-2005: A contribution to the celebration of UNESCO's 60 year anniversary* (Unpublished). Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Ministry of Education. (2009). *School performance development guide*. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman (in Arabic).

Ministry of National Economy. (2003). *Statistical yearbook of Oman*. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Murray, B. (1997). Observing teacher presentation of instruction. In G. Kosmoski (Ed.), *Supervision* (pp. 95-135). Mequon, Wisc: Stylex.

Natriello, G. (1990). Intended and unintended consequences: purposes and effects of teacher evaluation. In J. Millman& L. Darling-Hammond, (Eds.), *The New Handbook of Teacher Evaluation: Assessing Elementary and Secondary School Teachers* (pp.35-45). Newbury Park, CA: Sage publication.

Sergiovanni, T., & Starratt, R. (2007). *Supervision: a redefinition* (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Sousa, D. (2003). *The leadership brain: how to lead today's schools more effectively*. Thousand Oak, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Sparks, D., & Loucks-Horsley, S. (1989). Five models of staff development for teachers. *Journal of Staff Development, 10*(4), 40-57.

Stronge, J. (2006). Teacher evaluation and school improvement: Improving the educational landscape. In J. Stronge (Ed.), *Evaluating teaching: A guide to current thinking and best practice* (pp. 1-23). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). Teacher professional development: an international review of the literature. Retrieved February 21, 2010, from: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001330/133010e.pdf.

Zepeda, S. (2007). *The principal as instructional leader: A handbook for supervisors*: Eye on Education.