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Zina R. Jones Ms

University of New Orleans, zrjones@uno.edu

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Teachers' Perceptions of How the Teacher Evaluation Process Impacts Classroom Instruction in
Three High Poverty School Districts

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration

by

Zina Rochelle Jones

B.A. Southern University at New Orleans, 1998
M.A. Xavier University of Louisiana, 2004

December 2019

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Abstract

Improving the educational system for students and teachers is of the utmost importance. Educational leaders have realized that the best way to improve student success is by improving teachers' instructional practices and measuring their effectiveness (Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008). Because of this awareness, educators have realized the importance of connecting student achievement with instructional practices and instructional practices with teacher effectiveness. Evaluation tools are used to measure how effective teachers are in their classrooms. Evaluations are crucial in assisting our teachers in their professional growth. When evaluations are utilized as supportive tools, they help teachers and administrators identify strengths and weakness, but more importantly they prescribe strategies to assist teachers in improvement.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the evaluation systems and understand if and how they influence classroom instructional practices. The participants consisted of twelve teachers in the state of Louisiana. Data was extracted through semi-structured interviews and coded for common themes. Through these themes, the researcher formed a narrative format to voice the participants' experiences. The study concludes that teacher evaluation has minimal influence on instructional practice. Data suggested issues with the design of evaluation systems, the implementation of such systems, and the basic challenge of using a single system to evaluate all teachers regardless of personal or workplace characteristics.

Keywords: teacher evaluations, instructional practices, teacher effectiveness, phenomenological study, qualitative study

Chapter One

Introduction

As the demand for teacher quality has escalated into a national concern, the public has exercised its rights to demand forceful and effective leadership on issues of school quality and teacher effectiveness (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Be'teille, 2012; Stand Organization, 2010). This emphasis on school improvement has become acutely focused on measuring teacher effectiveness and improving teachers' instructional practices (Mathers et al., 2008). Therefore, the goal of teacher evaluation systems has evolved into ensuring that evaluations provide evidence to support teachers' daily instructional practices and guidance to promote greater teacher effectiveness.

Teacher effectiveness is one of the most important instructional practices that impact the growth and achievement levels of students (Danielson, 2011; Heck, 2009; Toch, 2008; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). When teachers are supported and performing at their greatest level, students are exposed to an environment that is conducive for their academic success. This environment allows students to be fully engaged and motivated to perform (Hill & Epps, 2010). Therefore, identifying characteristics of effective teachers is critical to improving the overall educational process. Because students spend most of their academic careers under the guidance of classroom teachers, teacher effectiveness has a lasting effect on how well students perform throughout their educational experiences. Students who have highly effective teachers, tend to outperform students who have ineffective teachers (Heck, 2009; Kane & Cantrell, 2012). Highly effective teachers are one of the consistent factors in student and school improvement (Marzano, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial that key elements are identified and labeled as effective teaching strategies so that these practices can be reproduced in all classrooms.

Teacher performance has been rated as the number one in-school factor that contributes the most to student achievement (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Teacher performance encompasses all the instructional strategies used in daily classroom instruction. It is important that teacher performances are consistently monitored and observed because the impact on student achievement is so great. The evaluation process is a viable tool that measures teacher performance while assisting in making instructional decisions that will affect teacher performance and student achievement (Goodwin & Babo, 2014). Due to growing concerns about student achievement, teacher and student achievement are now linked to classroom success (Rosenblatt, 2017; Salmi, 2015). The evaluation process has become a tool that links teacher accountability to student academic success. Students performance on standardized tests has become an important component of measuring teacher effectiveness (Bolyard, 2015). By ensuring teachers are delivering effective instructions in their classroom, it is expected that student achievement will increase. Utilizing evaluations tools will ensure that best practices can be developed and utilized to change practices within classrooms. Thus, this will lead to competent effective teachers.

Teacher evaluations came to the forefront of education under the No Child Left Behind Act as one of its four pillars to improve teacher quality through improved classroom practices (No Child Left behind Act, 2001). As a result, policymakers have identified teacher evaluations as a key component in improving and monitoring teacher performance and student achievement (Heck, 2009; Heneman & Milanowski, 2003, Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). In 2009, the Race to the Top (RTTT) Grant was established to reward modern evaluation techniques that focused on building teacher instructional practices that aligned with student performances. To obtain funds from the RTTT grant, states had to develop criteria that consisted of multiple indicators to

measure effectiveness (Brown, 2015). This led many states to individualize their evaluation practices and add rigor to their teacher evaluation policies (Hull, 2013). This push for greater accountability resulted in more detailed formative and summative evaluation processes that focused on specific teacher outcomes and behaviors (Brown, 2015). As a result, policy makers have begun reforming and restructuring how teacher performance is determined and measured. Policymakers are now focusing on teacher evaluations due to the understanding of the connection between teacher performance and instructional practices. Utilizing effective instructional practices will ultimately lead to proficient teacher performances (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

There is, also, a public accountability function embedded in most modern teacher evaluation systems. Forty-three states' Departments of Education have mandated statewide evaluation policies (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015), which is intended as a quality control practice for the public expenditures made toward K-12 education. States and local districts have been severely impacted by the demands of the new accountability system imparted by the federal government on educational policies (Bolyard, 2015; Rosenblatt, 2017). In the 2011-2012 school year, teacher effectiveness along with student assessments were incorporated in the rating of teachers' and administrators' job performance (Biesta, 2015). This framework was favorably received by policymakers and reflected the opinions and biases of the public (Bolyard, 2015; Marzano, 2012).

Despite many variations and goals of evaluation tools, many educational leaders are not satisfied that they are assisting in improving teacher performances. Consequently, there is a call for transformation in the evaluation process. This transformation has caused educators to focus on defining best practices that leads to increase development in teachers and students. Teacher

evaluations are utilized to assess teacher performances in their classrooms. This assessment should correlate with how well students perform on state mandated tests. Teachers and their instructional practices are crucial to the academic achievement for students. Teacher evaluations can provide educators and administrators with valuable and detailed information of teachers' performances that focus on specific strengths and weaknesses to encourage growth and improvement for teachers (Bolyard, 2015; Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2002; Mathers et. al, 2008). Through the evaluation process, teachers are ideally provided with strategies and resources to improve and refine their instructional practices. However, there is evidence that suggests there are currently many evaluations that are focused on teacher accountability verses the improvement of instructional practices (Aydin & Aslan 2016; Cherasaro, Yanoski, & Swackhamer, 2015; Jacobs, 2012). Teacher evaluation systems work best when they are used to enhance classroom instruction, provide professional growth, and increase student achievement (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Swan, Shen & Hiltz, 2006). Successful teacher evaluation systems establish a clear understanding and purpose, which are reflected in the procedures and processes of the system (Kauble & Wise, 2015; Toch, 2008). If teachers are aware of the goals of the evaluation system and believe the goals are intended to improve their skills, they are more willing to believe in the process and allow it to guide and improve teacher performance ((Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2011).

Teacher evaluations are sometimes based on a combination of valued added scores (VAM) and in-class observations. Marzano (2012) suggests that valued added scores do not adequately represent the effectiveness of a teacher. It does not account for classroom instruction nor does it measure if the curriculum is sufficient for all students. Additionally, classroom observations can be influenced by student achievement levels (Namaghi, 2010; Papay, 2012;

Schochet & Chiang, 2010). Classrooms that encompass high performing students usually earn higher ratings because the students are more equipped to meet the demands of the evaluation tools (Warring, 2015). There is little evidence suggesting that evaluation programs adjust their scores for this bias (Rogers & Weems, 2010, Toch, 2008). Even if the measurement problems could be addressed, there is remaining uncertainty about the connection between evaluation and corresponding changes in classroom instruction (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). To determine whether teacher practices have changed because of the evaluation process, teacher practices must be clearly defined and examined before and after evaluations. This study will focus on two thoughts. The first focus is the actual instructional practices teachers use in their classroom. The second focus is how teachers decide what instructional practices to use in their classroom. These two areas are interconnected and are necessary to measure the effect the evaluation process plays on teachers' decision-making processes.

Problem Statement

Although teacher evaluations are a political priority, very little effort is put into the effective training of evaluators and teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Riordan, Lacireno-Paquet, Shakman, & Bocala, 2016). There is very little research that identifies the effect evaluations have on teachers or their classroom instruction. (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Goodwin & Webb, 2014; Namaghi, 2010). Marzano (2012) suggests that evaluation programs are used as measurement tools and not developmental tools for teachers. Hull (2013) describes evaluation programs as bureaucratic exercises that focus on procedures and efficiency but does not recognize excellence or mediocrity in teaching. Very little time and support are put into connecting the evaluation process to instructional practices (Goodwin & Webb, 2014; Nyabero, 2016). As a result of new mandates placed on educational institutions to improve student

achievement and teacher performance, it is necessary to assess whether teachers' daily instructional practices are influenced by their evaluation performances and results.

Educators have re-accessed their evaluation tools to ensure their rubrics are fairly and consistently assessing teacher practices. Previous models had little impact on classroom instruction and teacher effectiveness. Evaluation models now utilize multiple indicators that focus directly on classroom engagement: planning and preparation, classroom environment, questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and assessments in instruction (Desimone et al., 2002; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). The intentions of these indicators are to improve teacher performances and, thereby, improve student achievement (Swan, Shen, & Hiltz, 2006; Taylor & Taylor, 2012). Additionally, these indicators are also used to identify high performing teachers.

Most evaluation systems require teachers to be evaluated twice a year, which does not give an accurate description of effective teaching (Bolyard, 2015). Feedback is often poor and offers little to no instructional support for teacher improvement (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Snyder & Bristol, 2015). Moreover, the feedback process is often downplayed or ignored leaving teachers to interpret and understand their scores on their own with little to no assistance on how to improve their instructional practices. According to Darling-Hammond (2004), changes in instruction will materialize with direct and specific actions that address teacher behaviors.

All teachers are evaluated using the same rubric, but they are not supplied with the same resources to successfully navigate the teacher evaluation process (Brown, 2015). School districts and schools are responsible for providing resources needed for instruction. Some teachers have not acquired the necessary skills needed to effectively implement the components of the teacher evaluation rubric. As mentioned earlier, some evaluation systems do not account for student

deficiencies (Bolyard, 2015). Teachers believe that high performing students assist with earning more positive evaluation ratings because they can engage in meaningful class discussions and perform higher order thinking tasks (Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Warring, 2015). As a result, teachers believe the evaluation programs are not fair for all teachers (Bolyard, 2015). Most evaluation programs are created by policy holders, and teachers have minimal input in the development of the evaluation rubric (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The problem to be examined is whether or not teacher evaluation programs have an impact on instructional practices in the classroom.

Every teacher in the public-school system will be affected by the new requirements of the evaluation process (Carter, Stephenson, & Hopper, 2015; Varlas, 2012). The evaluation process has created fear and stress among teachers and administrators in relation to the effect the findings will have on teachers and administrators. There is very little information regarding the perception of teachers on how the evaluation process and results affect their daily instructional practices.

Purpose of the Study

Improving teacher performances have been identified as one of the most powerful school-based interventions for improving school performance (Kane & Cantrell, 2012; Papay, 2012; Schools Matter, 2012; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Teacher evaluations are one of the measurement tools used to determine how well teachers perform in their classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to identify teachers' perceptions about their mandated evaluation systems based on a pre-determined set of instructional domains. Furthermore, this study will seek to identify and understand characteristics within the evaluation

system that are viewed as valuable in terms of helping teachers improve their instructional practices.

Papay (2012) identified two main evaluation purposes: to examine how evaluations might be utilized to measure teacher effectiveness and to determine methods for using evaluations to improve teacher practices. By examining the perspective of teachers concerning the impact the evaluation process has on classroom instruction this research will assist evaluators and policymakers in providing teachers with the support needed to improve classroom instruction while simultaneously holding them accountable for student achievement. The teachers' perceptions of the evaluation systems and the effects on classroom practices as viewed by administrators and teachers have the potential to improve classroom practices. Furthermore, teacher evaluation systems can inform change in teaching practices which could lead to a more thorough understanding of how an existing system might be merged or modernized to meet the current needs of teachers. Through this phenomenological study, the researcher seeks to examine how the evaluation process has assisted teachers in making instructional decisions to improve their practices. Furthermore, this study will also determine the motivations and perceptions of teachers who utilize the evaluation process as a change agent.

Research Questions

Through this phenomenological study, the researcher will explore the perceptions of teachers on how and if the evaluation process influences their daily instructional practices. This research is important because its findings will assist teachers and educational leaders in understanding the results of their evaluation process, provide them with guidance and resources for instructional improvement, and assist administrators in implementing the evaluation process effectively. The research questions that will be addressed through this study are:

1. How do teachers' perceptions of the components, processes, and results of the evaluation system influence and inform their instructional practices?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of how accurately the evaluation system reflects and captures their professional performance and capabilities?

Limitations of the Study

This study utilized a restricted population. Three school districts in the state of Louisiana were chosen to be a part of the study. Therefore, these findings may be specific to the participants in these school district rather than representative of the larger population. This study addressed the perspectives of teachers currently being evaluated under the Clear, Overall Measure of Performance to Analyze and Support Success (COMPASS) and Teacher Assistance Program (TAP) evaluation models.

The sample size of the research could also be considered a limitation as it represents a small percentage of the population of teachers and administrators from three school districts in Louisiana. Administrators and teachers who were selected for this study are not necessarily a representative sample of the entire district. Participants were chosen because of their availability and interest in the study. Because of the limited population, the findings may possibly be restricted to the districts in the study.

In addition, interviews were chosen as the main avenue for collecting data. Since the data was retrieved through interviews, the validity of the data collected from the participants depend on their truthfulness about their experiences. In qualitative research, the researcher is primarily responsible for collecting and analyzing the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). As a human being, this researcher brought her own experiences and perceptions of this research topic.

Her personal biases and experiences can have an effect on the way the data is interpreted. Finally, as an assistant principal, one of this researcher's major responsibilities is conducting teacher evaluations. While this researcher does not directly supervise all the participants in this research project, she is a colleague and friend to some of the administrators who directly supervise the participants. This fact could influence the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Delimitation of the Study

Delimitations narrow the focus of study and inform the reader of the parameters and boundaries that were deliberately considered by the researcher (Calabrese, 2009). The study is limited to teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system in three school districts across southern Louisiana. The annual ratings of teacher evaluations systems were a determining factor for participation. All teacher participants in the study scored proficient or higher. The researcher chose teachers scoring in this achievement range to ensure any biases that would be present would not be related to those who are frustrated because their scores were lower than proficient. Three school districts were chosen after careful consideration and analysis of commonalities such as teachers' achievement ranges, socio-economic status of the students, and district performance scores.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the purpose and significance of this study regarding teachers' perceptions of the impact of teacher evaluation systems on classroom practices were briefly discussed. Even though current research clearly identifies the classroom teacher as the most impactful school-based influence on student achievement, there has been little research about how teacher evaluations support the growth of effective instructional practices (Stronge, Ward, Tucker, &

Hindman, 2007). It is important the policymakers, evaluators, and teachers understand what components of the evaluation system require more focus and attention to promote a professional environment where teachers and administrators are working collaboratively to develop effective strategies that improve classroom experiences for teachers and students (Danielson, 2011).

Definitions of Terms

Understanding the complexities of teacher evaluation systems is a challenging task. The jargon and terminology used in the educational arena can be confusing. The following definitions provide explanations for specific educational terms included in this study.

Teacher evaluation

Teacher evaluations are tools that are utilized to assess and rate the effectiveness of classroom teachers. These tools consist of many assessments that are combined for a teacher's final rating. These assessments can include classroom observations, Value-Added Measures scores (VAM), and Student Learning Targets (SLT's). (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

Effective teachers

Teachers who are rated as highly effective provide students with positive learning experiences. They used research-based strategies that ensures students are learning and performing at their maximum capabilities (Goodwin & Webb, 2014).

Student Learning Targets

Student learning targets are developed by local school districts. They are goals that are set by teachers. They must be considered rigorous and attainable, and are aligned to curriculum

standards, and focused on measuring teachers' impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Observations

Classroom observations are detailed recordings of the classroom experiences recorded by an observer. The observation consists of the teacher and student actions. Observations can be classified as formal or informal. A formal observation is when the teacher and observer set a specific time and date and usually consist of a pre and post conference. The informal observation is at the discretion of the observer and only consist of a post observation (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies are practices that teachers utilize to deliver instruction to students. These strategies are engaging and assist teachers in facilitating the learning process. Through these strategies students become independent learners and critical thinkers. They equip teachers with techniques and methods that make learning interactive (Desimone et al., 2012).

Accountability

Accountability is the idea of holding educators responsible for student achievement or lack of achievement (Bolyard, 2015).

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Because of the many demands placed on students to perform on standardized tests, the emphasis of evaluation systems has been redirected to focus on teacher effectiveness. Most evaluation systems now concentrate on the performance of teachers and students whereas in the past, they focused exclusively on teacher behaviors. Teachers were rated on specific actions that occurred during the evaluation; how the actions affected student growth was not accounted for. Teachers are expected to demonstrate their abilities by using research-based strategies that improve classroom instruction, while students are expected to show academic growth in the classroom as well as on standardized tests (Liu, 2010). Educators now acknowledge that there is a link between teachers' instructional practices and student achievement (Aydin & Aslan, 2016; Carter, Stephenson, & Hopper, 2015; Danielson, 2011; Goodwin & Babo, 2014; Hu, 2015). With the understanding of this connection, it has become even more significant that teacher performances are effectively and accurately measured within the parameters of the evaluation systems. Research is beginning to identify essential components that define a well-designed evaluation system which provides teachers and evaluators with tools and resources to successfully navigate the process.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which teachers and administrators perceive that evaluation systems impact classroom instructional practices. This literature review provides an exploration into teacher evaluations and instructional practices. The first part of this literature review expounds on teacher evaluation in terms of history, the use of evaluations, federal push to reform evaluations, and the reliability and validity of evaluations. Since a major part of the evaluation process is to evaluate the success of strategies teachers are using in their

classroom, the second part of this literature review examines effective instructional strategies, the components of instructional strategies, and how instructional strategies are chosen for implementation in classrooms.

Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluations are considered an influential method for improving teachers and schools (Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2002; Doherty & Jacobs, 2015; Toch, 2008). If evaluations are used correctly, they can be a driving force in refining classroom practices and school improvement. Teachers associate several issues with the evaluation process, which includes, but is not limited to, lack of agreement on what constitutes good teaching, excessive emphasis placed on accountability rather than improved performance, limited feedback from evaluators, and the lack of support and connection to improving instruction (Feeney, 2007; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Walker & Slear, 2011). The evaluation process differs among states and school districts; however, teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process are consistent. They believe more emphasis is placed on the process rather than what is done with the results once the evaluation is completed (Danielson, 2011; Nyabero, 2016). This suggests teachers are not opposed to evaluations; they are opposed to the way evaluations are used (Danielson, 2011). Teachers believe that an effective evaluation system should stimulate educators to be self-reflectors which would lead them to setting goals to improve their own performances.

History of Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluation systems are tools that seek to hold teachers accountable for their performance and, more recently, their students' academic achievement (Bolyard, 2015; Marshall, 2005; Schochet & Chiang, 2010). Teacher evaluations have always been a major component in rating how well teachers perform in their classroom. During the early use of teacher evaluations,

little to no formal discussion focused on specific instructional skills. Often, in the past, those districts and school personnel evaluating teachers were not educators (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). Evaluations were used primarily for employment decisions and were only comprised of observations that rated teachers as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Schochet & Chiang, 2010; Toch, 2008). Most of the focus was on teachers' moral and ethical disposition. If they reported to work consistently, were professionally dressed, and were model citizens, they were rated as satisfactory (Varlas, 2012). There was very little emphasis placed on professional and instructional improvement or student academic process. The former teacher evaluation process did little to address whether teachers were effective (Danielson, 2011). This process failed to measure the quality of instruction; therefore, it was not a good indicator to make meaningful decisions that affected students or teachers.

In the 1940's and 1950's, evaluators looked at teacher attributes that pertain to their morals and ethical values, appearance, and ability to be compassionate (Danielson, 2007; Hindman, Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2007). Though these attributes do exemplify some importance, data from this time period is limited, other than the correlation of data which linked teacher enthusiasm to effective teaching and student learning (Danielson, 2007). In the aftermath of the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union in 1958, research indicates that in the 1960's and 1970's teacher evaluation systems emphasized improving the basic skills of students in mathematics and science instruction (Colby et al., 2002) Here we see, not for the last time, external political events impacting teacher evaluation within schools. During this time, a clinical supervision model, like the one designed by Harvard School of Education faculty in 1960, was developed to enhance classroom instruction (Colby et al., 2002). This model focused

on teachers and supervisors working together to set goals and determine student progress (Stiggins & Duke, 1988).

With this collaborative aspect and the focus on student achievement, teacher evaluations began to take on a new look and meaning. Instead of focusing on superficial qualities, evaluations began to focus on teachers' professional actions rather than the personal traits teachers are expected to possess (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995). During the 1970's and 1980's, teacher evaluation practitioners began focusing on teacher evaluation as a prescriptive teaching practice (Colby et al., 2002; Hull, 2013; Papay, 2012). Evaluators were expected to diagnose teacher practices and develop strategies to assist with classroom practices. This system was designed to improve and place emphasis on teachers' decision-making processes and enhance student learning.

The actual process of evaluating teachers has remained similar over the past sixty years; however, the philosophy of teacher effectiveness has undergone a massive change (Riordan, Paquet, Shakmer & Bocala, 2016; Rogers & Weems, 2010). These evaluation tools consist of classroom observations that assess teacher behaviors. They also focused on personal traits of teachers through the lens of an ethical perspective. Then there was a shift to observable teacher and student behavior. This change reflected a greater reliance on measurable objectives that focused on the learning process (Daley & Kim, 2010). Slough (2010) reported that shifts in evaluations were based upon the need to evaluate effective teaching behaviors in the classroom. Teacher evaluations began focusing on standards-based performance, which led to the expansion of the evaluation process (Slough, 2010). This expansion was prompted by mandates from the states and federal government for the use of improving classroom instruction (Rogers & Weems, 2010).

Use of Teacher Evaluations

Warring (2015) states that effective teacher evaluations are multi-faceted. They are comprised of systems that are fair, consistent, composed of systematic observations procedures, research-based, and are inclusive of teacher interviews, artifacts, assignments, and samples of student work (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birmen, 2002). The premise behind this method is to ensure a fair and equitable way to monitor and assess teacher performance and student growth. Namaghi (2010) suggests that these key elements should be included in teacher evaluations; broad stakeholder involvement throughout the process; the use of multiple measures, including data on student achievement and classroom practices; clear policies on how the information will be used; and the necessary resources and support to help teachers achieve desired outcomes. By using an evaluation process that encompasses multiple facets, the evaluator can fairly assess the effectiveness of classroom practices and make appropriate judgments and decisions to assist teachers in their growth as educators (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Thus, allowing the relationship between evaluations and instructional practices to be coherent for teachers. This coherency would allow evaluations to have a deeper meaning for all education professionals. Teachers and evaluators would be able to identify strategies that are more likely to increase student achievement. Thus, the evaluation process becomes a tool for improvement.

Federal Push to Reform Teacher Evaluations

During the mid-1900's, teacher evaluations began focusing on individual teacher's performance and needs. As a result, the federal government outlined the importance of assessing the quality of teaching and learning in the nation's public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities (Goodwin & Webb, 2014). The 1983 federal government document, titled "A Nation at Risk," also defined these guidelines. It focused on educational reform in schools in two

main areas: length of the school year and more rigorous academic course work (Danielson, 2011). The next phase began in the late 1990's and included high stakes assessment and the use of academic standards on which students were to be assessed. Lastly, the publication of *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) focused on teacher quality thereby pushing teacher evaluations to the top of America's agenda.

In 2000, President Clinton began focusing on low-performing schools by directing the U. S. Department of Education to provide state agencies with support to improve school achievement (U.S. DOE, 2001). Measures of accountability were further encouraged by President George W. Bush with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) by providing economic incentives for schools to increase performance on state standardized tests with the goal of increasing quality education for all American children. To globally compete with other countries, President Barak Obama proposed reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, arguing "a collective education effort must be made to turn around our education system to compete on a global economic scale" (U. S. DOE, 2010). All three initiatives included mandates that focused on student achievement and teacher quality causing an urgency to overhaul teacher evaluations (U. S. DOE, 2010).

Policy makers expressed concerns about student performance on standardized tests. In response, federal programs such as Race to the Top and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) were passed to increase academic rigor and accountability for schools and teachers and provided incentives to states to redesign their teacher evaluation programs. NCLB prescribed several changes in educational accountability. One of the central tendencies of that federal legislation was to ensure teacher quality (Daley & Kim, 2004). The Act provided a direct

link between student test scores and teacher evaluations. States were encouraged to include state testing and Common Core Standards in the evaluation of teachers (NCLB, 2001). States also received additional funding to assist with professional developments, incentives, and rewards (NCLB, 2001). Teacher evaluations began examining the quality of teacher instruction thus leading to the reform of evaluations (NCLB, 2001). It was expected that as more teachers became highly qualified, classroom instruction would improve thus helping students to achieve at higher proficiency levels. (Bolyard, 2015; Synder & Bristol, 2015). The utilization of qualified teachers lead to teachers who were more prepared to provide quality instructions for students.

The Race to the Top Grant allowed states to receive money for innovative projects to improve education (United States Department of Education, 2009). Awards called for teacher evaluations to use some form of student achievement data in their evaluation systems (United States Department of Education, 2009). This motivated many states to improve their teacher evaluation systems and require higher standards of instruction from their teachers (Daley & Kim, 2004). Since the grant competition began, the number of states mandating the annual evaluation of teachers has increased from 15 to 23. Furthermore, 22 states have measures of student growth as a significant part of their teacher evaluation programs (Schachter, 2012).

If the reform efforts of the federal government were going to help improve the evaluation process for teachers, assessment measures had to improve, and all stakeholders would have to ensure collaborative communication, continuous improvement, and effective resources. Reform efforts have been made with the intentions of improving educational practices which will lead to greater student achievement (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2017). For school reform efforts to be successful, implementation and usage must be understood and supported by

all vested parties. This ideal has resulted in making the relationship between teachers and evaluators extremely important. Through this relationship, teachers understand that the evaluation process is a guide to improving instructional practices.

Reliability and Validity of Evaluations

The evaluation tool must clearly define the characteristics of effective teacher behaviors during classroom instruction. To connect instructional practices to effective teacher performance, the evaluation tool must assess the actual strategies being used in the classroom (Mathers et al., 2008; Namaghi, 2010). The components of the evaluation process must be clearly defined and include a detail outline describing specific actions, behaviors, and performances that should be exhibited throughout the learning process (Feeney, 2007). If student data is included as a component, an explanation of how the data will be derived and how it will impact the score should be clear to all vested parties. If the evaluation tool is not valid, evaluations cannot provide effective, formative feedback (Namaghi, 2010). Evaluators must be knowledgeable of what effective teaching looks and sounds like, understand the importance of the alignment of effective practices and student engagement, and understand that rigorous standards might look different from what has been experienced in the past (Varlas, 2012). With adequate data, evaluators can descriptively and statistically demonstrate the link between teacher performance and student outcomes that can be measured as highly effective teacher performance, ultimately leading to high student and teacher performance (Bolyard, 2015).

To effectively measure teachers' professional practices, the evaluation tool must be proven to be reliable and valid. An evaluation instrument is considered reliable if two or more evaluators use the same evaluation instrument and come to the same conclusion (Schachter, 2012). By observing in teams and providing evaluators with opportunities to practice using the

evaluation instrument, the instrument can become reliable. One way to increase reliability is to ensure that the evaluation instrument has clearly defined domains that require minimal interpretation (Mathers et al., 2008). By providing quality training for evaluators and teachers, data from the evaluations can be transformed into meaningful information which teachers can use to improve their classroom instruction.

Districts acknowledge that inter-rater reliability is a concern, but they also acknowledge that many supports are in place to assist with discrepancies among evaluators (Moje, 2008). Evaluators must provide detailed evidence to support their ratings, and teachers have the right to ask for an outside evaluator if they do not agree with the scores. Some evaluation systems also provide teachers with the opportunity to rate themselves. Through the post conference, teachers and evaluators discuss ratings and specific details from the lesson, thus, giving teachers the opportunity to understand their scores and their weaknesses (Papay, 2012).

Clear standards, highly qualified and well-trained evaluators, and an evidence-based focus can help remove subjective bias within evaluations (Papay, 2012). However, most evaluators are faced with conducting evaluations, supporting teachers, and maintaining the daily operations of school. With so many other responsibilities, evaluators often allow some parts of the evaluation process to go undone (Heneman & Milanowski, 2003; TNTP, 2013). If evaluation rubrics are too complex and multifaceted, the process of observing and giving constructive feedback is downplayed. Emphasis is placed on completing observations in a timely manner rather than supporting the classroom teacher. It becomes more important to get through the process and not necessarily make sure teachers are receiving the support needed to grow. This issue can also lead to inadequate communication between evaluators and teachers, which can cause frustration and lead to a stumbling block in the evaluation process (Varlas, 2012).

In addition to ensuring that evaluation tools are reliable, creators of teacher evaluation systems must ensure that evaluation tools are valid. The domains within the rubric should assess the teaching performance it was designed to measure. To determine the validity, the domains within the evaluation tools must assess the specific strategies that are being utilized in classroom instruction (Mathers et al., 2008). Through the components of the rubric, teachers' performance should translate into positive ratings. Positive ratings are equated to ratings that accurately measure the teacher performance giving them a realistic picture of how well they taught the lesson. Through this realistic view, teachers can make judgements that will positively impact their classroom instruction. Once there is a consensus that the tool appears to accurately assess what it was designed to assess, that relationship must be tested (Hull, 2013; Walter & Slear, 2011). When the evaluation tools have been successfully authenticated, then they can be used as meaningful and effective tools to assist teachers in developing applicable techniques to improve instructional practices.

Reliability of evaluations increase when a comprehensive approach to evaluator training includes calibration and recalibration of observation and scoring techniques to enhance inter-rater agreement, increased attention to interactive and professional conversations, and invitations and time for teachers to reflect on their practices, thus allowing them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses (Danielson, 2012; Kane & Cantrell, 2012, Milanowski, 2004; Taylor & Taylor, 2012). Danielson (2012) suggests evaluators should be provided with ample opportunities to practice and perfect their skills.

Instructional Practices

To add to the discussion of evaluations, this review of instructional practices is focused on developing an understanding of the importance of instructional practices. Several themes

were identified that commonly define highly effective instructional practices. These themes included high expectations for students, the use of higher order thinking skills, differentiating teaching strategies, and a safe respectful environment (Hindman, et al., 2007; Danielson, 2011; Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007). Through the combination of these practices, teachers develop instructional practices that lead to student academic success.

Components of Instructional Strategies

One consistent finding of academic research is that high expectations are the most reliable driver of high student achievement, even in students who do not have a history of successful achievement (Hindman et al., 2007). Students and teachers are held accountable for the learning process. Students are expected to master and complete rigorous tasks. Teachers are required to use their classroom to encourage students to think at higher levels rather than simply recall and memorize information. They present students with challenging questions and require a deeper understanding of the content (Hindman et al., 2007; Moje, 2008).

Complexity of instruction and higher order thinking skills (HOTS) are characteristics of effective instructional practices (Akdemir & Koszalka, 2008). Because higher order thinking skills are a cognitive process, students benefit from their development. These skills involve analysis, evaluation, and synthesis and require different teaching methods. Higher-order thinking involves complex judgmental skills such as critical thinking and problem solving (Hoong & Chick, 2008). When student develop and use their critical thinking skills they become productive individuals. They can apply skills they learned in the classroom to real life situations.

Higher-order thinking is extremely difficult to learn and teach but is significant to student growth because these skills can be used in real life situations (Hu, 2015; Jacobs, 2012).

Classroom teachers are saddled with many demands such as meeting curriculum standards and objectives, diverse student levels, subject content, and student achievement on high stake testing (Hoong & Chick, 2008). They are expected to deal with these demands simultaneously, thus making instructional practices complex. Through constant monitoring and prioritizing, great teachers become skilled at managing their classroom and choosing adequate strategies for their students.

Utilizing multiple instructional strategies allows students to learn in a manner that is conducive to their understanding while providing them with multiple outlets to display their knowledge (Moje, 2008). Because students enter the classroom with diverse needs and learning abilities, teachers must be equipped with many teaching strategies (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010). So that learning is engaging and fun, these strategies must be able to accommodate multiple students. Addressing student needs requires teachers to use strategies that differentiate by readiness, interest, and learning profile (Carter, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2015). The combination of these elements provides students and teachers with a more inclusive learning environment (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010). By exposing students to a variety of instructional strategies, they are more likely to understand complex standards and objectives which increases their achievement levels. Teacher performance and student achievement can also be increased by a positive classroom environment.

Just as it is important to provide students with differentiated instruction, it is equally important that teachers are provided with differentiated learning and evaluations (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015; Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010). Teachers enter the profession with various cultures and background, making their teaching style and abilities unique and distinctive. Evaluators should be able to present strategies utilizing various methods that will allow teachers to grasp

and internalize strategies to benefit their instructional needs as well as the needs of their students (Daley & Kin, 2010). These strategies must be challenging enough to reach high performing students and simple enough to allow low performing students to comprehend.

Classroom environment plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of instructional practices. Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) found that instructional practices that are student-centered are the most effective in classrooms. It produces an atmosphere where students feel safe and respected while giving them the courage to take educational risks (Goodwin & Babo, 2014). In this environment, students understand they are valued and their academic success is the foundation of the classroom. When this environment is established, students and teachers can focus on learning, and the trust that exists allows for deeper content exploration (Park, 2013). Thus, this makes the classroom environment a key element in determining how effective teachers are in their instructional practices.

Effective Instructional Strategies and How They Are Chosen

Carter, Stephenson, & Hopper (2015) define instructional practices as activities and strategies used to engage students in daily instruction. It is a compilation of flexible designs, plans, and resources combined to meet the needs of all learners by teachers (Goodwin & Babo, 2014). Carter et al. (2015) states that effective teachers consider several principles when determining what strategies to use in their classroom. These principles consist of student interest, student respect, appropriate assessment and feedback, clear expectations and objectives, and active engagement.

When students are presented with information that is interesting, they become motivated and enjoy learning (Hoong & Chick, 2008; Varlas, 2012). The information is transferred from

memorization to relevant, thus making sense in their world (Jacobs, 2012). Expressing compassion for student success and displaying humility and respect for students and their learning are key components in motivating students. Through this process, students began to feel confident in their ability to perform and answer questions consequently building their learning capacity. Effective strategies assess students using multiple assessments. These assessments appeal to all students learning styles. They allow students to demonstrate mastery of standards and objectives through application and problem-solving (Hoong & Chick, 2008). After students are assessed, they are given immediate and specific feedback. Teachers must give students a clear understanding of what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will be assessed after they have learned it.

Effective teachers realize that they must have high expectations for their students (Brown, 2015; Heck, 2009). They set expectations that are rigorous and attainable for their students. Throughout the lesson, they articulate what they want their students to learn and how they expect them to excel at meeting their academic and personal goals. These goals are addressed with students individually and plans are set to assist them in achieving them. All lessons should be actively engaging for all students. Students learn best when lessons are thought-provoking and exciting. These principles represent lessons that are well-rounded and designed to promote student success.

Due to accountability mandates, teachers are more apt to use strategies supported by the district and state. It has also been noted that teachers' instructional practices vary based on the concepts being taught and the availability of the curriculum and resources at their disposal (Goodwin & Babo, 2014; Park, 2013). Due to district and state mandates, teachers admit they make minor modifications to their instructional practices due to the fear of not complying

(Desimone et al., 2002; Swan, 2006). As a result, they experience a loss of autonomy because of the policy restraints and the lack of proper resources (Feeney, 2007). Therefore, teachers are less likely to rely on their intuition for best instructional strategies.

Conclusion

Most school districts utilize teacher evaluations as summative tools to determine employment status and make personnel decisions (Mathers et al., 2008). This usage suggests school districts evaluate teachers with an eye towards state mandates rather than using evaluation as a guide to improve instructional practices. Effective evaluation systems address both accountability and professional growth and utilize multiple data sources and evaluators (Mathers et al., 2008). Although most experts disagree on whether one system could accomplish both formative and summative goals simultaneously, there was consensus that any effective evaluation system gave thought to both accountability and professional growth (Bolyard, 2015).

Due to changes in state laws, federal mandates, and the effort to link student test scores to teacher evaluation, the accountability movement has created a significant focus on teacher evaluation (Rogers & Weems, 2010). Because of mandates issued by the federal and state governments, teacher evaluations are continuing to evolve. Most teacher evaluations now consist of observations and value-added measurements (Bolyard, 2015). The combination of these two factors make-up teachers' performance scores. These scores are used to determine how effective teachers are performing in their classrooms. There remains a continuing unaddressed question of the relationship between teacher evaluation and the growth of teacher practice. Teacher perceptions of this relationship will be the subject of examination in this qualitative study.

Conceptual Framework

Evaluations are assessment tools used to measure the performance of teachers and assist with providing evidence of instructional practices (Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2002; Heneman & Milanowski, 2003; Kane & Cantrell, 2012). Teacher evaluation systems identify and measure instructional practices, professional behaviors, and delivery of content knowledge when implemented with fidelity. (Mathers et al., 2008). Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, and Product evaluation model is "a comprehensive framework for conducting formative and summative evaluations of projects, personnel, products, organizations, and evaluation systems" (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 325). The model was created in the late 1960s and its primary function was to establish a greater accountability for educational programs. This model sought to address many of the imperfections of traditional evaluation approaches (Stufflebeam, 1971). The aim of the model is to assist with improving the state of educational programs and not to prove the program's worth (Alkin, 2004). In other words, the end result focused on identifying specific strategies to assure the continuation of the program.

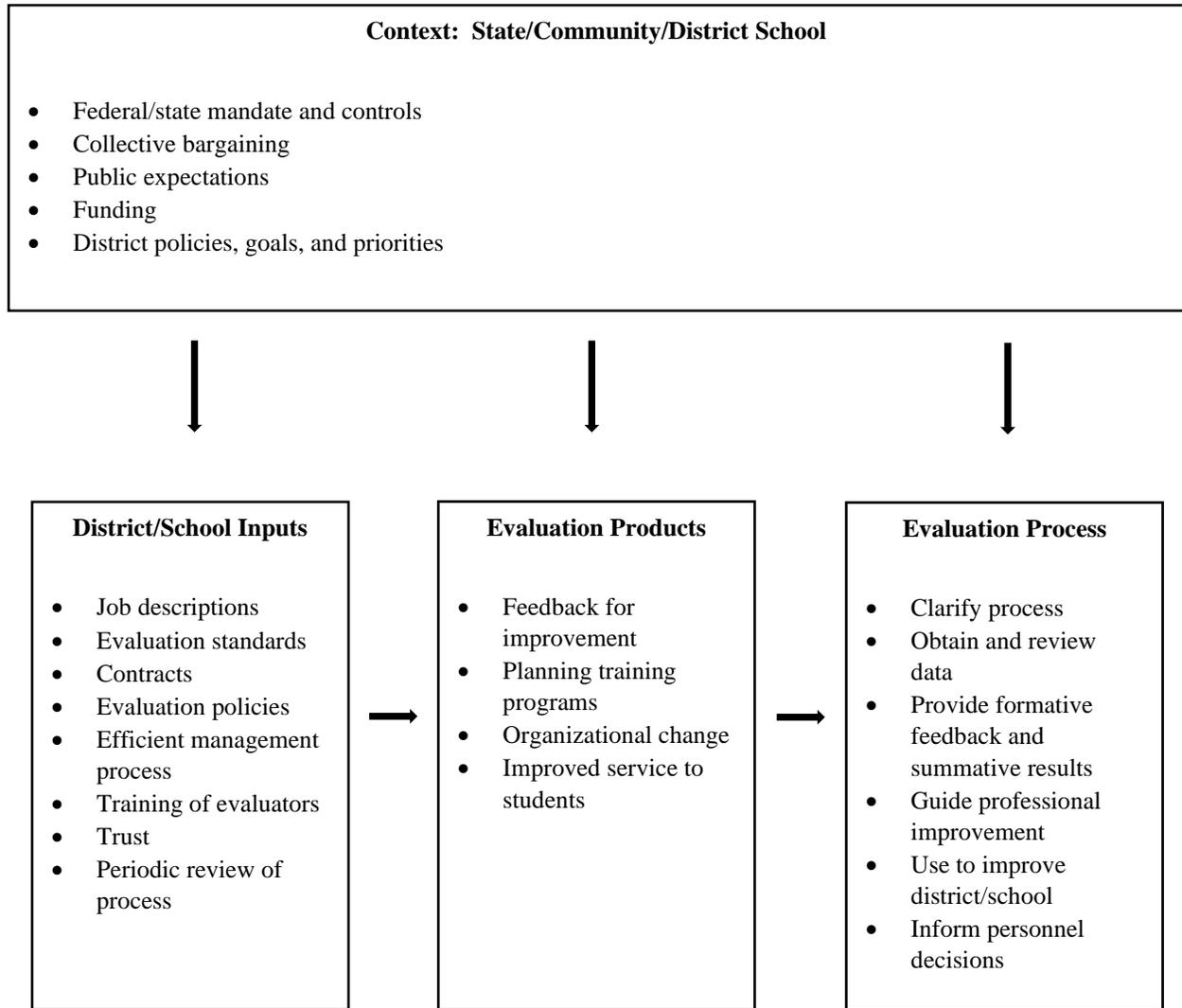
As seen in Figure 1, Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (2012) describe a conceptual framework that identifies four components that interact collectively to cause the success or failure of any evaluation system. These components are: (1) context, (2) inputs, (3) processes, and (4) products. Through the interactions of these components, a set of norms are developed and defined to measure the program's success. These factors can be applied to teacher evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of how the evaluation process impacts daily instructional practices. This study will encompass the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the impact the evaluation process has on daily instructional practices. By utilizing these four

components, this research will identify key findings to assist the education arena in understanding the impact the evaluation process has on daily instructional practices.

The Evaluation Context

A standards-based evaluation system is a continuum that links district commitment, school commitment, and teacher commitment with the overall purpose of teacher improvement. The context component influences all other variables and is associated with functions such as state law, collective bargaining agreements, district policies, funding, and public expectations (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). It also examines the overall environmental readiness of the project. The context in which the evaluation occurs has the potential to influence the participants' perspectives regarding their experiences in the program. It focuses on generating timely evaluations which assist groups in planning, implementing, and regulating effective services that benefits the entire group (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). Therefore, Scriven (1993) suggests when examining or making decisions about programs, the participants' experiences and intimate knowledge about the goals and aims of the program assist with the success of the program. Furthermore, Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (2012) suggested that during this phase, data should be collected to analyze the needs of the participants to determine what specific goals and objectives can be met.

Table 1. Conceptual framework for study adapted Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (2012)



Responsibilities for teacher evaluations are typically shared between educational authorities who are not classroom teachers (Nyabero, 2016). Teachers and administrators form opinions and feelings about the evaluation process during the implementation stage because they are typically left out of the developmental stage. Utilizing the context component as a lens, essential data that reflects the participants' perceptions of evaluation systems can be extracted through interviews. It will also provide a structure for understanding their experiences and thoughts of the evaluation process. Through their participation, teachers and administrators form opinions and feelings about the evaluation process.

Inputs of the Evaluation System

The inputs of an educational program describe how activities and strategies should be done within the program (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). The goals, components, learners, teachers, content, and the materials are all critical and important to the success of the program. In the evaluation process, the school and its leadership team play an important role in managing and implementing the evaluation process. The inputs are both district and school, which include management of the teacher evaluation process, enabling conditions, whose presence assists the operation of the evaluation process and whose absence likely impedes the teacher evaluation operations (Hu, 2015). Specifically, enabling conditions include the teachers' trust of the administrators (evaluators), the quantity and quality of training for administrators (evaluators), the in-depth training of the evaluation process for teachers, the evaluation process interactions between administrators (evaluators) and teachers will be evaluated, and the periodic review and improvement of the evaluation system. Applying the input lens to this research will provide data on how participants associate their growth as educators. By examining the participants'

experiences, data will be obtained to determine if the evaluation system has an impact on classroom instructional practices.

Process of the Evaluation

The process refers to the ways and means of how the activities and strategies of the program are being implemented (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). It measures the extent the participants accept and carry out their roles in the program. The application and implementation of the evaluation process are measured by gathering and analyzing data to determine the effectiveness of instructional practices (Scriven, 1993). The teacher evaluation process includes defining the teacher's role, working as a team to assess and document performances, providing quality feedback, reporting results, and analyzing data to guide professional development (Hu, 2015; Swan, 2006). Examining the implementation of the evaluation process, participants will be given the opportunity to express their views on the policies and expectations they are held accountable to through the evaluation process. The interview protocol will consist of questions that promote the teachers' and administrators' reflection on their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in the evaluation program. This data will be analyzed so their responses (perceptions) can be compared for commonalities and differences of the evaluation program's process or implementation stage.

Product of the Evaluation

The product measures the success of the program. The product component includes the quality of the evaluation, results, and the influences it has on teachers and administrators (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). During this stage, the needs of the participants are assessed, and the program is examined to determine if the goals of the evaluation system have been accomplished. The overall experiences of the participants and assessing what they have learned

through the program determines the success of the program (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). Scriven (1993) states that the best way to measure the effectiveness of a program is to compare the effects of the program to the needs of the participants of the program. The components of the program should match the needs of the participants. At the end of the program, participants should be better than when they started the program. The products of the evaluation include the quality of the evaluation results and the influences of the evaluations on individual schools and on students and parents (Hu, 2015). The product of the evaluation process is to provide teachers with strategies and resources to assist them in improving classroom instruction. Through data analysis, the participants' responses will provide evidence that either supports or nullifies the presence and the effectiveness of the evaluation process. The data analysis process may also indicate the depth of the participants' support for the evaluation process and provide evidence to categorize participants' attitudes towards the components in the evaluation process. During the course of analyzing data, the researcher's goal is to determine if the teachers' professional skills have improved because of the plans and strategies developed through the evaluation process.

Principal and Peer Evaluation of Teachers for Professional Development

Shinkfield and Stufflebeam's Theory was utilized to measure the success of a program. The basis of the theory was also utilized to evaluate teachers. Shinkfield (1997) suggests that the most effective evaluation systems for teachers are positive and centered on teachers' professional development. During the mid-1970's, Shinkfield introduced the Principal and Peer Evaluation of Teachers for Professional Development Model. This model was successfully used by St. Peters College in Austria. The objective of this model was "to develop teachers professionally through an intensive process of formative evaluation by on-going, cooperative efforts by teacher, principal, and peer in a three-year cycle involving all teaching staff" (Shinkfield, 1997, p. 389).

Teachers play a vital role in their growth. Through this collaborative effort, staff competency and morale increases. As a result, teachers perform better in their classroom. This model utilizes the evaluation process as an integral part of the education process with the school. It is a tool to promote teacher growth. The theory underlining this model stresses positive appraisal techniques that emphasize self-evaluation (Shinkfield, 1997). Evaluations must be grounded in collaborative efforts between all vested parties.

Limitation of the Model

One of the criticisms of this evaluation model is associated with the massive amount of time needed to thoroughly complete the process (Robinson, 2002). The model cause for mutual respect and collaboration among all parties. When working with a diverse group, it can be difficult to come to a consensus around what practices will best represent the goal of the program being evaluated. Another criticism that was noted deterred by different circumstances that arise and exist within the program. These circumstances can be barriers and prevent the evaluation process from running efficiently (Angelova & Weas, 2008). For example, political opinions and views that occurs within and between departments and the organization itself are often present and evident in the decision-making process (Robinson, 2002). In addition, because the process gives an equitable voice to all members and requires their input, the process can be long, slow, and very costly (Robinson, 2002). Lastly, although collaboration is encouraged, most decisions are made at the managerial level and passed down to the other participants. Thus the real decision making is in the hands of those overseeing the evaluation process, making the model a top down model.

Conclusion

Shinkfield and Stufflebeam's model best suits this study because its primary focus is not to prove teacher incompetence but rather it seeks to improve the teachers' overall instructional performance. Traditional evaluation models focus on teacher behaviors (rather than student learning outcomes) and tend to be compliance oriented and offer little support for teacher improvement (Donaldson & Papay, 2012). This model recognizes the limitations of traditional evaluation approaches and offers solutions to address them. It is also constructed in such a systematic manner that it promotes positive support for teachers in conditions that may not provide resources to promote professional growth. "The proactive application of this model can facilitate decision making and quality assurance, and its retrospective use allows the evaluator to continually analyze teacher performance and provide viable feedback for future advancement" (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2012, p. 312).

Understanding a framework that encompasses these four components can assist educators in developing more appropriate and effective instructional strategies that improve teacher performances. The combination of these factors gives a holistic view of the evaluation process. By connecting the components and participants' responses, this research project can assist school districts and schools in understanding and defining teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process thus improving or restructuring the overall teacher evaluation program. The purpose of the study is to determine how teacher evaluations systems influence teacher instructional practices. This research will be guided by the conceptual framework of Shinkfield and Stufflebeam's Evaluation Theory (2012). Their work indicated four components were necessary to have an effective evaluation system. Those components include context, inputs, process, and products. To better understand teacher evaluation programs, teachers' perceptions and opinions

about their experiences with the evaluation process will be collected. Their responses will be treated as their reality. The qualitative design lends itself to an inductive process of data analysis. Through the process of coding, themes may emerge. The themes will be clustered into broader concepts. These concepts will be used to articulate the teachers' perceptions of how the evaluation system impacts their classroom instruction. This study seeks to discover concepts that teachers perceive to influence their professional beliefs, classroom instructional practices, and experiences with teacher evaluations.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Policymakers and practitioners alike need to better understand how teacher evaluation programs inform change in teacher practice and whether it has the potential to lead to more effective instruction (Taylor & Taylor, 2012). Little is known about how evaluations and the experience of being evaluated might change teachers' instructional practices (Taylor & Taylor, 2012). This phenomenological study will employ a qualitative method to examine the participants' perception of the evaluation process and its impact on their instructional practices. This methodology was selected because it captures the lived experiences of teachers through their personal perspective. This study focuses on how the components and processes of evaluation systems are perceived by teachers to change their instructional practices.

Statement of the Research Questions

This phenomenological study is based on the following questions:

1. How do teachers' perceptions of the components, processes, and results of the evaluation system influence and inform their instructional practices?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of how accurately the evaluation system reflects and captures their professional performance and capabilities?

The questions of this study were addressed and answered through teachers interviews and an analysis of the rubrics used to assess teachers in the evaluation process. Through a thorough analysis of the tools chosen for this study, the researcher gained insight of the perceptions of the participants. This insight utilized to make judgements about the impact of how the evaluation process affects the instructional practices of teachers.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an exploration into the understanding of the way individuals perceive and internalize their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This phenomenological study was conducted to allow teachers to share their lived experiences to obtain insight of their perceptions about how the evaluation process affected their instructional practices. The interviews allowed teachers to express their thoughts regarding how they utilize the feedback that they receive from their evaluation. This also give the researcher the opportunity to ask clarifying questions to ensure that the interpretations were accurate. This qualitative study also gave others the opportunity to see various perspectives and gain insights on the lived experiences of a diverse group of teachers. This research also increased the knowledge of educational leaders by viewing the process through the eyes of those who have experienced it firsthand. Through this process, the researcher aimed to understand and develop what characteristics teachers felt the evaluation process has on their instructional practices.

Qualitative research permits the researcher to explore a phenomenon in its natural setting (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Through this exploration, defined beliefs are formed by individuals as they interact in their environment (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research, according to Merriam (2009), is built on the principle that one's reality is interpreted through the experiences and lives of the people that exist within a specific timeframe and how their understanding change because of their experiences. Because this study sought to recognize and understand the perceptions of teachers and the connection the evaluation process has on instructional practices, a phenomenological approach served as the best approach for this study.

Research Design

Van Manen (2016) describes phenomenology as a methodical attempt to reveal and explain the external and internal structure of lived experiences. Through a phenomenological point of view, researchers seek to understand the essence of an experience. Moustakas (2010) explains phenomenological science as a phenomenon that can be clearly observed and interpreted. It defines knowledge and the connection of an individual's perception about the reality of their world (Moustakas, 2010).

The foundation of phenomenological studies puts the experiences of individuals at the center of the research (Manen, 2016). The center of this research focused on the phenomenon of the impact the evaluation system has on classroom instruction from the experiences and perspectives of individuals who have direct and personal knowledge of the evaluation process. Moustakas (2010) suggests that the phenomenological study must refrain from developing any biases that will affect the outcome of the study. The researcher must be able to wonder and explore the curiosity surrounding the phenomenon being investigated without using prior knowledge to draw conclusions. By exploring the ideas and concepts that freely enter the mind, the researcher was able to compose the true perception of the participants thus allowing the emergence of multiple meanings.

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of how they made instructional decisions based on the evaluation process. As indicated by the research questions, this study sought to explore how teachers use the evaluation process to inform their instructional practices, the studied phenomenon. To do so, the researcher conducted interviews with teachers to understand their experiences.

This research was guided by the conceptual framework of Shinkfield and Stufflebeam's Evaluation Theory (2012). Their work indicates that four components are necessary to have an effective evaluation system. Those components include context, inputs, process, and products. The following section consist of how the districts were chosen for the study, the participants used in the study, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data.

Research Context

Research for this study took place in three school districts in Louisiana. Three school districts were chosen so that the data collected could be used to compare how educators throughout the region described their perceptions of the evaluation process. Purposeful sampling was used to choose the school districts for this study. These three districts were selected because of their proximity and similarities. The teachers participated in state wide professional development to assure the evaluation process is implemented. Evaluation scores are included in their hiring processes. Two of the districts utilize the COMPASS evaluation system, and the other district used TAP evaluation system. Both evaluation systems are considered summative and report teacher evaluation scores to the state. COMPASS, an acronym for Clear, Overall Measure of Performance to Analyze and Support Success, is one of the teacher evaluation models used in Louisiana to determine teacher effectiveness (LDOE, 2016). COMPASS is a set of standards that lawmakers and educational leaders in Louisiana have defined as good teaching practices. These standards are utilized to measure and support teachers in increasing student performance. Compass is divided into three domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instruction. Each domain is divided into components. These ratings are combined to give teachers a numerical score. Teachers can receive ratings that range from highly effective to ineffective.

COMPASS requires that teachers be evaluated annually based upon student growth (VAM or student learning targets) and professional practice (observations). COMPASS defines what Louisiana state lawmakers and education officials believe is good teaching and supports teachers by developing practices that will help students become college and career ready (LDOE, 2016). The overall goal of COMPASS is to increase student achievement and requires a shift in instructional practices whereby teachers are expected to help students meet more rigorous expectations (LDOE, 2016). At the end of the school year, teachers in Louisiana are assigned an effectiveness rating based upon the results of student achievement and classroom observations. If teachers do not meet predicted student performance targets, they will be considered ineffective and may be subjected to intensive assistance, loss of tenure, and even termination.

TAP (Teacher Advancement Program) is an evaluation tool that focuses on teacher growth and effectiveness. Through intensive professional developments and modeling, teachers are made aware of the descriptors and indicators that define effective teaching. The TAP system is known as a “comprehension educator evaluation and support model that increases classroom instructional practices that assist teachers in reflective practices that increase their overall performances” (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2015, p.4). Through this process, teachers are assessed on their actions and on student performance. Teacher performance is measured by multiple descriptors. These descriptors are defined by indicators that reflect best teaching strategies.

TAP’s Teaching Skills, Knowledge and Responsibilities Performance Standards are divided into four domains: Instruction, Designing and planning Instruction, the Learning Environment, and Responsibilities. Within each domain, performance indicators are listed with bulleted descriptors and a rubric specifying performance levels for measuring actual teacher

performance. Teachers may earn a score of a 1, 2, 3,4, or 5 for each indicator (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2015). A comprehensive rubric has been developed to measure teachers' performance in each of those indicators. These indicators are used to identify the teacher's weakness and strength. These areas are known as their reinforcement and refinement. During the post conference, teachers are given a specific plan to remediate their refinement. Evaluators, Master and mentor teachers also offer support through co-teaching and planning. Yearly ratings are comprised of four classroom observations and VAM scores. If teachers meet their annual goals, they can receive compensation. Both models are accepted as viable evaluation tools by the state of Louisiana (LDOE, 2016).

These three districts employ about 7,000 teachers and educate an estimated 68,000 students (NCES, 2016). All three districts performance score fall within a 76 -86 percentile range (LDOE, 2016). Each district is made up of elementary, middle, and high schools. All three districts have a high rate of economically disadvantaged students: District 1 is 85%, District 2 is 88%, and District 3 is 85% (LDOE, 2016). Students who are considered economically disadvantaged receive free and reduced lunch. The special education population for each district was approximately 10 %. Districts earn additional points for students who struggle academically and move at least one academic level on standardized tests (LDOE, 2016). Districts 2 and 3 both earned the maximum points (10) for making progress with students who struggle academically (LDOE, 2016). District 1 did not earn any additional points for making progress with students who struggle academically (LDOE, 2016). None of the districts had failing schools; most schools received the letter grade of C in all three districts. In conclusion, these districts are similar in their scores, and their teachers seem to perform well on annual evaluations. All three districts utilize classroom observations and Student Learning Targets to

evaluate their teachers, and all final evaluation scores were reported to the State Department of Education (LDOE, 2016).

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected utilizing purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) states that purposeful selection is advantageous because it allows the researcher to use participants who are available at the time of data collection and who understand the problem and research questions being studied. The study consisted of twelve teachers from the state of Louisiana. Creswell (2014) suggests that qualitative studies should use about 10 to 12 participants. By using a small number, the researcher analyzed the data to extract the participants' true voice.

The participants were selected because they are employed in three different school districts in the state of Louisiana and have no prior knowledge of each other. The participants' years of experience was also a determining factor for participation. Participants were required to have three years of educational experience to ensure they had a working knowledge of the evaluation process. Using participants from different districts gave the research a diverse perspective. Because the districts are similar in demographics, no specific school type will be targeted. The participants of male and female teachers. Male and female participants were chosen so the research could apply to a general audience and avoid biases. The researcher gained access to the participants through current and former colleagues. A demographic survey was also emailed to potential participants. The survey asked for participation and explained the criteria needed to be a part of the study. The first twelve responders were selected for the study. All participants were interviewed.

Table 2. Description of Participants and Selected School Districts

Selected School Districts		
District 1	District 2	District 3
District Performance Score: 79.4 (C)	District Performance Score: 84.9 (C)	District Performance Score: 85.2 (B)
86 Schools	18 Schools	11 Schools
48,835 students & 5,824 teachers	13,352 students & 860 teachers	6,000 students & 429 teachers
Final Teachers rating Proficient or better: 82%	Final Teachers rating Proficient or better: 95%	Final Teachers rating Proficient or better: 84%

Table 3. Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Race/Gender	Gender	Years of Experience	Age Range
Sharon	African American	Female	3	20 -29
Nick	Caucasian	Male	5	30 - 39
Victor	African American	Male	6	30 -39
Jack	African American	Male	3	20 -29
Lily	Caucasian	Female	5	30 -39
Victoria	Caucasian	Female	10	40 -49
Neil	African American	Female	8	30 -39
Nikki	African American	Female	10	40 -49
Tracy	African American	Female	3	20 - 29
Abbey	African American	Female	4	30 -39
Mackenzie	African American	Female	7	30 -39
Deanna	African American	Female	10	40 -49

Table 4. Professional Information

Pseudonym	Grade level/Subject Taught	School Type/ Grade Range	Evaluation Model	Years in District	School Free & Reduce Lunch Rate
Sharon	3 rd / Math	K – 8 th / Charter	COMPASS	1 – 5	93.04%
Nick	Middle School / Physical Education	K – 8 th / District	TAP	1 – 5	100%
Victor	Middle School / Physical Education	K – 8 th / District	TAP	1 – 5	87.12 %
Jack	Middle School / Physical Education	K – 8 th / District	TAP	1 - 5	87.12 %
Lily	K – 5/ Enrichment Teacher	K – 8 th / District	TAP	1 – 5	100%
Victoria	4 th / English Language Arts	K – 8 th / District	TAP	6 -10	100%
Jessica	8 th / English Language Arts	K - 8 th / District	TAP	6 – 10	100%
Nikki	3 rd / Science and Social Studies	K -8 th / District	TAP	6 - 10	100 %
Tracy	1st / All Subjects	K – 8 th / Charter	COMPASS	1 – 5	93.04%
Abbey	5 th / Math		COMPASS	1 – 5	82.81 %
Mackenzie	5 th / English Language Arts	K -8 th / District	COMPASS	6 – 10	82.81%
Deanna	8 th / Science	K – 8 th / Charter	COMPASS	6 – 10	82.81 %

Data Collection

For this study, participants were given a survey to ascertain the extent participants used the evaluation process to guide their classroom instruction and an interview was also administered. The survey asked the participants about the length of time they have been teaching and their current evaluation rating. Phenomenological studies include interviews that are “informal and interactive and consists of open-ended comments and questions” (Moustakas, 2010, p.183). To create a relaxed and social atmosphere, each interview began with a social conversation, so participants felt comfortable responding openly and honestly (Moustakas, 2010). The semi-structured interviews lasted about forty-five minutes and was taped using an audio recording method. Follow-up interviews was employed.

All interviews were transcribed within one week of the actual interview. The interview protocol (See Appendix A) assisted participants in voicing their perceptions of how they made instructional decisions based on the evaluation process. The researcher believed that interviews would bring a rich understanding of the phenomenon.

To refrain from personal judgments and viewpoints, the researcher examined personal biases before the interview process through journaling (Merriam, 2009). This process allowed the researcher to accurately develop and analyze the participants’ experiences. Individual interviews allowed the researcher to have more in-depth conversations based on topics uncovered throughout the interview process. Interviews consisted of open-ended protocol questions which allowed participants to respond to questions from their perspective (Creswell,

2014). It also provided the researcher with an opportunity to probe and ask more pertinent questions to assist with revealing the participants' actual experiences.

Organizing and Analyzing Data

The data was analyzed through the lens of the research questions. This process of keeping the research question in the forefront of the data analysis guided the researcher to ensure the findings are answering the research question (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This process provided the researcher with the opportunity to analyze the participants' responses to identify codes. The codes were synthesized into emerging themes. The themes were linked to the research questions.

Lichtman (2013) states that thematic analysis assists the researcher in focusing on the themes from the data. It highlights and identifies patterns within the data that are vital to defining the phenomenon related to the research (Lichtman, 2013). Data from the protocol questions were coded and analyzed to formulate categories to assist with developing themes. To extract information from the participants' interviews, the researcher utilized open, axial, and selective coding as a means of data analysis. Through open coding, words or phrases were written on the interview transcription where the data was acquired. This allowed the researcher to reflect and interpret the data on a deeper level (Saldana, 2016). The researcher then examined the codes for similarities from all interviews. Axial coding was utilized to combine codes into categories to find overall ideas and interrelated concepts (Saldana, 2016). Through the selective coding process, categories were analyzed and, themes were formulated (Saldana, 2016). These themes assisted in formalizing the results and findings.

The data was displayed in a matrix. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) defines a matrix as a visual arrangement that represents the data systematically to aid the researcher in examining, analyzing, and drawing conclusions. Through this process, the data was organized logically to allow a thorough assessment of the data discovering differences and trends that assisted in creating the themes. Utilizing this condensing process, no relevant information was overlooked. The matrix was accompanied by an analytic narrative to assist the reader in making sense of the data.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) replaced reliability and validity with the idea of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is described using four aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Merriam (2009) suggested focusing on strategies to establish trustworthiness should be done throughout the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the enhancement of credibility through the establishment of structural coherence, which ensures there are no unexplained inconsistencies between the data and their interpretations. In this study, triangulation between interview data collected from the participants and member checking was utilized to enhance the credibility of the study. Member checking was done via a follow-up interview. Member checking was used to assure trustworthiness and accuracy by allowing each participant to view their responses for clarity and feedback (Creswell, 2014). This process allowed the participants to review the information that was recorded and make any adjustments or additions to the data. Participants were also allowed to review their transcript prior to data analysis process. This provided participants an additional opportunity to correct any errors that may have been made during transcription. Member checking is an added component that increases the validity of the study (Creswell, 2014).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that dependability might be confirmed through a single audit, compelling the researcher to prepare a detailed audit trail. An audit trail was kept via a journal. The journal was utilized through the duration of the research and was used to document the course of development throughout the research. The journal included a detailed account of the study's methods and an explanation of why and how decisions regarding the course of the study was made.

Confirmability addresses the reduction of the impact of researcher bias (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher dedicated a section defining the role she plays in the evaluation process to limit her bias throughout the study. The researcher used thick description to assure the participants' voices are represented accurately. The researcher utilized thick description to relay the experiences and thoughts of the participants thus making the findings more realistic (Creswell, 2014). Finally, a reflexive section was done to address the researcher's biases, personal experiences, and shortcomings of the study.

When the results and conclusions from a study can be utilized and applied to different circumstances and situations, the study is considered to have transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Since the findings of a qualitative study are contained because of the limited number of participants, it can be challenging to apply the findings and conclusion to situations or areas outside of the study (Merriam, 2009). To address transferability, the researcher chose to use three different districts to provide the study with a variety of input. All documents obtained from the research were protected and secured at all times. These items include flash drives, transcripts, questionnaires, and all other printed materials. To protect the anonymity of each of the participants, all auditory data will be destroyed. All data will be reserved for a period of three years.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study sought to explore teachers' perceptions in relation to their beliefs on how the evaluation process impacts instructional practices. Because this study consisted of educators from the state of Louisiana, it may not be applicable to the general population. The researcher conducted each interview separately as the primary method of extracting data; it was anticipated that all participants would be honest about their experiences. However, since the researcher is an active evaluator, personal biases may impact the data. Due to time restraints, participants were referred by colleagues. The contributors' knowledge and opinions of the evaluation process also had an impact on their responses. The participants' scores and experiences with the evaluation process also was a barrier in the study. The researcher is assumed that all participants responded truthfully in their interview.

Implications

The results of this study lead to implications for practitioners and policy makers to promote school reform impacting the teaching and learning processes. To promote school reform that will impact the teaching and learning process, it is imperative that education leaders and policy makers begin to implement changes that will support ongoing professional growth to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction. The data from this study served as a tool utilized to make improvements in current teacher evaluation processes. Findings from this study also provided administrators and school leaders with vital feedback that allows them to address teacher concerns regarding the process and ratings of the evaluation system. Through this collaboration model, all parties began to identify true characteristics of an evaluation tool that will benefit all teachers. In order to improve or enhance the evaluation process, effective training for evaluators and teachers is crucial. Through the results of this study, policymakers

can begin to develop trainings that will assist evaluators in developing plans that will support teacher in developing classroom strategies.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the research instrument (Creswell, 2014). To strengthen the results and findings of the study, it is imperative that the researcher clarifies her role in the research process and follows a plan of inquiry (Creswell, 2014). In phenomenological qualitative research, researchers are tasked with transforming the data into “a description of the lived experiences” of the participants (Moustakas, 2010). Both researchers and participants have a subjective influence on the outcome of the research due to how the researcher’s perception influenced the interpretation of the participant’s responses, thus impacting the reliability of the data retrieved (Manen, 2016, p. 24). The researcher clearly identified and defined the personal components and develop strategies through which these components will minimally interfere with the study. This process, known as reflexivity, allows for the researcher to acknowledge their experiences, views, emotional attachment and thoughts while identifying how these elements can have an effect on the research process and findings (Creswell, 2014),

This researcher acknowledged and accounted for the fact that she harbors her own opinions and judgments about teacher evaluations from her experiences as a teacher and evaluator. As the primary researcher, it was important that this researcher acknowledge her personal experiences as an evaluator and not allow them to interfere with the analyzation of the participants’ responses. To account for this factor, this researcher conducted memos during the research process. This strategy allowed her to not only acknowledge but also record and analyze her biases throughout the research process.

The researcher is a principal in the state of Louisiana; therefore, she is knowledgeable of the evaluation process and its intended use. Additionally, the researcher has been an evaluator for seven years and has been employed by two districts in the state of Louisiana. The researcher has a total of eighteen years in the education system. Of the eighteen years, five were spent as a classroom teacher, and the other thirteen were in administrative roles. This researcher acknowledged the fact that she has ten years of teaching experience that shape her personal views of teacher evaluation, due to the lack of receiving feedback from evaluations. Also, as an administrator, the researcher has seen instances where the evaluation process was not fully implemented, such as crucial steps being ignored such as pre and post-observation conferences. The lessons obtained from these experiences has taught the researcher the importance of timely and usable feedback. Throughout this process of collecting and analyzing literature for this research, this researcher has gained insight and perspectives on the history of teacher evaluation, best practices in implementation of teacher evaluation, and the common problems associated with teacher evaluation.

This researcher believes her experiences and knowledge of teacher evaluation practices of both the COMPASS and TAP Model will help to decrease researcher bias since she has been exposed to teacher evaluation from the perspective of both the teacher and the administrator. To limit the impact that her professional status has on the study, this researcher assured all participants were granted complete autonomy and all confidentiality measures, such as the use of pseudonyms and assuring that all identifiable information is ambiguous, were employed to protect their identities. Additionally, this researcher ensured all participants signed an informed consent form. This form further indicated participants were aware of the information that was gathered and reported (Creswell, 2014). These additional steps helped to build trust with the

participants and increased the likelihood that they would provide trustful responses throughout the interview process.

As the qualitative researcher is the instrument from which the data is obtained, processed, and interpreted, it is essential the interviews conducted by the researcher are thoughtfully and deliberately planned and executed. To control the researcher's biases, the researcher constantly referred to the reflective journal used throughout the study. This action aided the researcher in controlling biases so the participant's thoughts and views were represented accurately and objectively.

Conclusion

Chapter III provided an extensive review of the current study, specifically an in-depth discussion of the background of the study, sampling methods, a profile of the research site and research participants, and data collection and data analysis methods. This researcher also discussed the validity and reliability of the study and identified the role of the researcher and the biases she recognized throughout the research process. All this information was described to illustrate how she effectively addressed each of the proposed research questions.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of teachers of teacher evaluation systems and the impact this experience has on their instructional practices. The study consisted of thirteen participants who are educators in Louisiana public schools. These educators varied in years of experience, grade level taught, and age. All participants were evaluated with the COMPASS or TAP evaluation model. This chapter describes the results of the perceptions of teachers of the evaluation process utilized to assess their capabilities of classroom instruction. The data collected and analyzed identified four major themes: 1) issues with systems design, 2) issues with implementation, 3) challenges of a universal system of teacher evaluation, 4) emotional toll of teacher evaluation.

Issues with System Design

Some of the challenges described by participants resulted from the design of the evaluation system by state-level official. Unlike implementation issues (described next) these were challenges caused by the system when it was operating as intended. These include things like policies regarding timing and frequency of observations and student achievement data, the selection of approved data sources, the required school-based evaluation conferences, and the training requirements for evaluators.

Time Lag with Student Learning Data

The participants in this study acknowledged feedback is an important component of the evaluation process. They also stated that they did receive feedback at the end of their observations; rarely did they receive feedback on their Student Learning Targets or VAM

(Value-Added Modeling) scores. Because this data was reported at the very end of the school year (for SLT's) or over the summer (for VAM scores), substantive discussion of teacher performance on these measures often did not happen. While these measures are required to count for a majority of a teacher's evaluation score, participants struggled to recall feedback regarding their Student Learning Targets or VAM scores. Sharon stated, "Usually SLT's and VAM scores come in so late that we rarely talk about them until the following year, if we talk about them at all." Another participant, Nick, articulated, "We do not spend a lot of time looking at or reviewing our SLT's scores, I mean they do count but they come at the end of the year when we are focusing on wrapping up for the summer." Ample time is not given to the discussion and analysis of SLT's and VAM scores which can result in teachers not understanding how they are linked to their instructional practices. There seems to be a disconnect between teachers and their SLT's and VAM scores because little time is spent discussing them with teachers.

Mackenzie, Tracy, and Abbey stated had a were not able to communicate their VAM scores. Although VAM scores have a direct impact on the school performance score, teachers in this study could not articulate their personal VAM scores nor could they speak to how they are calculated in the school performance score. Tracy expressed:

I know that the school usually receives VAM scores the next school year. But no one has called me in to discuss my score or tell me what my score is. We are a best practice school so we did not receive any type of pay out, so the scores are not used for anything.

Schools usually receive VAM scores in late September or October the following school year. School site administrators are responsible for sharing scores with teachers. It may be that administrators are focused on their managerial responsibility of running their schools when scores are released, thus making it difficult to meet individually with teachers to review and discuss scores. As a result, some teachers may not receive their scores, or their scores may be given to them with little to no explanation. This would understandably diminish the importance of the scores in the eyes of teachers. By requiring VAM scores as a required component, the evaluation system, by design, creates a tremendous lag in the time between measured teacher performance and opportunities to correct areas where growth is needed.

SLT's are somewhat more amenable to mid-year analysis, potentially serving more of an improvement-oriented function. Because these summative assessments can be offered at any time, and because they are scored in-house, administrators might have a better understanding of SLT's and their effect on instructional practices because they have more time to analyze and examine teachers' scores within the current school year. However, the data from SLT's and VAM scores are not discussed among administrators and teachers. In addition, most time is spent discussing and analyzing students' scores. Little to no time is left for teachers to actually look at and analyze their own scores.

Teacher Measurement vs. Teacher Improvement

A second area of evaluation system design issues was the unstated tension between designing a system that measured current levels of teacher performance (as mandated by the state legislature) and one that maximized opportunities for teacher growth. The participants identified two components utilized in the evaluation process. The component used for observations consisted of multiple domains and descriptors that measured teacher's instructional practices,

and the other component is used at the end of the year to calculate their scores and it also consist of a reflection section used to summarize a teacher's performance for the school year. Nick described the rubric used during his observations as a check list. Jessica and Nikki also described the rubric as a list of descriptors the observers check off as they observe the lesson. In addition, the participants also stated they did not clearly understand all of the descriptors. They relied on their own interpretation of the descriptors. Nikki stated:

During weekly clusters some of the descriptors were discussed and we were given examples on what it should look like. But that was one descriptor, so we had to figure the others out on our own. So, I focused on the one we discussed in cluster but then I was refined on the others.

In schools utilizing the TAP teacher evaluation system, the rubric consists of twelve indicators; each indicator has several descriptors that assist evaluators in defining the indicators. Weekly cluster meetings usually last about forty-five minutes. In that time frame, the Master Teacher provides teachers with new learning and give them an opportunity to develop and practice the learning. Because time is limited, descriptors are not taught in isolation but rather they are embedded into the model and rationale of the new learning. But during observations, teachers are expected to demonstrate the descriptors with accuracy. This is challenging when they have not been given relevant examples of what the descriptors look like in lessons or had a chance to practice certain teaching behaviors in a non-evaluative environment. Teachers who are evaluated on behaviors that were new to them understandably felt measured rather than supported as they moved through the school year.

This lack of improvement orientation can cause the reflective process to become difficult. Victor stated, "It's hard to know what actions are leading to student success because observers

do not do a good job explaining how they derived your scores.” This shows there can be a disconnect in the explanation of scores during the post conference. Although there are protocols in place for post conferences, more support may be needed in explaining how scores are connected to specific classroom practices. Without this connection made explicit, teachers struggle with identifying strategies that positively impact their classroom instruction. Teachers are not provided with enough information to adequately analyze their classroom instruction. In order to make decisions that will reflect positive classroom practices, teachers and evaluators have to be equipped with sufficient techniques to identify, teach, and rehearse best practices. As designed, the evaluation system in Louisiana does not do this.

Most evaluation processes are built around teacher development or teacher measurement (Schachter, 2012). Tracy explained, “The primary focus of the evaluation process utilized in my district focused on teacher measurement.” As Mackenzie noted:

The most important part of the evaluation process is how I score. If my scores are good, my administrators are happy and so am I. Also, the better my scores are, the more I get in incentive pay. So, I really work on keeping my scores up.

Because educational leaders utilize scores to describe teachers and their ability to transfer knowledge to students, scores are a high priority. Typically, teachers who are rated as proficient or higher are considered to be “good teachers” and it is assumed that their students will do well on standardized test. Therefore, administrators tend to favor these teachers. Teachers’ final observation scores are used to describe how well teachers are performing. They are encouraged to become proficient in all areas on the rubric. When teachers are not proficient, they can be placed on intensive remediation plans, and they can lose their position. Because of the ramifications of the scores, teachers might spend more time worrying about how well they score

and less time concentrating on improving or developing their classroom practices. This can cause teachers to put time and attention on quick fixes verses making true improvements that can affect their classroom practice. They attempt to steer their instruction around what they believe evaluators are looking for and not what will make them better educators. While the public would likely take issue with K12 students who were more focused on their test scores than their overall development and growth as individuals (Zhao, 2009), the data here point to exactly this scenario in teacher evaluation practice. Furthermore, this appears not to be simply due to poor implementation or untrained evaluators, but with the design of the system itself.

Issues with Implementation

Victor, Tracy, and Abbey expressed their concerns with an evaluation system that could be implemented fairly for all teachers regardless of unfair biases, such as poor leadership, insufficient knowledge of observers, and the fairness of the mechanics of the evaluation process. Although, procedures and protocols are addressed and sometimes adhered to, the implementation process can be dysfunctional causing teachers not to benefit from the valuable data and support that the evaluation process can offer. Proper implementation of the evaluation process should promote equity for all teacher.

Reliability issues

The participants affirmed the existing system included components for assuring the evaluation process successfully assisted teachers in improving their instructional practices. The problem arose when components were not implemented in a uniform way therefore, teachers felt it was unfair and not consistent. For example, Jack expressed concerns about the observation schedule.

During unannounced observations, we are supposed to have a ten-minute warning. Well I know teachers who receive a three-day notification. That's not fair. We should all receive the same treatment. This is unfair and disrespectful to teachers. So as a result, I don't have a lot of faith in the system.

This action made the participant feel as though the evaluator was not being impartial and was given other teachers unfair advantageous because they had more time to prepare for their observation. This practice can give some teaches the opportunity to earn better ratings than their peers. Thus, devaluing the participant's view of the observation process. Procedures and routines are put in place to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation process. These procedures and routines that have been developed by districts are known as protocols. Each participant acknowledged they were in- serviced and given a document explaining the protocols for observations. But when evaluators were pushed for time, the protocol was not always adhered to or followed.

Sharon stated, "Protocols were followed during my announced observation but not really during my unannounced observations. Most of the time my unannounced observations were rushed and not really taken seriously." This attitude can cause teachers to feel their observations are not important to their personal growth. A process that prioritizes data collection rather than teacher development certainly would be unlikely to be trusted or seen as an improvement tool by classroom teachers. Participants freely expressed their disbelief in the process. Abbey remarked, "I do not think measurements were in place to hold observers accountable for the integrity of completing the evaluation process fairly." Most participants stated teachers talked among themselves but never reported or challenged their evaluators even when they did not agree with their scores or the process.

Other violations of the evaluation protocol included a lack of post-observation emphasis on teacher strengths, and a conversation dominated by areas for growth. Jessica recited her refinement area easily but struggled to summarize their reinforcement areas. Meetings and conferences with their evaluator focused on areas they needed to improve. There was little discussion about what went well in the lesson thus teachers left the conference feeling as though they were inadequate in the lesson. Sharon expressed, “We spent the whole conference talking about my refinement and what I needed to do to improve it.” Lily stated, “My entire conference focused on my refinement and I know we were supposed to talk about my reinforcement first.” Although it is crucial to address the areas teachers need support with, it is just as important to focus on the areas that they excelled in as well. When placing too much emphasis on either area, teachers can become disillusioned about their performance. This is the complete opposite of the purpose of the evaluation process. The evaluation process should be a tool that assists teachers in development and growth. Teachers grow when they connect to positive experiences. When a person’s strengths are acknowledged and recognized, their confidence is eluded.

Another issue with the reliability of the evaluation instruments was the sheer size of the rubrics used during observations. The observation rubric was perceived as vast and overwhelming. The participants noted it was nearly impossible to demonstrate all the descriptors within one lesson. Victor stated, “The rubric is over seven pages long with so many descriptors it’s hard to keep up with them all.” One lesson might be effective in producing learning with only some of the required descriptors, but, in fact, teachers were penalized for not meeting every descriptor. Nick and Deanna, admitted they were not sure how to successfully demonstrate each descriptor. Although they had been provided with some professional development, all descriptors were not fully discussed and because there were so many, it was hard to keep track of

what each descriptor should look like in the classroom setting. Because each observation is scored by different evaluators, it is also difficult to keep up with the evaluator's perception. Increasing the reliability of this process would require significantly more professional learning capacity than participants' schools had available. This may be possible if schools are willing to reallocate existing resources or if the state or districts can generate more revenue. It is also possible that teachers develop a clearer sense of the evaluation rubrics as they gain years of experience.

Lack of instructional leadership capacity

The evaluation process causes for administrators to take a proactive role in the evaluation process. However, because of system demands and logistics some administrators can struggle to provide the proper instructional guidance teachers need. The participants attributed this deficit to a lack of time to support and follow up with teachers. Deanna stated:

There is not time to develop relationships with all those who will be evaluating you.

There just isn't time for evaluators to check back in after the post conference. They don't have the time to coach me the way I would like to be coached and to me that makes the difference in my success. It is more helpful when I am evaluated by someone who has spent time in my classroom.

One of the concepts of the evaluation system is to grow teacher practices through coaching and collaboration. The process should assist teaching in defining best practices to improve classroom instruction. To assist teachers in embedding those best practices into their daily instruction, they have to receive ongoing training and monitoring to ensure practices are being utilized correctly. The participants stated after their initial observation and post conference

they rarely see the observer again. Some observers spend little time in classrooms because of other duties that have to be performed to manage a school.

After observations, teachers are provided with post conferences where they receive feedback and instructional plans to assist with refining their area of weakness. Jessica reported that after the post conference they heard little about their refinement area.

I was given a refinement and a strategy to assist with the refinement. But after the post conference, it was never talked about again. No one came to check if I implemented the strategies or to see if it actually helped me.

This participant admitted that she wanted to improve her scores, but did not feel that she received the proper support needed to make the changes she was asked to make. Once a score was recorded, there was a sense that the evaluation stopped. No semblance of continuous improvement can be detected here. Such individualized supports are time-intensive on the evaluators, but without them, it becomes difficult to see how evaluation results would ever get translated into improved classroom practice.

If the evaluation process is properly implemented, it can become a tool to support daily classroom instruction. Most of the participants were not able to verbalize their area of refinement. They all admitted they received little to no assistance on refining their area of weakness. Jessica, Mackenzie, and Sharon agreed they needed more individualized support and professional development. Jessica verbalized:

I wished there were more mentor teachers to work one on one with me. I like being able to discuss strategies with someone who is in the trenches with me and understands that each classroom functions differently and the needs are different. My school offers weekly

professional development but sometimes I feel like what's being discussed does not help me or my students.

The need for individualized teacher support is evident in this participant's thought. Attending professional developments alone does not provide teachers with the necessary resources needed to make instructional changes. Professional development coupled with individualized support from mentor and master teachers can provide teachers with the necessary resources needed to make positive changes to their instructional practices. When teachers struggle to get the support they need, they can become frustrated. Because of time constraints and huge staffs, it can be difficult for mentors to provide sufficient support to individual teachers. As a result, they may provide teachers with strategies that are oversimplified and only address classroom issues on the surface.

Mentor teachers are allocated based on the number of teachers in the building and they receive an additional planning period daily to work with teachers. They model lessons, assist teachers in planning and preparation, and offer constructive feedback on instructional practices as well as serving on the school leadership team. Sharon stated, "My mentor teacher services eight teachers. It is very difficult for her to mentor everyone." Because teachers have diverse needs, mentor teachers are used to provide individual plans to assist teachers. Because of the mentor teacher ratio, this task can become overwhelming if it is not properly planned. It is also imperative these teachers receive adequate professional development in all subject areas so that they provide individualized support to teachers. Most districts provide some training but because of money and time, schools are expected to supplement trainings through leadership team meetings and members are expected to seek additional training on their own. The expectation of

optional training is an example of an implementation challenge preventing optimal effectiveness of any innovation.

While individualized supports are indeed resource intensive, group-administered supports would be easier to provide, but these were shown to be limited as well. Part of the evaluation process calls for teachers to receive classroom support from weekly cluster or data team meetings. These weekly meetings are comprised of many teachers with different needs, which makes it difficult to address individual needs. Lily acknowledged most of the assistance she received in their weekly meetings was generic and only addressed surface level classroom problems. Lily also stated she was not comfortable discussing her weaknesses in a group setting. Victoria stated, “In cluster meetings, I try to listen and pick up as much as I can, if I do not understand, I try to figure it out on my own.” This points to a sense that cluster meetings were more about the coverage of prescribed content rather than teachers mastering specific instructional strategies. Similarly, Sharon shared, “I feel awkward asking questions in front of the group.” she feared what their peers would think of them. Therefore, they left their weekly meetings without their individual growth needs being met.

Cluster meetings also presented issues for teachers of non-core subject areas like the arts and physical education. Because of the dynamics of a school setting, administrators have to be creative in grouping teachers for cluster or PLC learning. Often teachers can be grouped by subject area or simply, by common planning time. Deanna stated, “I am in a cluster with math teachers and we’re learning about justifying responses. I mean I teach physical education. That doesn’t help my students learn their physical education standards.” It is apparent that the cluster leader did not utilize examples that were relevant to all members within the cluster. Thus, all members were not able to make personal connections to the strategies. Most teachers are placed

into clusters according to what subjects they teach. But some teachers, especially enrichment teachers, may be placed in cluster with multiple subjects. When clusters are mixed, it can become difficult for the master teachers to address specific subject needs, so they try and use general strategies that would benefit the entire group. If the master teacher does not make a clear connection to the strategy and how it would benefit individual teacher instruction, the teacher could leave feeling as though the meeting was not beneficial.

In addition, the selection of teachers to various supervisory roles was not always viewed positively by participants. Several of the participants also voiced their concern about how they had more teaching experience than the mentor and master teachers who were assigned to help and guide them. Lily voiced, "I have far more years of experience than my master teacher, and teachers come to me for advice." While correlating experience with teaching effectiveness has proven to be a mixed bag (Kane & Cantrell, 2012; Park, 2013), there is clearly a sense here that Lily's master teacher was not seen as a respected expert in the school, raising questions about how people are selected for these teacher development positions. Victor stated, "My master teacher only has three years of experience, and she has not been teaching long enough to be considered an expert." Again, we see the teachers in this study believed that teachers who have been teaching for a long period of time have more knowledge to assist with providing instructional practices. Lily and Victor agreed they wanted guidance from educators who were experienced and who had proven results in a classroom setting.

In addition to teachers holding a preference for experienced educators in staff development roles, there was the challenge of these staff developers being new to their roles and learning their new job while in a position of significant authority of their staff, often their former colleague. Not only does the creation of these roles violate a somewhat strong historic culture of

equality among classroom teachers (Hoong & Chick, 2008; Goodwin & Web, 2014), but these roles were created and then enacted in a short period of time. This did not always allow for confidence and trust in the newly promoted teachers' work. Teachers who were observed by evaluators who were novice and did not possess experience with the rubric, felt they were penalized for their inexperience thus making their experience with the evaluation process unfulfilling.

My evaluator was a first-year master teacher, she was not able to justify how she evaluated me. When I spoke with my administrator, and she acknowledged my scores were not consistent but stated my scores could not be corrected. I was very upset.

To fairly assess teachers, evaluators must understand the indicators and descriptors being used to evaluate teachers. They must also be able to identify key elements in the lesson that can be utilized as evidence to support their ratings. After the evidence is collected and analyzed, evaluators have to articulate their findings with reasonable justification. These actions will provide teachers with an understanding of their ratings. A key element for successful evaluations is the ability to assist teachers in reflecting on their classroom practices and how those practices affect student achievement. This reflective practice will be hindered if teachers are not confident in their evaluator's ability to adequately measure their classroom performances.

In addition, some evaluators are not equipped to provide teachers with adequate feedback or support to assist them in making changes that will impact their instructional delivery. Three of the participants described experiences when an evaluator, who was not an expert in their content, gave them a refinement area that did not fit well into their content. explained, "This makes it difficult to accept the evaluator's findings and suggestions if they do not understand my content and has never taught my content." Having knowledge of the content area, allows the

evaluator to provide the teacher with a specific model that will directly impact classroom instruction. Perhaps, if the model is directly related to the refinement area and is research based, then it may have a positive effect on student learning. Models should be directly related to the refinement area. They should be research based and have a direct impact on student learning. Models should be clearly defined so that teachers can easily replicate them in the classroom. It is the evaluator's responsibility to share with the teacher how the model can be inserted into their everyday practices and curriculum thus demonstrating to teachers how the model is connected to their content and classroom instruction and providing them with concrete examples.

Another limitation noted by participants was the lack of time to learn and perfect new instructional strategies prior to formal evaluation. Some participants admitted they needed more time to perfect the strategies they were expected to implement in their daily instruction. Jack voiced:

I get weary when things are constantly pushed on me before I have had the opportunity to be successful with what I've previously learned. I am a very detailed person, and I want the opportunity to learn and perfect a strategy before a new one is thrown on me. It becomes frustrating for me and my students when I am not confident in what I am trying to teach.

Teachers are frustrated with the rate of growth the evaluation process seems to demand. They all had the desire to grow, but the push for growth has been at a faster pace than the time needed to process and internalize the new learning. Because of time constraints and the urgency to move students, and complete the required observations each year, teachers are given strategies at an astronomical rate. To ensure success of the new learning, teachers need additional time to

practice and become familiar with the new learning before it becomes a natural part of their instructional practices.

Insufficient collaboration time with evaluators/ mentors

One area of implementation repeatedly found lacking by participants was the amount of time they had with instructional leaders in their schools. When evaluators spend time in the classroom, they become familiar with the students, teacher, and the curriculum. They can have a clearer picture of how well students and teachers are progressing. Teachers can receive immediate feedback to assist them in perfecting instructional practices. Some of the indicators on the rubric dictate the teacher action should be observed over a period of time. For example, one indicator reads over the course of multiple observations, teachers consistently and thoroughly teach two types of thinking. To accurately rate this indicator, the evaluator must complete several observations over a period of time. Multiple evaluations can also provide additional time for evaluators to meet with teachers and provide them instructional support.

Victoria expressed, “While evaluators have no problem articulating the model or strategy, they struggle to convey to the teacher the intricate details to make the model or strategy come alive in the classroom.” The success of a strategy depends on how well it is implemented. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be provided with all details that will assist in the implementation process. This takes time.

From the evidenced gathered in this study, teachers expressed the importance of having a positive relationship with their evaluator. Deanna mentioned, “I don’t feel threatened when they offer support, and I feel that we are collaborating and working together on what strategies will work in my classroom.” When teachers are comfortable and feel their evaluator is genuinely

interested in assisting them in increasing their teaching ability, they tend to be more open and susceptible. When teachers and evaluators have the opportunity to form and build relationships, they build a rapport where both parties are mutually respected. Through this respect, they are able to express their thoughts and ideas without offending each other. This relationship is built on professional knowledge and should have nothing to do with personal feelings. Some participants also spoke about the consequences of not having a relationship with their evaluator. They were afraid to disagree or speak out when they did not agree or understand their evaluator's reasoning. Because there was no relationship, it was difficult for the participants in this study to express themselves. When they would try and justify their actions, it was taken as excuses.

Jessica, Abbey, and Nick agreed they received some feedback during their post conferences; however, they also reported they did not receive feedback often after the initial post conference. According to this study, most participants noted the feedback they received during their post conference was not enough to help them improve their instructional practices. The participants stated feedback should be ongoing, with specific directions on how to improve, and timelines should be detailed for follow up during the process. Nick expressed, "I like concrete examples with guidelines that helps me when I am trying to implement new strategies into my lessons." Teachers prefer to have sufficient knowledge and examples when trying new strategies. Perhaps providing them with ample details, would assist them in determining key elements that are necessary for the success of the strategy. Teachers are more apt to apply new strategies when they fully comprehend how to implement it and the effect it should have on their practice. While it appears, evaluators were performing the required pieces of the evaluation model--- there was a sense that more was needed. This issue of greater support appears both as an issue of system design (described above), but also as one of implementation in that

participants describe the need for more and more specific instructional guidance that is present in their buildings, but not mobilized optimally for the teachers who need it.

The rotating assignment of evaluators to classrooms was not viewed positively by Mackenzie.

We get observed four times a year. Usually when I complete a cycle, the next cycle starts up. I have never had the same observer. I just wished I had time to work with my previous observer to fix my refinement area.

Each cycle the participant was presented with a different observer. Having multiple evaluations, can limit the time the evaluator spends assisting teachers with their area of weakness because they have many teachers to support. Victor, Tracy, Deanna, and Jack noted they were observed at least three times a year. Completing observations in a timely manner can be difficult because of the number of teachers on a school's campus. Teachers should receive at least two weeks between observations. This time gives the teacher an opportunity to reflect and refine their area of weakness. It also gives the Master Teacher time to provide additional support. This support is needed to aid the teacher in improving their instructional practices and scores.

In a related issue relating to evaluator-teacher collaboration, weak relationships between teachers and evaluators can lead to a lack of improvement- even when specific areas of growth are identified. Some evidence suggests that when teachers receive feedback that is not accompanied by follow up, they did not feel compelled to implement it. Nikki stated, "I mean I listen to my observer, but I don't always implement the suggestions they give me. No one checks." Similarly, Sharon stated, "I don't know where they get their strategies from, it doesn't fit my students, so I agree and never use it." Even though strategies are given, if no one checks, sometimes they never reach the classroom and teachers will not have the opportunity to see how

they will impact their instructional practice. without sufficient leverage from a strong relationship, evaluators have few methods to ensure the necessary actions have been taken to remediate the skill. Overall, the participants wanted someone to care enough about the feedback they provided to make sure the feedback was being implemented and worked.

When the relationships are strong, and there is clear trust between the observer and the classroom teacher, a positive professional learning climate can be seen. When asked about the evaluation process, teachers immediately referred to the observations, citing the opportunity for collaboration with another educator. The participants expressed they received more feedback during their observations. Victor stated, “I enjoy the one on one time I spend with my evaluator during my post conference, we get to really discuss my classroom actions.” This productive dialogue seems highly likely to lead to changed practice, unlike the examples cited above. Similarly, Sharon articulated, “I really enjoy meeting with my observer after my observations, because I get to see my classroom practices from another point of view.” They also stated the observation component provided more opportunities for teachers to receive feedback. Feedback can be given during pre-conferences, post-conferences, and throughout the observation process. Because observations are ongoing throughout the school year, teachers and evaluators are presented with multiple opportunities to discuss and analyze lessons.

To fairly assess teachers, evaluators must understand the indicators and descriptors being used to evaluate teachers. They must also be able to identify key elements in the lesson that can be utilized as evidence to support their ratings. After the evidence is collected and analyzed, evaluators have to articulate their findings with reasonable justification. These actions will provide teachers with an understanding of their ratings. A key element for successful evaluations is the ability to assist teachers in reflecting on their classroom practices and how

those practices affect student achievement. This reflective practice will be hindered if teachers are not confident in their evaluator's ability to adequately measure their classroom performance.

Nick affirmed the existing system included components for assuring the evaluation process successfully assisted teachers in improving their instructional practices. The problem arose when components were not implemented in a uniform way therefore, teachers felt it was unfair and not consistent. For example, Jack expressed concerns about the observation schedule.

During unannounced observations, we are supposed to have a ten-minute warning. Well I know teachers who receive a three-day notification. That's not fair. We should all receive the same treatment. This is unfair and disrespectful to teachers. So as a result, I don't have a lot of faith in the system.

This action made the participant feel as though the evaluator was not being impartial and was given other teachers unfair advantageous because they had more time to prepare for their observation. This practice can give some teaches the opportunity to earn better ratings than their peers. Thus, devaluing the participant's view of the observation process. Procedures and routines are put in place to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation process. These procedures and routines that have been developed by districts are known as protocols. Each participant acknowledged they were in- serviced and given a document explaining the protocols for observations. But when evaluators were pushed for time, the protocol was not always adhered to or followed.

Sharon stated, "Protocols were followed during my announced observation but not really during my unannounced observations. Most of the time my unannounced observations were rushed and not really taken seriously. Observers did not stay until the end of the lesson and post

conference was shortened.” This attitude can cause teachers to feel their observations are not important to their personal growth. A process that prioritizes data collection rather than teacher development certainly would be unlikely to be trusted or seen as an improvement tool by classroom teachers. Participants freely expressed their disbelief in the process. They did not think measurements were in place to hold observers accountable for the integrity of completing the evaluation process fairly. Most participants stated teachers talked among themselves but never reported or challenged their evaluators even when they did not agree with their scores or the process.

Challenges of a universal system of teacher evaluation

In addition to challenges with implementation and evaluation system design is the inherent challenge of designing a universal teacher evaluation system that works for all teachers in a state. In Louisiana, this represents nearly 50,000 teachers ranging from residential schools for adjudicated youth to selective magnet schools and from math and English teachers to those teaching band or robotics (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). Louisiana teachers also work in schools and districts with a wide inequity of resources and supports. The participants voiced that the universal evaluation process is sometimes measuring things other than a single teachers skill creating perceptions of unfairness.

For example, teachers who have access to resources and professional development have a better opportunity of meeting the criteria of the rubric; whereas, teachers who are not privy to resources might struggle to meet the descriptor on the rubric, but they are still held to the same standard. In order to successfully meet the descriptors on the rubric, teachers need resources to assist them. Sharon stated:

I know teachers that teach in other parishes, they have technology, promethean boards and a variety of resources to meet the needs of their students. They provide their struggling students with remediation and intervention. My school, we are not that lucky, we work with very minimal resources and our students struggle to keep up. The rubric does not account for this situation.

This participant named several contextual factors that may influence a teacher's evaluation rating and equated them to unfair advantages. For example, teachers in schools with math manipulatives could receive higher rating for student engagement than teachers who do not have access them. Secondly, teachers who teach in districts where academic trainings are consistently offered would have a leverage on researched based strategies thus improving their evaluation ratings.

All participants acknowledged the evaluation process was too generic. They thought that the subject area and student academic ability should be incorporated into the rubric. Some subjects do not lend itself to the indicators on the rubric. As Deanna stated, "I am a physical education teacher, most of my classes are outside. I do not have anywhere to display my standards and objectives, but I am penalized for not displaying them." The rubric does not compensate for individual teachers nor does it compensate for specific content areas outside of the core subjects. All teachers are expected to meet every descriptor of the rubric.

Similarly, special education teachers who do not have their own classroom were rated on how they motivated students and how well they knew their students, just like their regular education counterparts. Victor noted this inherent challenge: "I am an inclusion teacher, I only see my students in 30 min intervals. But for observations, I am expected to do a fifty-minute lesson." Therefore, for observations, the teacher was forced to complete a lesson in its entirety

even though that is not what he does normally. The rubric leaves little opportunity to fill in academic gaps for struggling students.

Recognizing that students are different and have individual needs, successful teachers contribute positive relationships as an integral part of the learning process. Through these relationships, teachers develop pedagogical practices and strategies which cater to their students' abilities and instructional needs. When creating and planning lessons, the classroom of students is often a starting point, rather than a list of decontextualized teaching strategies. Participants in this study, acknowledged this and stated that it is a big part of their planning. Victoria stated:

When planning my lessons, I incorporate strategies I know my students will enjoy and learn from. Sometimes the activities in the curriculum is not enough to meet my students' needs. I think they forget students come with gap skills and need additional support. So, when my observer gives my suggestions, without considering the needs of my students, it becomes frustrating because I know they will not work.

This participant addressed the challenges of creating instructional strategies to overcome learning barriers within the classroom setting. To access and address student needs, teacher have to analyze and develop instructional plans to provide additional supports (Garret & Steinberg, 2015). These instructional plans should include lessons that give all students an equal opportunity to learn. Because students are different and may have multiple learning levels, teachers may have to provide them with individual learning experiences to help improve their performance. Instructional plans that may impact students may require a blue print that creates instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessment that work for all learners and teachers. This approach is flexible, customized, and easily adjusted.

If the needs and personalities of students are not addressed when creating strategies, students may not invest in learning the process. A dynamic and rigorous learning environment is built on planning that is inclusive of a variety of differentiated opportunities that prepare students for learning. Knowing students is fundamental to real collaborative learning that meets the needs of all students.

Teachers receive their scores at the end of the post conference with little explanation. Time is not given to review or dispute scores. The procedures state if a teacher is not in agreement with their observation scores, the teacher is responsible for providing evidence countering the evaluator's scores. Sharon stated, "Even if you really disagree with the score, it is not changing. This makes it subjective, because it is the perception of the observer." The process for refuting scores is cumbersome due to teachers being responsible for providing evidence needed to change the score, and the evaluator's score is final; therefore, most teachers accept the scores they are given without complaining.

Participants of this study affirmed they did not believe the evaluation process truly described what happens in their classroom. They all agreed the process did capture some classroom experiences, but the overall rating was not always a true description of their performance. Even though they were given descriptors for each indicator, there were some critical attributes not accounted for. Jessica admitted she got mixed messages from her evaluators.

One evaluator told me to make sure my lesson consisted of multiple group activities. For my next observation, I made sure I used three different group activities. Then the second observer told me that I utilize too many groups. The first observer also told me to spend more time reviewing my standards and objectives. When I spoke to my master teacher,

she told me I should not spend over five minutes on the objective, to ensure I could complete my entire lesson. The second observer told me to the standards and objectives should be reviewed throughout the lesson.

Clearly the observers in this case did not do a good job explaining their rationale to the teacher. Each lesson is different and require different techniques and strategies that lends to the complexity of the lesson. Most observers are judging a specific lesson and their advice is geared towards that lesson. When providing teachers with explanations of their scores, it is important for the evaluator to remember to relate their rating and findings to the specific lesson. The observation is a snap shot of one lesson, and the feedback is specific for that lesson. The support that is given reflects the success of that lesson and depends on how well students respond to and acquire the new learning. However, through the observation and post conference, it is possible to detect some teacher actions that are a constant in their instructional practices. At this point, it is crucial for the evaluator to provide the teacher with concrete examples on how to find and develop solutions that will improve their practice. Accuracy depends on how well the evaluator can measure and explain the indicators and descriptors.

The problem of student learning as teacher evaluation

Student learning is understood as a place where students began to think critically and use inquiry skills to problem solve (Nyabero, 2016). Considering the challenges within the educational and evaluation processes, it may be difficult to understand the positive or negative relationship between student achievement and teacher performances. Victoria, Abbey, Deanna, Sharon, and Jack noted the complications of utilizing student learning as a measurement of teacher success.

Victoria and Sharon stated, “VAM scores were based on their students’ performance on the state standardized test. They also expressed the importance of students applying classroom strategies to questions on standardized tests. These teachers believed that effective classroom strategies played an intricate role in their VAM scores. However, they also admitted that even though state and district leaders emphasized students’ performance, administrators spent little time explaining to teachers how their performance impacted the overall school performance scores.

Mackenzie and Tracy also stated they connected the evaluation practices to punitive actions. When students’ academic performance was low, then their observers felt the teacher’s scores should be low as well.

No matter what I did in my lesson, if most of my students did not master the objective, my observer automatically rated me low on majority of the indicators on the rubric.

Because of the low ratings, I was forced to attend additional professional developments and was told that if my students’ scores did not improve that my TAP bonus would be in jeopardy.

From the participant’s view, it appears that teacher success is dependent on student success regardless of the teacher’s classroom actions. While few can argue with the general notion that teachers should be held accountable for their students’ progress or lack thereof, this leaves open the possibility that a teacher enacts teaching strategies precisely how the evaluator prefers, and students still do not master the learning objective. Student work is heavily weighted in the evaluation process. Observers are encouraged to view the student work before they begin scoring the teacher’s observation. In addition, teachers who are in testing

grades receive low VAM scores if their students do not score proficiently on state standardized testing.

While the above scenarios generate some sympathy for a teacher utilizing the right practices and being penalized for students still not mastering the lesson's object, there is an opposite scenario as well, as described by Jack:

I taught the lesson. The lesson was engaging and students had fun. But when checking their exit tickets, they did not master the objective. I do not know what went wrong I taught the lesson well. I should not be penalized because they did not master the objective. Sometimes they have to see the information more than one time to get it. But it was taught.

Here a teacher has totally disconnected classroom practice from learning. A lesson is supposedly deemed effective is it is "engaging and fun" while mastering the learning objective is oddly the responsibility of the student, not the teacher. The teacher does not understand the relationship between student mastery of objectives and teacher practice. It is this anti-accountability view that certainly fueled legislative pushes for teacher evaluation policies, and damages the reputation of the teaching profession. An attentive observer might rightfully ask, *if teachers are not responsible for student learning, then who is?*

In the above two examples, we see both the need for strong teacher accountability, along with the challenges of mandating specific teaching practices and removing professional decision-making from the hands of trained educators. What begins to emerge, then, is an understanding that the Louisiana teacher evaluation policy studied here may serve as an important guide for lower performing teachers, or those taking little responsibility for student learning. But at the

same time, it can act as a handcuff and an insulting bureaucratic exercise for teachers who accept the challenge of their responsibility. Perhaps this is a policy which might remediate or drive off lower-performing teachers, but it seems unlikely to engage higher performers or create a climate of continuous improvement.

According to the rubric, the success of the teacher's lesson is measured by how well students complete the exit ticket. Student progress is an important factor but there are other factors that should be considered. For example, student engagement and student gap skills are both elements that can affect student achievement. Most teachers in this study believe it is important to monitor student performance. However, they do not believe standardized test scores is an accurate way of measuring teacher instructional practices because of other variables that are not accounted for in the evaluation formula. Jack stated, "The standardized test students take at the end of the year is not a true assessment of what happens in the classroom." Similarly, Deanna expressed, "We have to meet students where they are and then move them. The evaluation process does not account for that." Students are tested on grade level learning content and compared to their peers across the state regardless of their academic deficit. Consequently, teachers are still held accountable to those scores regardless of a student's performance level at the beginning of the school year.

There is an alarming concern that teachers are not provided with the resources to successfully meet the indicators on the rubric. While the rubric does acknowledge the importance of resources utilized in a lesson, it also stresses the significance of teachers being knowledgeable of the content they teach and the learning styles of their students. Even though their success is based on how well students perform, the participants expressed that getting an accurate picture of student work can be difficult. During announced observations, the lesson can

be rehearsed thus making it appear students have mastered their objective. Jessica and Sharon also talked about how misleading standardized tests can be. Jessica noted:

I have students who I know are performing well. Their grades are high and they do well on district assessments. But their standardized test score show that they are making minimum progress. Those test scores can be affected by many variables but if my students don't perform, I am told that I am not a proficient teacher.

With multiple levels of assessments now commonplace in most schools, this occurrence is certainly likely, where a student performs well on in-class assessments and grades, and then poorly on statewide exams from which a teacher VAM is calculated. Either due to misalignment of the various assessments or test-day underperformance, this teacher would have no advance notice of a student's potential poor test scores, and could be blindsided. Of course, a teacher's VAM score is an average of all students he/she taught in a given subject, and so a single outlier would only have a limited impact on a teacher's score.

This high reliance on student outcomes also causes problems when students do not master end-of-day assessments during formal observations. Mackenzie voiced:

During my post conference, my observers told me, if my students didn't master the objective, then I was not successful in teaching the objective. We spent a lot of time discussing the things that the students did during the lesson. Very little time was spent on what I actually did in the lesson. My success was measured by how many students actually passed the exit ticket

According to this participant, student success and student action is a major indicator of teacher performance. It appears that the participant did not understand that student actions and

teacher actions are greatly connected. When teachers present the content in a manner where students can grasp and understand the concepts being taught, they are more likely to exhibit behaviors that show they have mastered the standards and objectives they were expected to master. When measuring how proficient teachers are, student performance should be included; however, there are additional factors that should also be accounted for in the process. For example, it is important to note if students are performing on level and if students have been provided with the proper resources. These circumstances are not necessarily controlled by teachers. However, the resources must be accounted for in classroom instruction. In addition, most observations last one class period, but mastery of some standards requires more time. To safeguard their scores, some teachers began rehearsing students and adjusting the lesson so it appears students are mastering standards. The lack of student performance and engagement becomes synonymous to poor teacher performance, and poor teacher performance leads to ineffective scores.

Although, some students have the ability to show proficient progress in the classroom setting, there are other circumstances, such as test anxiety, that can hinder their performance on state mandated tests. Student performance is a big part of the evaluation process. Typically, teachers who score at the proficient level produce students who also score at the proficient level. The evaluation process utilized by the districts represented in this study placed a strong emphasis on students' academic success. If teachers are teaching at a proficient level then they are ensuring students are learning at a proficient level. Teachers in this study stated some observers do not consider other factors when scoring observations. Jack stated, "There are a lot of student variables that can change any of the best plans that a teacher has, and the threat of those variables impacting a score that determines my effectiveness, causes quite a bit of anxiety for me."

Teachers confirmed the evaluation process can be stressful and additional support is needed to provide teachers with stability in the classroom.

Emotional Toll of Teacher Evaluation

While teacher discomfort and feelings of unfairness have been mentioned in multiple sections above, it is important to address the emotional toll of teacher evaluation directly here, as this is likely connected to teacher improvement, school climate, and ultimately teacher retention. One of the most common complaints the participants voiced was that the evaluation process does not allow teachers to feel comfortable to take instructional risks. Most participants stated that their instructional practices came directly from the curriculum because they feared low ratings with any self-developed lessons. Deanna, an experienced teacher shared a conversation she had with one of her colleagues, “I would really like to try this strategy but because it’s not in the curriculum I’m scared I will be penalized.” Because of fear, consequently teachers are reluctant to implement strategies they are not familiar with because they cannot predict how students or observers will respond. The participants found it to be safer to stick to the strategies the district approved. While standardizing teacher practice may improve low-performers and bring up teacher performance school-wide or district-wide, this de-professionalizes teachers and creates a role much more akin to content deliverers than instructional decision-makers.

Because of state mandates and the district’s desire to improve student success, some districts have moved to a Tier 1 curriculum mandate, meaning teachers can only use curriculum resources that have been approved by the state. However, these set curricula may not come with resources to supplement for student deficiencies. Therefore, making it difficult to provide students with the necessary instruction needed to master grade-level objectives. Spending time on necessary remediation can give evaluators a false perception of a teacher’s ability and content

knowledge. Part of the evaluation process measures how well teachers know their content and how well they know their students. When planning lessons, teachers should account for their students' learning abilities. In order to assist students in mastering standards, teachers have to anticipate where students will struggle within the curriculum and provide them with the necessary supports. These supports are not always built into the curriculum. When teachers are able to meet their students' needs, the teachers are fulfilled and satisfied thus leading to teacher longevity. But a fear of poor evaluations might have the unintended consequence of students not receiving the extra supports they need.

Most participants in this study did not equate their growth to the evaluation process. A teacher's career has a distinct life cycle which is dependent on several factors such as how well students perform on standardized tests and their classroom instructional practices (De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015). Teaching is complex and requires time and support to perfect good teaching strategies and the knowledge of when to use them. To attain proficiency, teachers should be exposed to professional development that directly reflect their weaknesses. Through differentiated and supportive maintenance, teachers can begin to improve their classroom instructional practices. Sharon and Novice teachers attributed their growth to the assistance they received from tenured teachers, and tenured teachers attributed their growth to professional experiences and professional developments.

Sharon, Victor, and Lily expressed their concerns about the consequences associated with low evaluation scores. Victor stated, "I get really nervous during observations, I don't know how my students will perform. I am not sure if my job is secure anymore." Teachers whose evaluation scores are not sufficient have an increased probability of not receiving tenure or losing their position. As a result, teachers experience anxiety during the evaluation process.

They began to focus on how to satisfy the evaluator and not how the evaluation process will improve their instructional practices.

As a result, the participants expressed the evaluation process comes with a negative connotation. Not scoring proficient means more professional developments, more meetings, more demands, and more scrutiny by administrators at the school and district level. Therefore, teachers began to spend more time trying to meet the expectations of the rubric and evaluators and not trust their own skills. This element of self-doubt is a hinderance to teacher improvement. A teacher unsure of themselves is going to exert effort to appear proficient, rather than improve their skills.

There are a lot of student variables that can change any of the best laid plans that a teacher has, and the threat of those variables impacting a score that determines effectiveness, causes anxiety. Teachers expressed, “It is very stressful trying to meet the needs of all of our students and live up to the expectation of the community, parents, and district personnel.” These entities coupled with evaluation performances have caused tension to arise within teachers. Because of the potential consequences of evaluation, such as termination, teachers have become increasingly worried about performing at the proficient level of evaluations. As a result, teachers would like the evaluation process to be less stressful and more teacher friendly. Abbey expressed:

The anxiety caused by the pressure to include as much of the rubric as possible affects my ability to think clearly about responding to students throughout the lesson, like I would normally do in a regular lesson where it is just me and my students.

Because teachers and students spend much of the day together, they form relationships with each other. Through these relationships, a level of commitment and comfort is often formed. Students are willing to take educational risks in the classroom and teachers are comfortable with students taking risks. But when visitors are in the room, students and teachers can become nervous and may do or say things out of the norm. Teachers can be so busy trying to concentrate on doing what they think the observer wants to see, that they lose sight of what is best for students.

Jack, Abbey, and Mackenzie also admitted the idea of having someone come in their classroom and completely script everything that occurred during the lesson is very stressful. The first observation is announced, and teachers are provided the opportunity to prepare for the observation; however, the remaining observations are unannounced, and teachers are given a ten-minute advance notice. Knowing that everything you say and do is being scripted to measure how well you are performing as a teacher, is demanding and cumbersome. Although the evaluation system is designed to give teachers feedback on their performance, there is a time lag between an observation and a conference and between state testing and receiving scores. Abbey commented about her observation:

I think the most difficult part is not knowing whether or not you are good enough or if your students did enough. It is easy to overlook or forget the positive impact you had on your students because you are so focused on how they did. It causes you to lose confidence in your own ability, you start second guessing yourself.

They also reported waiting for students' standardized test scores to come in over the summer also caused them anxiety. As they closed out the school year and prepared for summer vacation, teachers do not know what their final evaluation score. Most teachers do not find out

their VAM scores until the next school year. The participants agreed they would prefer to know their scores before they close out the school year, so they could use the information to assess their instructional practice and begin working on techniques to improve the next school year.

Teachers are expected to attend optional professional development, but depending on a teacher's personal situation, this can be challenging. As Mackenzie noted:

It is very difficult for me to participate in after school professional developments, so my evaluator does not think I want assistance or support. When she completed my post conference she mentioned several times that my scores would be better if I would participate in the after school professional development. She was not interested in hearing why it was difficult for me to stay. I think she believes I don't want to stay, in fact I don't have a babysitter.

Because of a lack of communication, the teacher and the evaluator has made some assumptions causing negative connotations in the evaluation process. This breakdown in communication can cause a teacher not to receive the recommendations given by the evaluator. On the other hand, it can also cause the evaluator not to provide the teacher with the support he/she needs to improve the instructional practices. The evaluation process is heavily dependent on communication and collaboration. As teachers engage and reflect in educational dialogue, they grow into reflective practitioners thus improving their instructional practices.

The evaluation process not only assists teachers in growing in their instructional practices, but it is also an avenue to assist teachers in their career growth. Part of that growth is being able to communicate and express ideas. When teachers are denied the opportunity or their voice is silenced, it hinders their growth.

Summary

This phenomenological study was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the evaluation system used in their district. The researcher collected and analyzed data that was derived from interviews with 12 Louisiana teachers.

Overall findings from this study indicate teachers are in favor of an evaluation process that is fair and consistent. Although, the evaluation process has undergone many changes, teachers still believe there are ongoing educational issues that should be factored into the way teachers are evaluated. Teachers acknowledged positive feedback was crucial to their growth as educators. They also believed there were many factors that affected which instructional practices that they used in their classroom.

Most participants considered observations as the crucial element of the evaluation process. However, some of their comments demonstrated they had some concerns about how they were evaluated and how their scores were reflected. They believed the overall goal of the evaluation process was to support teachers. Although, the evaluation process was designed to be implemented in a standard manner, teachers voiced through their comments that practices throughout districts might be different and inconsistent. Therefore, the evaluation process might not have the same effect on all teachers.

Teachers expressed the belief that the school's culture played a powerful role in how they felt about the evaluation process. The participants who worked in schools where the evaluation process was embodied as a tool to improve classroom instruction regarded the evaluation process as beneficial. In schools where the evaluation process was completely implemented, and teachers felt their success was valued, the evaluation process was viewed satisfactorily. Deanna

expressed, “My school does a good job at following timelines and making sure we have the guidance we need to be successful.” In schools where teachers felt they were not receiving support and the evaluation process was perceived as a mandatory procedure, participants viewed the evaluation process unsatisfactorily. Victor expressed, “It feels like everyone is going through the motions. I mean teachers and administrators.” Teachers also communicated that when the observers were well trained and had the ability to convey the relationship of the evaluation process to teacher effectiveness, their experiences were more gratifying.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Teacher evaluations potentially provide a structure for schools and districts to assess and improve their teachers. Because of the powerful impact effective teaching has on student achievement, it is crucial that the evaluation process foster teacher learning and improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Through an effective evaluation process, teachers might become reflective practitioners who understand that their success in the classroom is closely connected to their student success. When the evaluation process is utilized as a tool to assist teachers in their growth, teachers will positively embrace the process. Unfortunately, this was not the reality for the participants of this study. Overall, the participants overwhelmingly stated that the evaluation process did not assist them in improving their classroom instruction nor did it provide them with adequate feedback to support their growth as teachers. This chapter discusses the findings from the research, answers the research questions, and connect to the theory.

Discussion of Research Findings

While studies have been done on teacher evaluations, few have focused on how they impact teachers' classroom instruction (Johnston, Baker, Malone, & Michelson, 1995; Looney, 2011; Ovando, 2001; Strong & Hacifazlioglu, 2011). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to research teacher's perceptions of how the evaluation process affects classroom instruction. The research centered on how teachers perceived the components, processes, and results of the evaluation process influenced daily instructional practices. The findings from this study added guidance and directions to future refinements of teacher evaluation processes. It is my hope that this study is a linking bridge between education leaders and teachers. This study

contributes to the body of knowledge necessary to address the ongoing need of balancing teacher accountability and instructional improvement.

Although there are many influences in the education arena surrounding teacher evaluations, education leaders continue to refine evaluation practices to improve and measure best practices in the classroom. Teacher evaluations are the cornerstone for measuring teacher effectiveness but very little teacher input is utilized to improve the process. This study was administered to gain a more precise understanding of the perceptions of teachers as it reflects to how the evaluation process impacts their classroom instruction.

The research uncovered five major themes that were interwoven in the participants' responses: 1.) issues with system designs, 2.) issues with implementation, 3.) challenges of a universal system of teacher evaluations 4.) problems of student learning as teacher evaluations, and 5.) emotional toll of the evaluation process. According to the interview responses, the research did not indicate that teachers had an overall negative attitude towards the evaluation process; however, they did express concerns with some of the processes. This chapter summarizes remarks and explanations according to responses given by educators in public schools as they related the evaluation process to their personal experiences as classroom teachers. The themes correlated around one major thought; despite claims about teacher growth, the evaluation process appears to be designed and implemented in such a way that teacher growth is just an afterthought.

Throughout the research there is a common acknowledgement that teacher evaluations are key components in building and creating self-reflecting educators who are capable of providing a quality education for all students (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). Therefore, the utilization of the evaluation process has to be seen as more than a tool to assess teacher, but it

also must be seen as a tool to improve teacher effectiveness. Teachers have expressed deep concerns with the use or misuse of evaluation systems by evaluators and educational leaders (Norman, 2010; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Zatynski, 2012). In this study, participants also identified and emphasized the injustice of the evaluation process. When referencing the evaluation process, most participants thought it was a tool to prove their incompetency. They shared that most of the process was consumed with exploiting what they were not doing and little time was spent on assisting them with strategies to improve their classroom instruction. For some participants, the evaluation process was simply a measurement tool or a process that the evaluator had to complete. As a result, these teachers developed feelings of inadequacy that made professional growth less likely, rather than more so. These feelings were associated with uncertainty, fear, and anxiety. These emotions coupled with a lack of support can cause teachers to shut down and become unresponsive to the outcome and end products of evaluations. Teachers who are emotionally detached struggle with accepting responsibility for their actions and do not see a clear connection between teacher actions and student actions (Norman, 2010). Thus, these teachers struggle seeing a connection between student performance and teachers' instructional practices. Consequently, the evaluation process had a minimal effect on their classroom instruction. Teacher perceptions and attitudes can be affected by the type of evaluations used and the methods in which evaluations are carried out (Zatynski, 2012). To ensure that teachers are meeting guidelines, mandates, and employing best practices in their daily classroom instruction, considerations must be made concerning how the evaluation process is developed and implemented thus, helping teachers to change their outlook on the process. Therefore, the implementation process plays an important role on how teachers perceive the evaluation process.

Establishing effective teacher evaluation procedures and routines has been a challenge (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012; Schachter, 2012; Smyser & Wodlinger, 2012). Specific challenges in the literature include training of evaluators, understanding of the rubric, relationships among evaluators and teachers, feedback structures, practical feasibility, and teacher knowledge of the rubric. These challenges can cause a breach in the subjectivity and inconsistency of scores. Through the eyes of the participants in this study, it was evident that there were inconsistencies throughout districts and also throughout schools. Some participants also suggested that there were also some discrepancies in scores between teachers on the same campus. They attributed the variations in scores to the inexperience of the evaluators. Most evaluators receive little training before they began evaluating teachers. Their scores are considered valid and are difficult for teachers to overturn. As a result, teachers accept their score even if they do not agree with them. These scores can, over time, cause low-performing teachers to lose their tenure or classroom positions. To assure teachers are being evaluated properly, evaluation systems have to be accompanied by standards and criteria that will safeguard teachers from flawed evaluations. Furthermore, a clear definition of what “effective instruction” looks like needs to be developed. Evaluators should be provided with multiple opportunities to identify high quality instruction (Smyser & Wodlinger, 2012; Zatynski, 2012). Therefore, giving them various chances to recognize and pinpoint successful teaching in essence, improving the chances for teachers to receive fair scores. If teachers receive scores that are fair and accurate, then they know their true weaknesses and strengths and can be provided with specific feedback that can increase their classroom instruction.

Feedback is an essential part of effective learning. It helps teachers identify and understand how their specific actions are connected and gives clear guidance on how to improve

instructional practices. Evaluation processes where feedback is an instrumental component seem to have the most impact on teacher performance and instructional practices (Daley & Kim, 2010). Ideally, the expectation of feedback is to provide teachers with detailed descriptions of what went well during the lesson and what could have been improved in the lesson. Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of feedback and stated they rarely receive feedback outside of abbreviated post-observation conferences. Teachers noted that this limited feedback was not enough support their growth as educators. They desired feedback in an ongoing manner.

Teachers are more likely to implement feedback when they are given specific actions and follow up support to assist them in implementing new strategies (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2012). By receiving continued support, they get to see their instruction through the eyes of an outsider thus giving them a true picture of their success. The participants admitted that they wanted to be successful in their practices and wanted their evaluators to care enough about the feedback they provided to make sure the feedback worked and was being utilized in the classroom. They wanted their feedback to lead to additional conversations and ideas thus making the process a continual cycle leading to the success of teachers and students. Instead, the participants described a process that was episodic, and driven by the need for administrators to schedule all of their required evaluation activities.

Although avenues for providing feedback are embedded in most evaluation processes, they are not always implemented in a way that is supportive to teachers which cause teachers to have a lack of belief in their importance (Feeney, 2007; Walker & Slear, 2011). Providing detailed feedback and ongoing support becomes a daunting task that must be completed and is hardly revisited after the initial conversation by the teacher or the evaluator. Feedback that is not

preceded by follow up will not have a lasting impression on teachers' classroom practices. The absences of timely, actionable feedback can diminish the value of the evaluation process.

Teachers in this study also expressed the importance of receiving feedback from knowledgeable sources, with first hand experiences in their content area or grade level. Evaluators are expected to assess and provide feedback to teachers from all content areas. When evaluators are inexperienced and do not know the content, teachers are not comfortable in their evaluator's ability to provide quality feedback. This concern was echoed by throughout the study by special education teachers. They did not feel they received instructional feedback from individuals who understood the needs of students with disabilities. As a result, they were reluctant to accept the feedback as beneficial and were less likely to implement it. When assigning evaluators, it is important to select individuals with intentionality in terms of meeting the needs of the teachers they support. To improve classroom instruction, feedback and support must be modified and individualized to meet the diverse needs of teachers.

Along with feedback teacher should also be provided with professional development opportunities targeted to their areas of growth. Through professional developments, teachers are given the opportunity to focus on specific skills to improve their teaching technique (Phillips & Weingarten, 2013). After teachers have received feedback, the next logical step is to provide them with additional training. The participants noted that most professional development opportunities were generic to meet the needs of most teachers. Moreover, they were not tailored to teachers' individual weaknesses but they were geared to the development of curriculum needs. The participants also voiced that they had no voice in what professional developments they had to attend nor did they have a voice in what was presented. Most participants admitted that they attended some form of professional development at least once a week, but the lack of teacher

voice in mandated professional developments; led to some negative resentment. Teachers felt they had little control over their learning, therefore hindering their growth. One of the primary goals of teacher evaluation systems is to encourage continuous growth and improvements at an individualized level (Carter, Stephenson, & Hopper, 2015). This growth should be defined by collecting and analyzing pertinent data through multiple resources such as observations, portfolios, and student work samples. The evaluation processes examined in this study did not prioritize these types of activities, and thus were somewhat limited in their impact on instructional practice.

High Poverty Districts and the Evaluation Process

The expectation of the evaluation process is that teachers will provide students with instruction that leads to academic growth that can be positively measured by standards and objectives (Wang & Degol, 2016). This can be difficult because the diverse needs of students and their learning styles can be challenging. To offset these challenges, classroom resources can be used to support instructional practices and create equitable opportunities for disadvantaged students. However, the evaluation process evaluated here seems to be doing just the opposite. It seems to be providing teachers who have access to this additional support and resources with unfair advantages during the evaluation process. The three districts represented in this study had populations that were largely made up of economically disadvantaged students. School districts in high poverty areas may not be able to provide teachers with necessary resources, such as technology or engaging manipulatives. The participants in this study stressed the importance of having access to resources to support their instructional practices. They believed that their scores were directly impacted by the lack of resources provided to them by their school or district.

Classrooms and students are different. Students in high poverty areas tend to have fewer academic experiences than their counterparts (Borman & Kimball, 2005). Therefore, teachers may need additional resources and supports to enhance the learning process for these students. One important element of the evaluation process is student engagement. A critical element for student engagement is sufficient exposure to background knowledge that allows for academic equity amongst all populations. By ensuring that all students have an equitable playing field, it may partially reduce the disadvantage gap between teachers with access to resources and those with the lack thereof. Studies have shown that students who are economically disadvantaged statistically are lower performing on standardized testing (Tajalli & Opheim, 2005). Subsequently, this impacts teacher's performance on their annual evaluation assessments.

Studies have shown that teachers who serve in disadvantaged schools consistently do worse on their yearly evaluations (Tayler & Tyler, 2012). This can be a result of underprepared and disengaged students learning in a context without the additional support and resources necessary to accurately assess their knowledge. Although this lack of resources is out of the teachers control, they are consistently penalized under the evaluation system. Due to unforeseen gap skills that students may enter the classroom with, teachers are unable to effectively assist students on their journey to mastering any grade level content. Thus, these additional resources can be pertinent to a teacher's success in the evaluation process and their instructional practice growth.

In addition, due to budget mandates and lack of funding, it can be very difficult to provide teachers with adequate professional development to assist with improving evaluation scores. By failing to provide teachers with access to effective training and professional development, we stunt their growth, sense of purpose, and career advancement opportunities

(Landry, Anthony, Swank, Monseque-Bailey, 2009). Thus, contradicting the very essence of the evaluation process. This study showed evidence that teachers do not have a true understanding of the purpose of the evaluation process. Most participants believed that they evaluation process was not a tool to assist with growing their instructional practice but rather a tool of accountability.

Answering the Research Questions

Teachers are one of the most significant resources in schools; therefore, it is critical that they are nurtured and cultivated. Teacher evaluations can be a tool for increasing teacher effectiveness if used correctly. By improving instructional practices, teachers and their classrooms become self-sufficient thus providing an environment where students are actively engaged in the learning process. According to the literature, most evaluation systems are utilized as a measurement tool whose purpose tends towards accountability rather than improvement (Heneman, et al., 2003; Bolyard, 2015). Evaluations that are used to strengthen teachers' classroom instruction have been somewhat elusive. Raising teaching performance is perhaps the key element most likely to lead to substantial gains in student learning (Hindman, et al., 2007, Jacobs, 2012; Park, 2013). Effective assessment and monitoring of teachers is vital to the progress of teacher growth. A process by which teacher supervisors know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, provides an entry point to creating and developing instructional plans to aid in teacher development. Therefore, the role of teacher evaluations is a necessary, but often unrealized, element of improving teaching and learning. The objective of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of how and if the evaluation process influenced their daily instructional practices. Few studies exist pertaining to teacher perceptions of how the evaluation

process impact instructional practices. As a result of the analysis from Chapter IV, the researcher has concluded the following findings to the research questions that guided the study.

How do teachers' perceptions of the components, processes, and results of the evaluation system influence and inform their instructional practices?

The first research question was designed to highlight and explain how teachers perceived the evaluation process in its entirety affected their instructional practices. This question comes from an understanding that “Teachers’ beliefs, practices and attitudes are important aspects for understanding and improving educational processes” (Schachter, 2012 pg. 44). Within these aspects, teachers formulate strategies to assist them in building their capacity to understand and cope with the daily challenges in their professional lives. Moreover, they began to shape their processes and influence their perceptions. When a part of the process is omitted or not accounted for, teachers are less likely to be influenced or motivated to change their perception. Through the data, most teachers articulated that they believed the evaluation process was necessary but due to system design issues and of the implementation process, they believed that the evaluation process had very little impact on their classroom instruction. This disparity is associated with the fidelity of the evaluation tools. The participants did not agree that the components of the evaluation process gave a complete and accurate description of their instructional practices. They felt that many other contributing factors were purposely overlooked such as a lack of resources, student gap skills and differentiated strategies needed for different classes. According to Papay, 2012, an evaluation tool that has a holistic approach and encompasses many factors depicts a more precise representation of teachers’ classroom performance. As Nick indicated, “I have an inclusion class, over half my students have specific accommodations, which affected some of my scores. My evaluator did not take this into

account.” The components of the rubric are rigid and inflexible. There are certain descriptors that must be present in a lesson to be considered proficient. As a result of this, enrichment teachers and special education teachers in particular, did not agree with many of the descriptors that their instructional practices were measured by.

The rubric’s frame work consists of “adequate pacing, classroom management, clarity of presentation, well-structured lessons and, informative and encouraging feedback” are all characteristics that are known to have a positive effect on student achievement (Jerald & Van Hook, 2011). Most teacher evaluations consist of a combination of these characteristics. However, there are additional characteristics that also influence and provide students with positive learning experiences. Although, teachers bear the responsibility of providing students with learning opportunities that are meaningful, a student’s motivation, goals, and outcomes are also determining factors (Salmi, 2015). Nonetheless, these factors are not included on most teacher evaluation and if they are included they are weighted very low. This causes teachers to harbor negative thoughts about the evaluation process. Sharon recalled, “The rubric is not fair, it does not account for students nor does it account for their gaps in academics.” Because of student deficiencies, most teachers find it beneficial to spend time motivating and connecting learning objectives to real world experiences. Through these experiences, students become intrigued and motivated by academic content which helps with their comprehension. These actions are not accounted for during teacher evaluations.

Because there are many background factors that influence scores, many teachers do not have confidence in their accuracy. Classroom observation scores are solely based on the observer’s perceptions. Observers who are not well versed in all content areas may not possess the ability to fairly assess the knowledge and skills students needed to master an objective.

Objectives must be clear, concise, measurable, and embedded in activities that are engaging and rigorous (Namaghi, 2010; Smyser & Wodlinger, 2012). Without sufficient knowledge, it can be a challenge to analyze the appropriateness of objectives. As a result, teachers in this study adamantly expressed that their thoughts on the unfairness of being judge by observers who do not have a working knowledge of their content area.

Teachers almost universally voiced the importance of classroom practices and their impact on student achievement. But because of the lack of consistency throughout the evaluation process, they admitted that their instructional practices were not significantly affected by the evaluation process. This study found that the processes and implementation of the evaluation system would have to become more defined and a system would have to be on place to oversee those assigned to observe.

What are teachers' perceptions of how accurately the evaluation system reflects and captures their professional performance and capabilities?

The second question investigated how accurately the evaluation process captured and measured teachers' practices. How a teacher perceives and feels about teacher evaluations can affect the results of the evaluation process. Attitudes and perceptions may be very positive when teachers understand the necessity of an evaluation process and are allowed to participate in designing and implementing evaluations (Norman, 2010). On the other hand, negative reactions appear when teachers feel disconnected from the evaluation process. To create an environment that is conducive to positive growth for teachers, there must be a relational balance where teachers feel the evaluation process is impartial, rigorous, and a true representation of their teaching practices (Liu, 2010). Teachers associated with this study expressed some concerns with the relational balance. While they believed that most evaluation systems are demanding in

terms of expectation, they lack in terms of assessing a teacher's skills and competences. The participants stated that a teacher must be adaptive in respect to their students' backgrounds and achievement levels and the evaluation process does not account for this. To effectively evaluate teachers, there must be a harmonious balance focusing on equilibrium of student achievement and teacher performance. According to the participants, the absence of this balance has a negative reflection on their teaching practices. Therefore they have little to no confidence in the evaluation process.

The belief that learning and instruction is connected seemed to be the driving force behind the participants' mindset in reference to well-balanced evaluation process. They emphasized the importance of acknowledging where students are in the learning process and providing them with additional instructional strategies and time to acquire new learning and close their academic gaps. Most evaluation processes do not have indicators or domains that measure teachers' ability to measure students' needs and provide them with a prescriptive instructional plan to meet their needs where they are. Although it is not measured, it is an expectation of all teachers. Many evaluation processes imply that a proficient teacher is one that communicate knowledge in a clear and structured way that allows students to receive knowledge in an environment that is calm and stresses the ability of students developing into individuals that can think and reason (Aydin & Aslan, 2016). Most participants would agree whole heartedly with this explanation; however, they also believe that other variables should also be acknowledged and measured such as student deficiencies and background levels. Teacher effectiveness is student specific and well as content specific. Student success can look different for individual students because of their needs and ability. Because content areas have specific standards and objectives, student success has to be differentiated. Student success in a math

class will look different from student success in an art or physical education classroom but yet they are assessed by the same rubric. Thus, making it difficult to utilize a “one size fit all” rubric. Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed their concerns about how deceptive they thought the evaluation score were. They did not believe that their scores were a true representation of their teaching skills nor did it represent their instructional practices.

Connection to Theory

This study This study utilized Shinkfield and Stufflebeam’s evaluation theory. Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (2012) identified four fundamental components that interact collaboratively to ensure the success or failure of any evaluation system. These components are: (1) context, (2) inputs, (3) processes, and (4) products. When these components are interwoven correctly, an evaluation system emerges that is beneficial to the organization and the individual it services. Teacher evaluation systems were analyzed through these components to measure how they impact teachers’ daily instructional practices. The research considered all components with a specific emphasis on the input process. Specifically focusing on the protocols utilized to implement the evaluation processes, management tools utilized to monitor the process, and training techniques for evaluators.

If these components are not properly implemented, teachers can exhibit barriers that will undermine their understanding of the evaluation process causing them to disassociate themselves from the process. Thus, fueling resistance and causing a culture of noncompliance and triggering negative relationships among teachers and administrators over observations. Teachers in such contexts began to spend more time in survival mode, trying to navigate through the process without reflecting and actually connecting it their actions to improve their instructional practices.

The input component was important to this study because it provided a lens to understand teacher's perceptions. During the input component, the inner working functions and roles are defined and executed. In this period, parameters are set to ensure the success of the evaluation process. During this phase, additional attention is given to initial procedures to assure the success of the program. In this study, it was evident that the participants did not believe that protocols and procedures were followed. Through this lens we can begin to understand how teachers make sense and formulated their perceptions of the evaluation process. Kezar (2012) describes sensemaking as a vital process that has to be nurtured and supported. To ensure teachers receive more than a surface level of understanding of the evaluation process, school leaders are tasked with the mission of deepening the experiences and comprehension through supported and development. Although it is important for teachers to understand the evaluation model and become comfortable with it, the implementation process must be monitored and continually supported.

Huberman and Milankowski (2001) found in teacher evaluations implementation is more important than effectiveness of the system. Teachers within the study claimed to be overwhelmed and confused about parts of the evaluation process, namely VAM scores. Participants admitted that they needed additional support and time to understand exactly how their VAM scores truly affected their instructional practices. Teachers also stated that they received numerous professional developments on the observation rubric and little to no professional developments on VAM scores. According to Shinkfied and Stufflebeam's evaluation theory, if teachers received training and explanations in reference to VAM scores during the implementation process, there would have been a greater chance of understanding and successful utilization thus, making this a meaningful process for teachers.

The context component encompasses the overall framework of the system. It is inclusive of the development and implementation of the program. The context in which the evaluation occurs has the potential to influence the participants' perspectives regarding their experiences in the program. It focuses on generating timely evaluations which assist groups in planning, implementing, and regulating effective services that benefits the entire group (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). In this study, those participants who worked in districts where the evaluation system was properly implemented had the most success with the evaluation system. They saw the process as a help tool to improve their instructional growth and they trusted the process. On the other hand, participants who worked in districts where there was no specific protocols to monitor the evaluation process, felt the process was not fair.

The product component measures the success of the program and includes the quality of the evaluation results, and the influences it has on teachers and administrators. One way the participants defined the success of the evaluation process was through the actual use of the feedback and strategies they were given in the evaluation process. Most of the participants struggled with feedback or the lack of feedback they received at the end of their observation. Furthermore, they also struggled because of the lack of time that was spent on analyzing and explaining SLT's and VAM scores.

When the product component is evident in the evaluation process, teachers are provided with strategies for self-improvement. The goal of the evaluation process is to build structurally sound teachers that can provide instructional practices to assist students with academic growth (Frink & Ferris, (1998). At the end of the evaluation process, teachers should be reflective individuals that intrinsically want to improve their instructional practices. Teachers should be better than when they began the evaluation process. According to the participants of this study,

the evaluation process had no significant effect on their instructional practices they used in their classrooms. The participants did not appear to be influenced by the feedback or process itself. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of trust in the implementation process or the lack of support given throughout the process. Ultimately, the participants professional skills did not improve.

Implications

This study's objective was to determine the perceptions of teachers of how the evaluation process impact their instructional practices. The results led to implications for practitioners and policy makers to promote school reform impacting the teaching and learning processes for teachers. It is imperative that educational leaders and policy makers start initiating changes that can support ongoing professional growth for teachers. The data from this study suggests several improvements in current teacher evaluation processes. The participants indicated that the evaluation process needs to devote more time and effort in aiding teachers with effective strategies that will improve their instructional practices.

Implementing an effective evaluation process has presented itself with multiple challenges such as an unstable climate, evaluators' limited knowledge, insufficient preparation of schools to implement evaluation procedures, limited understanding by teachers, and a sense of unfairness (Bigham & Reavis, 2001; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). These challenges are factors that impeded the productivity of the evaluation process. It is important that these challenges are acknowledged and addressed to improve the instructional practices of teachers. This includes combing the interests of teaches and stakeholders, analyzing policy mandates, and their impact. Thus, utilizing a consensus view to address necessary changes to the evaluation process. Because teachers are in the best position to define critical actions that might obstruct the

evaluation process, a consensus with school leaders to determine best practices for teacher growth is crucial. Ideally, this collaborative process would consist of a diverse group of educators (administrators, teachers from across the state, and state policy makers) discussing critical attributes of effective teaching.

Although the participants in this study experienced some form of success with the evaluation process, namely they were named as proficient teachers. However, it was not evident that they utilized the evaluation process as a change agent in their classroom practices. In order to receive better scores, they made attempts to address indicators and descriptors on the rubric, however there was no indication that these practices went beyond the procedural level, meaning they were done just for the evaluation. In order for change to become a constant in an individual's performance there must be a transformation of an individual's perception (Cherasaro, et.al, 2015; Aydin & Aslan, 2016). This transformation can only happen when individuals began to internalize and make sense of the phenomenon. When teachers begin to comprehend the value of the evaluation process, or of particular instructional strategies, it will be a logical tool for improving classroom processes. This occurs when teachers become reflective practitioners. The evaluation system examined here does not foster such reflection.

Great teachers possess the gift of engaging in rigorous self-reflection (Phillips & Weingarten, 2013). Through rigorous self-reflection, focus on their specific actions and how their actions affect their students. They began to reflect on their practices and seek ways that they may improve. Their focus becomes very intrinsic seeking out ways to improve their actions and placing little emphasis on extrinsic factors. This process becomes a playbook for developing stronger teachers, which in turn builds stronger students.

Measuring teacher performance is only the beginning of improving classroom practices (Danielson, 2011). The Educator Effectiveness Act (2010) specifically addressed the importance of continuous improvement using feedback and professional development. By analyzing the feedback and support teachers receive through the evaluation system, an in-depth knowledge can be acquired to assist stakeholders with making additional changes that will ultimately lead to better teachers. This study was designed to determine if there is a direct correlation between teachers' instructional practices and the evaluation process. The results of this study will provide guidance for educational leaders and practitioners. To promote school reform that will impact the teaching and learning process, it is imperative that education leaders and policy makers begin to implement changes that will support ongoing professional growth to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction. The data and results from this study can be used as evidence to support current and future evaluation trends.

Implications for Future Research

Currently, educational researchers have identified a distinct paradigm shift in teacher evaluation practices, which include school leaders as instructional facilitators, teacher practices, and student actions (Marzano et al., 2011). The current literature supports the recommendation for an evaluation process that is inclusive of various assessments to assure teacher growth (Bigham & Reavis, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Liu, 2010). The literature also supports the fact there is a correlation between teacher quality and student academic success. Teacher effectiveness is consistently identified as a contributing factor to student academic achievement (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015; Heck, 2009; Sanders et al., 1997; Stronge et al. 2007). Considering the recent changes in teacher evaluation systems throughout the nation, it is important to understand if these evaluation systems have aided in increasing teacher practices and student

achievement. Few studies have explored teachers' viewpoints and knowledge of how the evaluation system truly affects their classroom instruction. It is essential to understand how the evaluation tools are perceived by its primary audience: the teachers. Understanding how teachers experience the evaluation system is fundamental in understanding how the instrument can be used effectively.

Current research aims to understand the beliefs of teachers regarding current evaluation practices in school districts that have adopted modern evaluation models. While newer evaluation models require specific components, school districts still have the autonomy to decide how they are going to implement the selected evaluation models. The results of this study can inform and guide the practices of the school districts' instructional leaders using the instrument to assess teacher effectiveness. To improve teachers' evaluation systems and teachers' instructional practices, we must first begin the conversation and attentively listen to both the commendations and recommendations of the teachers (Liu, 2010; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). If educational leaders have a clear understanding of how teachers perceive the use of the instrument, then they too can begin to reflect upon their own practices. This reflection will not only increase teacher quality but will also enable educational leaders and policymakers to make informed policy decisions that reflect their consideration of the identified concerns.

Recommendations

The recommendations from this study are based on the data implications and findings. This study focused on how the evaluation process affects teachers' instructional practices. The researcher strongly suggests the following recommendations for the interpretation and utilization of the data collected from this study: specifying and mandating specific teacher support

mechanisms and expansion of evaluator training. Adding additional supportive measures throughout the evaluation process can also benefit teachers, because immediate feedback and assistance could assist teachers in developing strategies at the onset. However, administrators would need further advanced training on research-based practices.

Teacher evaluations should have built in measurements that cater to all subject matters, hence giving all teachers a fair opportunity to receive accurate scores and feedback to address their weakness and subject areas. Most evaluation processes are geared towards core subject areas which do not include enrichment classes or classes with students with special needs. Further research on developing multiple evaluation tools that are specific to each content area would be beneficial to this area of study

Administrators and evaluators will need to add additional measurements to ensure teachers are supported throughout the evaluation process. These measurements should begin with professional developments that outline the process and accountability for evaluators and administrators that stray from protocols. In addition, teachers must be provided with timely support after each classroom observation. This support should be specific to their classroom and student needs. Teachers must be empowered with the necessary tools to make positive gains as educators.

More training sessions would greater enhance the administrators' ability to provide a more supportive and nurturing teaching environment. Evaluators should understand that the evaluation process is a tool to assist teachers in refining their effectiveness as classroom teachers. Further approaches such as extended time for teachers to meet and discuss adaptive and realistic strategies and the likeliness of their success are essential. Moreover, teacher evaluations should

educate and foster collaborations amongst teachers and administrators to unify diverse strategies that will enhance the educational curriculum, novice teachers and tenured teachers.

Summary and Conclusion

The evaluation process is designed to provide teachers with meaningful feedback on their classroom performance. If performed correctly, a continual cycle shall emerge that enhances teachers' craft. This support should consist of resources, strategies, and materials that offer teacher the necessary provisions to thrive upward. Goodwin & Webb (2014) reported that the concept of using teacher evaluation to improve practice is one of the most discussed purposes of teacher evaluations in educational research. However, most modern evaluations systems overemphasize the function of evaluation as tools of assessing teachers with little evidence that they provide teachers with the strategies needed to improve their classroom practices (Schachter, 2012). Although they identify areas where teachers exhibit strength and where they need improvement, often teachers are not provided with the tools needed to improve their classroom practices.

This study's purpose was to determine how teachers' experiences and perceptions of the evaluation process assist them in perfecting their craft. Because of the pressures put on administrators and teachers to score proficiently, the challenge has become on how to cohesively balance both assessment and improvement. The participants believed that the evaluation process in their system was average, but possessed a strong impact on professional practices. Results of the study revealed teachers believed that they had to use the components of the evaluation process in order to score proficiently. They agreed that the components were important and consideration of evaluation tactics were necessary. Nevertheless, they believed that outside factors were also beneficial. They deny the evaluation process as a proficient tool to assist them

in cultivating their craft. It was also viewed as an instrument that restricted their ability to judge what their students' needs were and felt the evaluation process geared more towards accountability and not teacher growth.

The participants reported that the feedback received from their evaluators was positive but lacked depth. The ideas and suggestions were at times cliché and the evaluators lacked knowledge and true experience with implementing their suggested tactics. Thus, increased growth and correction were not achieved. Teacher evaluations have the ability to greatly increase student achievement through professional development and growth recommendations (Toch, 2008; Norman, 2010; Goe, et. al., 2012). They also felt that a great deal of time was allotted to the evaluation process, but a minimum amount of time was spent assisting them in improving their instructional practices. Ideas and strategies were offered and encouraged, but the time needed to master their development was not given.

Although the participants in this study were evaluated with multiple evaluation tools, they felt that most evaluation tools were the same. In that they include, who observed them, what was observed, and what was done with the results of the evaluation process. Effective evaluations need to be able to assess accurately, provide meaningful feedback, and engage in reflective practices for both evaluator and the teacher. This reflective practice should engage teachers in collaborative conversations about practices that will lead to the ultimate goals of success for teachers and students. An effective teacher evaluation system must be designed to encompass as many measures as possible that fairly and accurately gauge teachers' abilities. Therefore, the methods used to ascertain teacher effectiveness must be rigorous, research-based, and most of all fair.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore teachers' perceptions of the evaluation systems and understand if and how their instructional practices are influenced.

1. How do teachers perceive the components and processes of the evaluation system effect their classroom instruction?
 - A. How do you decide what instructional strategies to use in your classroom?
 - B. What evaluation tool are you evaluated with?
 - C. What does your evaluation system require and look for in terms of instructional practices?
 - D. What components are used to assess instructional practices?
 - E. How do the components relate to effective classroom instruction?
 - F. How do you and your evaluator determine what next steps you should take to improve your classroom instruction?
 - G. How do you both monitor your process?

2. How, if at all, has the evaluation system influenced and informed teachers' instructional practices?
 - A. What do you like about your evaluation system, if anything?
 - B. What do you not like about it?
 - C. In what ways, if any, do you think your approach to lesson planning and teaching has been influenced by your district's evaluation process?
 - D. What are your thoughts about the feedback you have received throughout the evaluation process?

3. What are teachers' perceptions of how accurately their evaluation system reflect and capture their professional performance and capabilities?
 - A. What are the scale ratings for your evaluation system and how would you describe or define your experiences with each of the proficiency scale ratings?
 - B. What do you like, if anything about the scale rating?
 - C. What do you dislike?
 - D. What are your thoughts about the accuracy of the ratings that you have earned under your evaluation system?

Vita

The author was born in Jackson, Mississippi. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education degree in 1998 from the Southern University at New Orleans. She obtained her Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership in 2004 and is currently enrolled in the University of New Orleans doctoral program focusing educational leadership. She has worked in public education for nineteen years in the state of Louisiana, and currently holds the position of Elementary Principal.