An Evaluation of the
Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System
(IPEGS)
To Improve Student Achievement

by
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Abstract


Given recent nationwide impetus towards increased academic standards and the accelerating momentum of the public school accountability movement, teacher effectiveness and teacher appraisal systems, as the primary way to measure effectiveness, have come under much scrutiny and debate. As part of its response to the accountability trend, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) piloted the Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System (IPEGS) in 2006. The IPEGS instrument is comprised of eight performance standards by which instructional personnel are evaluated and boasts being a multiple data-source appraisal system, replacing previous evaluation instruments which focused solely on observing student or teacher behavior. The literature demonstrates a strong correlation between teachers’ favorable and accepting reactions to evaluation systems and subsequent optimal use of the systems to improve teaching practice. Absent from much of this discourse in the literature about teacher performance appraisals is the teacher’s voice in the design, execution, and implementation of evaluation instruments, and there is no knowledge of teacher perceptions of IPEGS. The purpose of this applied dissertation is to conduct a program evaluation of IPEGS by applying the Content-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) method and by analyzing quantitative survey data about teachers’ perceptions regarding the design, execution, and implementation of IPEGS at one Florida public school.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Given nationwide impetus towards increased academic standards and the accelerated momentum of the public school accountability movement resulting in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, teacher effectiveness and teacher appraisal systems, as the primary way to measure effectiveness, have come under much scrutiny and debate (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Ludwigsen, 2009; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). As part of its response to the accountability trend and subsequent legislation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) piloted the Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System (IPEGS) in 2006, “a competent evaluation and appraisal system for instructional personnel that would serve to replace” the previous teacher evaluation instrument (MDCPS IPEGS Handbook, 2009, p. 3). The IPEGS instrument is comprised of eight performance standards by which instructional personnel is evaluated and boasts being a “multiple data source” appraisal system (MDCPS IPEGS Handbook, 2009, p. 3), replacing previous evaluation instruments which focused solely on observing student or teacher behavior (MDCPS IPEGS Handbook, 2009).

As a practicing classroom teacher for more than a decade and as a District-certified trainer in IPEGS for MDCPS, this researcher was privy to teachers’ firsthand, informal impressions of IPEGS as being: overly complex in the unrealistic amount of paperwork and in the sheer number of teaching performance standard-related expectations in order to achieve a proficient (satisfactory) rating; perfunctory and non-representative of a teacher’s performance in that supervisors do not spend enough time in class observations or in follow-up conferences to truly gauge execution; therefore, summative evaluations, never having been preceded by formative evaluations, were not genuinely connected to professional development plans; and finally, there was the inferred perception that mastery of each of the eight performance standards
within the IPEGS instrument was ultimately a subjective decision left to each individual administrator’s sole interpretation and discretion. These informally collected perceptions that teacher evaluations may not be carried out in an effective manner and that they may not contribute substantially to the betterment of teaching practice run parallel to many other studies conducted in the same topic (Blase and Blase, 2003; Davis & Annunziata, 2002; Davis, Pool, & Mits-Cash, 2000; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Hardy, 1997; Marshall, 2005; Okhremtchouk, Seiki, Gilliland, Ateh, Wallace, & Kato, 2009; Ovando, 2001; Peterson & Comeaux, 1990; Pizzi, 2009; Pridemore, 2008; Repici, 2008; Robles, 2007; Stronge & Tucker, 1999; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998).

Current research also asserted that results-oriented and standards-based teacher performance evaluations are linked to student academic achievement (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Ludwigsen, 2009; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Pizzi, 2009; Pridemore, 2008). The literature also pointed to an abundance of teaching evaluation frameworks, best practices behaviors, and professional development and growth activities as a basis for evaluating teacher performance (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Danielson, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2001; Ludwigsen, 2009; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Pizzi, 2009; Pridemore, 2008). The literature also established the importance of using varied data sources, as multiple criterion are more representative of teacher performance (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Ludwigsen, 2009; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Pizzi, 2009). Most critical, the literature also demonstrated a strong correlation between teachers’ favorable and accepting reactions to evaluation systems and subsequent optimal use of the systems to enhance teaching practice (as cited in Ellet et al. 1996; McLoughlin & Pfeiffer, 1988; Keeping & Levy, 2000). However, absent from much of the discourse in the literature about teacher performance appraisals is the teacher’s voice in the design, execution, and
implementation of evaluation instruments (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Pizzi, 2009). More specifically, there was no evidence found on MDCPS instructional personnel’s reaction to the IPEGS once debuted.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is the researcher’s opinion, shared with researchers in the literature, that teacher perspectives need to be taken into consideration during the design, execution, and implementation phases of appraisal instruments in order to produce more authentic, robust, and feasible instruments that are simultaneously: (1) within realistic administrative capabilities, as well as (2) used effectively towards improving instruction (Hardy, 1997; Ovando, 2001; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Pizzi, 2009; Repici, 2008; Robles, 2007; Stronge & Tucker, 1999; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). The literature forcefully concluded that teacher evaluation instruments that engender meaningful teacher investment for the craft are potent conduits for improving student achievement, which is ultimately, as with all education professional endeavors, the highest purpose (Pizzi, 2009).

Thorough explorations of numerous databases (ProQuest, ERIC, OCLC First Search, WilsonWeb, Thomson Web of Knowledge, etc.) have yielded no quantitative dissertation or other scholarly publication that exclusively studies the perceptions of MDCPS teachers regarding the IPEGS evaluation methods. Therefore the problem is extant that teacher perspectives on the current appraisal system have not been effectively examined, qualitatively nor quantitatively. As a result, an indispensable and viable set of data is going untapped.

**Definition of Terms**
Present study/present investigation. The present study or present investigation, used interchangeably, is the original research conducted and then subsequently presented and examined in this applied dissertation.

Teachers/participants/respondents. The respondents in this study will be teachers of reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, as well as arts and electives typically offered in Miami-Dade County Public Schools in grades K-8. All respondents are subject to being evaluated using the current evaluation system, the Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System (IPEGS).

Administrators. These are principals and assistant principals exclusively authorized by contract and responsible for conducting formal evaluations for instructional staff.

Teacher performance standards, performance standards, or instructional standards.

Formal teacher evaluation. This is the system of appraisal for instructional staff which carries contractual authority to issue summative evaluation for continued employment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this applied dissertation is to uncover data about teachers’ perceptions regarding the design, execution, and implementation of IPEGS by conducting quantitative survey research at one Miami-Dade County Public School K-8 learning institution.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Here is where I shall introduce the themes of my literature review including:

History of Teacher Evaluation

Purposes of Teacher Evaluation

Post-Evaluative Results Action

Teacher Perspectives on Teacher Education

The Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System Instrument

Recommendations in the Literature

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to uncover data from participants regarding their perceptions of a standards-based and multiple-data-sourced performance evaluation system used to assess their performance as professional teachers. So the central question for this study is, “What are teacher perceptions of evaluation in a K-8 school within a public school district that uses a performance standards-based and multiple-data-sourced performance evaluation system for teachers?” The guiding research questions that follow are: To what degree is the evaluation of teachers being executed in an effective manner, that is, in a way that significantly supports the improvement of teaching and learning? Then, according to teachers, what factors affect (promote or inhibit) the use of teacher evaluation systems to improve teaching practice and instruction?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

A convenience-sampling, volunteer method will be employed for selecting full-time professional teacher participants from a pool of 50 elementary and middle school teachers within one K-8 school in MDCPS. All of the instructional staff from the school worksite will be invited to participate in the quantitative survey group by way of an administratively sanctioned flyer (Appendix C) as well as through verbal networking and promotion.

In order to ensure veracity and honesty from respondents, confidentiality will be guaranteed and explained to all participants from the worksite completely unassociated with the researcher by way of the survey cover letter (Appendix D). This explanatory cover letter to the questionnaire will delineate administrative clearances and procedures to be employed for maintaining participant and school anonymity throughout the data collection process as well as during reporting phases.

Instruments

This researcher will be employing a quantitative approach for gathering of categorical, descriptive data. The data collection will be conducted in a single phase survey questionnaire.

Survey Instrument. The Teacher Evaluation System Attitude Scale (TESAS, Appendix A) will be the 27-item quantitative Likert-response survey questionnaire used for this study. The TESAS was originally developed to gauge secondary public school teacher perceptions to a standards-based evaluation system in one high school in the state of Massachusetts (Pizzi, 2009). Pizzi (2009) developed the Teacher Evaluation System Attitude Scale by adapting a similar survey used by MassPartners in a preceding pilot study mirroring Pizzi’s 2009 dissertation study with the difference that Pizzi’s study focused on one Massachusetts high school, while
MassPartners measured the perceptions of hundreds of teachers within three Massachusetts school districts (2009). Pizzi also sought to measure the degree of teacher understanding of Massachusetts teacher standards (2009).

The quantitative portion of the Teacher Evaluation System Attitude Scale was verified for internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha and construct validity for the instrument was ascertained by a panel of experts (Pizzi, 2009). The only adaptation that will be made to the quantitative portion of the TESAS will be one regional label changes as applicable to Miami-Dade County: change Seven Standards for Teacher Performance to Eight Performance Standards for Teachers. The qualitative, open-ended portion of the TESAS will not be used for this study.

The four subscales of the Teacher Evaluation System Attitude Scale that will also be used for this study include: (1) The Eight Performance Standards for Teachers; (2) Evaluation Activities and Communication; (3) Evaluation and Instructional Improvement; and (4) Participant Demographics Information. These first three components will specifically address the research questions. Demographics information will be used to describe the site and participant characteristics.

**Procedures**

**Design.** Upon obtaining the necessary clearances from the various regulatory and administrative bodies, this author will have the invitational flyers distributed in teacher mailboxes at the school’s main office. This researcher will also begin to mobilize within the full-time teaching staff to recruit volunteers for survey participation during non-instructional periods after dismissal. The instrument will then be administered to the participants who were personally recruited by the researcher and who responded to the flyer. The questionnaires will be placed in each participating teacher’s mailbox in a sealed envelope. In addition to the
questionnaire within the envelope, participants will find the explanatory cover letter guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity as well as detailing instructions for completing and returning the questionnaire.

**Data analysis.** After a reasonably significant amount of questionnaires have been returned, the data from the completed surveys will be converted to a custom database using the IBM SPSS 17.0 statistical software package. This principal researcher will then conduct relevant statistical analysis of the participants’ responses using the software.

**Limitations**

Presently, this study is limited by two issues including the general limitations inherent of survey research and the relatively small number of study participants.
References


