TEACHER EVALUATION IN FIVE STATES: LESSONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

Jane Gilles, February 2017
Today’s session

- Teacher evaluation policy context
- Methodology and findings from two studies on teacher evaluation
- Structured conversation on lessons for teacher educators
Currently: There is unprecedented policy focus on teacher evaluation (TE) as a means of improving teaching and learning, both internationally and in the U.S.

- Of 29 OECD countries surveyed in 2013, 23 had TE policy frameworks in place.
- 1970: Only four U.S. states had TE policies.
- Today: All 50 states have TE policies; nearly all states have updated their policies since 2009.
- ESSA removes the federal emphasis on teacher evaluation; however, state TE laws are still in place. ESSA raises the bar on equitable access to quality teaching.
Teacher evaluation policy context

- TE policies have spurred controversy across the U.S.
  - Teacher ratings published
  - Lawsuits over TE methods and results
  - TE at issue in highly publicized teacher strikes

- TE linked to teacher accountability movement
  - Market-oriented approaches to teacher policy
  - “Bad teacher” narrative placing teacher at center of reform efforts
Teacher evaluation in five states

- Research study conducted in Missouri and Oregon in 2014-15
  - Purpose: to explore the efforts of local policy actors as they interpreted new teacher evaluation policies and developed local teacher evaluation systems in response to external policy mandates

- Implementation scan conducted in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota in 2015, with follow-up in 2017
  - Purpose: to develop an understanding of the teacher effectiveness landscape in the three states, particularly regarding the implementation of new teacher evaluation policies

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Method

- **Missouri and Oregon:**
  - Phase I: Interviews with local policy actors in six small school districts, three districts in each state ($N = 27$)
  - Phase II: Interviews with state-level policy actors ($N = 8$)
  - Document analysis

- **Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota**
  - Interviews with state-level policy actors in each of the three states ($N = 12$)
  - Follow-up interviews with MN state-level policy actors ($N = 2$)
  - Document analysis

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Findings: MO and OR

The formative purpose of teacher evaluation dominated policy actors’ understanding of the TE policy

- TE embraced as a means of professional growth
- Policy viewed as an improvement on past policy and practice, with a new, more meaningful focus on improving instruction
Findings: MO and OR

Policy actors perceived conflict related to the two main purposes of teacher evaluation (formative and summative)

- Conflict between local actors’ perception of policy goals, which focused on professional growth (formative), and the reasons for the policy’s adoption, which focused on accountability for teachers and schools (summative)

- Confirms tension between formative and summative purposes of evaluation documented in the literature
Policy actors perceived conflict related to the student growth requirement

- Issues of validity in tying student performance to teacher evaluation
- Requirement linked to perceived over-investment in standardized testing
- Implementation planning confounded by lack of clarity in policy and guidance
Findings: MN, ND, and SD

- Certain challenges arose during early implementation efforts:
  - Implementation is an evolving process, with some districts lagging behind.
  - Implementation of student growth measures is a significant challenge.
  - In MN, implementation of student engagement measures is a challenge.
  - Goal setting – both for student learning and for teacher professional growth – is a challenge.
Findings: MN, ND, and SD

- State-level policy actors recommend that teacher preparation programs prepare beginning teachers to:
  - Effectively assess their students using both formative and summative means, and utilize the full range of data on students in making instructional decisions.
  - Set, manage, and assess student instructional goals as well as teacher professional growth goals.
  - Connect student standards to instruction and assessment (MN).
Findings: MN, ND, and SD

- State-level policy actors recommend that teacher preparation programs prepare beginning teachers to:
  - Develop a “vocabulary of practice” for effectively contributing to discussions about teaching and learning in the school setting.
  - Work “multi-generationally” with colleagues in PLCs and other collaborative settings (MN).
  - Be familiar with the teacher evaluation rubrics that are commonly used in the region.
Structured conversation . . .
References


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Questions?

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