

A review of research studies on evaluation of teachers in Turkey; dimensions and methodologies

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to review the research on the evaluation of teachers in Turkey and to arrive at a synthesis on the methodological issues and the conclusions through a content analysis strategy. Review of research on the selected studies was undertaken considering pre-determined criteria; studies (1) done with Turkish sample, (2) presented empirical data, (3) done between 2004 and 2014 and (4) published in refereed journals and defended as graduate studies (Master and Ph.D. theses). These criteria were utilised to select the studies to be content-analysed. Selected studies were analysed across their purpose, design, sample, data collection, findings and implications. A total of 93 studies satisfied the criteria were included in the analysis. The current synthesis indicates that these research studies mainly focuses on six dimensions, such as (1) classroom management competency, (2) instruction (curriculum implementation), (3) teacher development, (4) teacher knowledge, (5) teacher evaluation process and (6) teacher thinking.

Keywords: Research on teachers, teacher evaluation, content analysis.

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1. Introduction

Evaluation of teachers is a complex process and requires various sources and data in order to reach sound, dependable and effective decision making. As discussed in the literature, evaluating teachers by only considering the observations and views of principals and inspectors might not always give a complete picture of teacher performance and growth. There is also a need to envisage teachers' learning as something broader than participation in in-service training courses. According to Timperley (2011), the term 'professional development' is now often associated with the delivery of some kind of information to teachers meant to influence their practice; whereas 'professional learning' refers to a more internal process in which teachers create professional knowledge through interaction with this information in a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings. So, it can be supported by effective pedagogical leadership providing support to teachers. In the case of using numerous sources (such as self-reports, student rating reports, observation results and peer reports), the evaluation would be more meaningful and provide reliable results (Lengeling, 1996; Pehlivan, Demirbas & Eroglu, 2000). Qualified teachers reflect his/her competency such as developing educational systems, conducting reforms and preparing learners for world citizenship in educational activities and thus support child development (Tot, 2013). According to Looney (2011), the different forms of teacher evaluation focus on individual teaching performance in classrooms (teacher appraisal; teacher peer evaluation and student ratings); the school context (external school inspection and internal school self-evaluation) and student outcomes (national or regional student assessments) and value-added assessments to measure gains in learning over time. The literature indicated that teachers' involvement in the teacher evaluation process would improve the quality and effectiveness of teacher evaluation (Atkins, 1996; Johnson, 1997). Ideally, teacher appraisal should give teachers tailored feedback, which should then followed with opportunities for continuous learning in the areas identified (Hill & Herlinhy, 2011). An extensive analysis of the theoretical and research studies that were basically about teacher evaluation appeared to be that the multiple data sources and strong organisational commitments are needed for effective evaluation of teachers that address not only accountability but also professional growth and development (Colby, Bradshaw & Joyner, 2002)

Evaluations of teachers are done by making use of different models and different processes. Egelson (1994), and Egelson and McColskey (1998) identified two types of evaluation processes for teacher evaluation system; formative and summative evaluation. Although both forms of assessment serve specific and separate functions, summative and formative assessments are not mutually exclusive in practice. That is, it is the purpose of the assessment, rather than the task, that delineates the form of the assessment (Earl & Katz, 2006). Egelson (1994) further discussed the functions of those in the teacher evaluation. Summative evaluation based on checking for teacher competency is a general form of teacher evaluation, whereas formative evaluation based on promoting teacher growth and improvement is gaining more popularity. Egelson and McColskey (1998) went beyond and discussed that summative evaluation would serve organisational decision-making processes, whereas formative evaluation would provide feedback for helping them improve on an ongoing basis. A review of the literature by Collins (2004) revealed that there are some other classifications for teacher evaluation. One of those included four dimensions such as scientific, clinical, artistic and eclectic. In addition to this classification, as indicated by Oliva (1989) and Poster (1991), the supervision can be also categorised as scientific management, developmental, laissez-faire, group dynamics, managerial and judgmental.

Teachers are so important for society that no education system can be better than the quality of teachers. The quality of teachers has a tremendous effect on the overall quality of education that students receive (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In this regard, changing the education system in recent years makes it compulsory to evaluate teachers based primarily on student learning. So, revealing and analysing dimensions and methodology of the studies in recent years provide us to see the current situation of teacher evaluation.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study was to portray the research on teacher evaluation in Turkey by reviewing the existing research studies regarding this area. So, by presenting the current situation of the research in teacher evaluation field, this study aims to propose a model depending on the variables (or categories) emerged from the analysis of the selected research studies.

2. Method

In the analysis of the studies and to reach the common findings, the meta-synthesis technique was employed to address the purpose of the study by using various search engines based on different criteria. Meta-synthesis (thematic content analysis) is used to reveal preferred fields by analysing the studies on specific subject thoroughly and making these studies to be synthesised and interpreted with a critical viewpoint (Au, 2007). Meta-analysis, also known as thematic content analysis, brings the findings of several studies together and enables to reach common results (e.g., themes, codes). It helps the researchers to securitise the results of previous studies and interpret the themes emerging (Finfgeld, 2003).

2.1. Selection criteria and data sources

The existing literature in Turkey pointed out that there are plenty of research studies done with the sample of the teachers, students, inspectors, principals and even parent and Ministry of Education (Milli Egitim Bakanligi (MEB)) officials in order to determine teachers' performance and competencies, and evaluate them. In order to better understand the teacher evaluation and to draw a clear picture of current status of teacher evaluation in Turkey, the following criteria were taken into account for selecting the research studies; (1) undertaken in Turkey, (2) undertaken on teacher evaluation, (3) had empirical and first-hand data, (4) undertaken between 2004 and 2014 and (5) published in the selected refereed journals (both national and international) and defended as graduate studies (Master and Ph.D.). The studies satisfied with these criteria were collected from refereed journals published in Turkey, Turkish Council of Higher Education, Thesis Centre, ISI-Web of Science, ERIC database, Scholar Google and Turkish Academic Network and Information Center (Ulusal Akademik Ag ve Bilgi Merkezi-ULAKBIM).

2.2. Process of analysing the research studies

Each of the selected studies was firstly content analysed across 'the article analysis form' developed by the authors. This form includes several sub-categories each corresponds to various sections (e.g., design, participants and characteristics, data collection tool(s) and its quality-validity and reliability, data analysis procedures, findings, conclusion and suggestions) of the articles. Then, the filled forms were brought together to establish the trends and to reach common findings.

In order to analyse (e.g., coding, describing and synthesising) the research studies that satisfied the above criteria, the following steps are taken: (1) extracting the pertinent information from the research studies, (2) coding the studies in terms of purpose, method and sample, (3) coding the results and conclusions based on the themes identified in the studies and (4) describing and synthesising the findings. A table including these dimensions was constructed to easily examine the themes emerged, and to compare research studies. During the review of existing literature considering the stated sources, a total of 93 research studies were found to be related to the teacher evaluation in order to portray the dimensions of the teacher evaluation. Studies included in the analysis were drawn from the selected refereed journals ($n = 61$), and the master ($n = 24$) and Ph.D. thesis ($n = 8$) available in Turkish Council of Higher Education, Thesis Center.

3. Results

The findings of the studies were firstly discussed according to the research design used, subjects (participants) of the studies, the level of teachers evaluated in the studies and the publishing date of the studies. The categories and the sub-categories were further discussed based upon codes emerged. Since some of the studies included more than one category (classroom management, knowledge..., etc), different types of subjects (students, teachers..., etc) and more than one levels (K, 1st–8th and 9th–12th grade), the number of the studies stated in the following tables may not correspond to the number of the studies considered (examined) for the study.

3.1. Analysis of design, subjects, level of teachers and date of the evaluation studies

Quantitative research methodology was preferred in 60 of the selected studies. A questionnaire or an instrument each of which included either a 3- or 4- or 5- or 7-point Likert-type scale items, and knowledge test was used in any of quantitative studies. Twenty-two of the studies were designed by making use of a qualitative research method. Semi-structured, structured interview or participants-observation were used as a data collection instrument for the studies in which qualitative method was used. A combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods that is also called a mixed model was used in only 11 studies. For these studies, a combination of questionnaire-observation, of questionnaire-interview or test-interview was used.

In addition to some studies reported data on more than one group of subject, teachers were the main subjects who had been invited to the studies. Teachers were given opportunities to evaluate themselves in 72 studies. The students were the subjects of 26 studies, the principals and inspector were the subjects of 15 studies. Parents, prospective teachers, academicians and MEB personals were invited in 10 of the studies to evaluate the teachers.

As some studies reported data on more than one school level, 65 of the evaluation studies focused upon the primary grade and evaluated the teachers who served first grade to eighth grade. Secondary school teachers were evaluated in 34 of the studies. Pre-school teachers also called as kindergarten teachers were evaluated in only five studies. It can be understood that the evaluation of the pre-school teachers got little attention in teacher evaluation studies.

3.2. Dimensions of research studies on evaluation of teachers in Turkey

Six main categories emerged from the meta-synthesis study included 93 teacher evaluation studies in Turkey. Each of the studies was coded according to the dimension of purpose, methodology (design, sample, instrumentation and analysis), findings and suggestions. As a result of the critical and in-depth coding process, the name of the categories was decided by taking into account the common codes that were explored in the analysis. Having determined the codes, the categories were constructed and named. Six categories were entitled as (1) classroom management competency, (2) instruction (curriculum implementation), (3) teacher development, (4) teacher knowledge, (5) teacher evaluation process and (6) teacher thinking.

3.3. Demographic variables in the analysed studies

Some demographic variables, called also as independent variables, were also emerged from the meta-synthesis of the study. Those demographic variables which were associated with teacher evaluation were gender, experience, department, faculty and university which was graduated, branches (math, science..., etc), age, region, in-service training taken, extra course taken, level served, degree earned (master and Ph.D.), manager position, marriage, job satisfaction, SES level and workload (course load). Since either one or more of these factors and demographics were collected from the participants, some of the researchers just used them as a descriptor of the sample, whereas

the other preferred to use them in order to explore their effects on teacher evaluation and how much of the variance could be accounted on the variation of teacher evaluation.

4. Conclusion and discussion

The content analysis of the existing research studies regarded as teacher evaluation provides a critical evaluation and summary, and further, a synthesis reflecting a model of teacher evaluation in Turkey. Six categories, also called as variables, pertaining to the teacher evaluation in Turkey emerged from this analysis. Furthermore, a model including the main categories and sub-categories was proposed depending on the relationship among the categories emerged (see Figure 1).

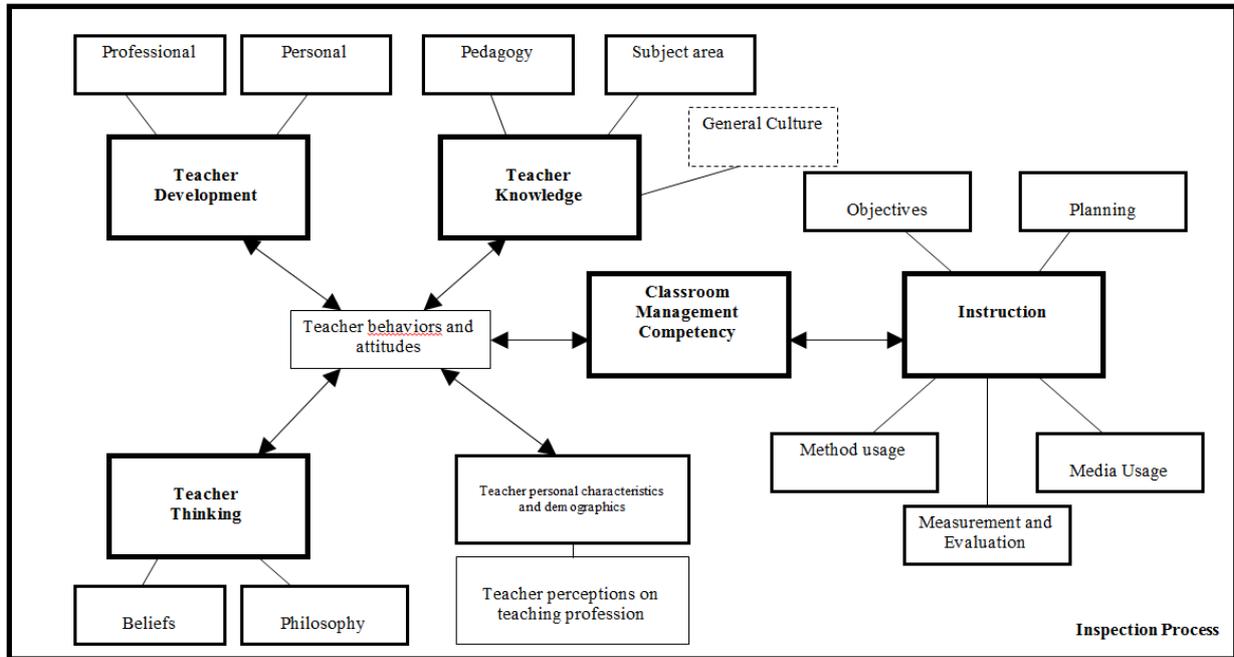


Figure 1. Model that represents the teacher evaluation in Turkey based upon the research studies content analysed

Considered the aims of the teacher evaluation studies, six categories emerged. When deeply looking at the studies, sub-categories were further revealed. It was apparent in the analysis that the results of these studies pertaining to any of the categories and sub-categories were associated with and contributing to one another.

As revealed from the analysis of 93 teacher evaluation studies, the teacher evaluation seems to be a quite complicated process in Turkey. Number of variables, each of which is interacting with one another, involves in the process to operate the teacher evaluation. Considering the variables (categories, sub-categories and demographics), it appears to be hard to propose a model since the literature surveyed did not clearly identify the association among the variables. However, when we look at the big picture through the content analysis of all studies, the association among the variables was clear leading to the dimensions of the model proposed as a result of this study. Figure 1 illustrates a teacher evaluation model that was created by considering the analysis of 93 research study. Teacher evaluation basically included the main categories and sub-categories that are associated with one another. Six main categories shown in the model are (1) classroom management competency, (2) instruction (curriculum implementation), (3) teacher development, (4) teacher knowledge, (5) teacher evaluation process and (6) teacher thinking. The category of inspection process embarrasses the other

five dimensions in the model. Teacher development includes the sub-dimensions of professional and personal development. The category of teacher knowledge consists of two sub-categories such as pedagogical knowledge and subject area knowledge. Even though it was not evaluated in any of selected studies, general culture is likely to contribute to teacher knowledge. Beliefs (in particular, self-efficacy and epistemological beliefs) and teaching and personal philosophy are the sub-categories of teacher thinking. Classroom management is merely based on qualification and competency on the teaching profession. Instruction, called as the implementation of curriculum, comprises the main elements of objectives, planning of instruction, method and media usage, and measurement and evaluation. These were not identified as separate categories, but teacher behaviours and attitudes are most probably influenced by and influence on the other components in the model. The statistical analyses performed in some of the selected studies indicate that teacher personal characteristics and demographics (e.g., gender, experience..., etc) influence the other emerged categories. Teacher behaviours and attitudes that appear to be more associated with teacher personal characteristics and demographics (age, gender, experience, branches, faculty, department and university graduated and some other), and teacher perceptions (i.e., SES level of students and school, and high and low expected students) and feelings (i.e., dedication) on teaching profession seem to influence whole evaluation process by interacting with all other categories.

5. Suggestions

Following suggestion could be drawn from the analysed studies. This study indicated several factors/dimensions associated with teacher evaluation research. Thus, the researchers suggested performing an in-depth analysis of each of these factors to better understand teacher evaluation research and to examine the missing areas in the field of teacher evaluation in Turkey. Furthermore, experimental and correlational studies are needed to be conducted to effectively determine the factors and interventions that possibly influence the dimensions of teacher evaluation.

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