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EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Appraisal

A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to examine EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher appraisal in terms of its purpose, methods, and criteria. Data for this study were collected from 20 EFL teachers who were given a questionnaire asking them to indicate to what extent they agreed with a total of 44 statements in a Likert-style format, with space to write their comments. Descriptive statistical analysis of responses revealed several characteristics that many teachers considered to reflect effective teacher appraisal. In terms of purpose, teachers seemed to lean more towards conducting appraisals for professional improvement purposes than making personnel decisions. As for methods, teachers seemed to prefer to be evaluated by their supervisors, whether in terms of classroom observation or evaluation of their written work (tests, portfolios, etc.), to being evaluated by non-EFL supervisors, students, or external evaluators (whether in terms of classroom observation, questionnaires or asking them to take tests). As for evaluation criteria, the results revealed that teachers strongly agreed with most of the evaluation criteria in the literature but were less enthusiastic about such criteria as knowledge of learning theories, use of visual aids, and using higher cognitive levels in discussions and examinations.

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تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تقييم أداء المعلمين

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معاهد التمريض - دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الى معرفة تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية المتعلقة بعملية تقييم المعلمين من حيث الأغراض والأساليب والمعايير. تم جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة من 20 معلماً من معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية ، الذين تم إعطاؤهم استبياناً يطلب منهم الإشارة إلى مدى اتفاقهم مع مجموع 44 عبارة منسقة وفق مقياس ليكرت ، مع وجود مساحة لكتابة تعليقاتهم. كشف التحليل الإحصائي للإجابات عن العديد من الخصائص التي اعتبر العديد من المعلمين

انها تميز المعلم الفعال. أما من حيث الغرض من التقييم فيبدو أن المعلمين يميلون أكثر نحو استخدام التقييمات لأغراض التطوير المهني أكثر من استخدامها لغرض اتخاذ القرارات المتعلقة بشؤون الموظفين. وفيما يتعلق بأساليب التقييم ، يبدو أن المعلمين يفضلون أن يتم تقييمهم من قبل مشرفيهم المباشرين، سواء باستخدام أسلوب الزيارات الصفية أو عبر تقييم أعمالهم الكتابية (الامتحانات ، الملفات ، وما إلى ذلك) ، أكثر من أن يتم تقييمهم من قبل الطلاب أو مقيمين خارجيين غير متخصصين بتدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. أما بالنسبة لمعايير التقييم ، فقد أوضحت النتائج أن المعلمين يتفقون بشدة مع معظم معايير التقييم الشائعة الاستخدام ، ولكنهم كانوا أقل حماساً لمعايير مثل المعرفة بنظريات التعلم ، واستخدام الوسائل البصرية ، واستخدام المستويات المعرفية العليا في المناقشات والامتحانات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقييم المعلمين ، تصورات المعلمين ، اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية ، اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية ، أغراض التقييم ، أساليب التقييم .

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

The English Department at the Institutes of Nursing (ION) does not have its own appraisal system (especially classroom appraisal forms), and English teachers are currently assessed in terms of forms (and processes) that were originally designed (and are still used) for evaluating nursing teachers. This resulted in English teachers and English supervisors (myself and my predecessors) complaining that those forms and processes contained items that did not apply to English teachers and failed to capture and evaluate many language teaching characteristics.

Moreover, during staff meetings, post-observation conferences, and informal talks with teachers, I have come to perceive that English teachers seem to have varying views of the purpose of the appraisal process (e.g., formal evaluation vs. professional development), effective methods of appraising teachers (especially when it comes to students rating English teachers), who should conduct it (whether senior administrators who do not know much about English should be involved), and the best criteria for evaluating teachers' performance, and of course these perceptions have never been investigated.

For these reasons, and based on the researcher's agreement with Bailey's (1996) belief that decisions on teacher evaluation should be made "in collaboration with the teachers involved and other stakeholders"(p. 208), the current study is a first step in the long process of revising the whole English teacher evaluation system at the ION.

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of English language teacher appraisal in terms of its purpose, methods, and criteria.

1.2 Research Questions

To address the purpose of the study, three research questions were posited to guide the study:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the purpose of the teacher appraisal process?
2. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the best method for appraising EFL teachers?
3. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the best criteria for appraising EFL teachers?

1.3. Significance

The study will shed light on how EFL teachers view the appraisal process at the ION and thus help me as an EFL teacher supervisor and the administration to improve our teacher evaluation process and build a better appraisal tool for assessing our EFL teachers. It will also provide some insight into all tertiary institutions in the UAE where English is taught as a foreign language.

1.3 Literature Review

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines teacher evaluation as "The process of collecting data and making professional judgments about performance for decision-making." (1999, p. 25). In TESOL settings, a similar definition, but with a more general purpose, is offered by Genesee (2001), who defines teacher evaluation as "a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about teaching and learning in order to make informed decisions that enhance student achievement and the success of educational programs." (p. 144)

The same concept has been labeled *appraisal*, *evaluation*, and *assessment* by different writers. In line with Braskamp and Ory's (1994) confirmation that the terms assessment and evaluation "have now become interchangeable in higher education" (p.13), for the purposes of this study, all three words will be used interchangeably and will all refer to the process of collecting data and making professional judgments about teachers' performance.

1.3.1 Purposes of Teacher Appraisal

There seems to be a variety of opinions about what constitutes the major purposes of teacher appraisal. Some scholars talk about two purposes, while others talk about three, four, and even more, as shown below. However, despite these divergent views, it may be safe to say that most scholars seem to think of two major purposes of teacher appraisal, which will be described below.

In their seminal work on the different approaches to teacher evaluation in TESOL, Pennington and Young (1989) identify two types of teacher evaluation in terms of the purposes or "motivations" (p. 620) behind them. The first is "formative" evaluation, whose purpose is "to help teachers improve their performance by providing them with information, judgments, and suggestions on what and how to teach," and the second type is "summative" evaluation which aims at "providing information for decision-making with respect to hiring, firing, tenure, promotion, assignments, and salary."

Similarly, Hutchinson (1995, p. 21) talks about two major purposes behind teacher appraisal programs, and these are either “extending and maintaining managerialist control and accountability” (p. 21) or “the professional development of staff.”

On a similar note, such authors as Danielson and McGreal (2000), Casey, Gentile, and Bigger (1997), Ur (2012), and Braskamp and Ory (1994) all talk about two purposes of evaluation, naming the first as *summative, quality assurance, institutional, institutional accountability, and hiring-and-firing*; and naming the second as *formative, professional development, staff development, and individual improvement*.

While adopting the formative and summative purposes of evaluation, Bailey (2006) agrees with Daresh (2001) in adding a third primary purpose for evaluation, i.e., the diagnostic purpose. Bailey starts by describing the formative and summative purposes calling them the “Two basic types of evaluation ... discussed in the program evaluation literature” (2006, p. 184) in a similar manner to that mentioned above. One new element she adds to her description is that of time. So when talking about formative evaluation, she mentions that it is “conducted to provide feedback to an ongoing project” [my underlining] and describes *Summative* evaluation as “a final assessment ... at the end of a project or funding period” [my underlining again].

Bailey then adds the third “diagnostic” purpose, which states that one of the purposes of conducting teacher evaluation is that it “provides baseline data about the normal state of affairs prior to any intervention or treatment.” (p.185)

On the other hand, Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983) talk about four purposes for teacher evaluation, and these are: “Individual staff development, School improvement, Individual personnel (job status) decisions - School status (e.g., certification) decisions” (p. 302). Thus, they clearly distinguish purposes on two levels. First is the “stakeholder” level, i.e., individual vs. institution. Second is the end product level, i.e., improvement vs. taking decisions.

Another classification of teacher evaluation purposes into four is given by Stake (1989, p.13), who classifies them into: offering information for merit recognition and deficiency repair; helping in the selection of the most talented teachers for new jobs, and the retention of the essential instructors for existing ones; enhancing instructors’ continuous professional development; and making a contribution to the comprehension of the school’s functioning as a whole. Purposes 1, 2, and 4 are thought of from the institutional perspective, while purpose 2 is taken from the individual perspective.

So, apart from Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983), most of the literature assumes one level of classification of purposes, i.e., summative/institutional/decisions vs. formative / individual / improvement, not to forget Bailey / Darish’s new type of “diagnostic” evaluation.

1.3.2 Methods of Teacher Appraisal

The literature on methods of teacher appraisal within TESOL seems to talk about a small list of such methods. In terms of the professional development purpose of teacher appraisal, Ur (2012) lists the following three methods of evaluation: “personal reflection,” “collaborative discussion with colleagues,” and “student feedback” (pp. 289-291).

On the other hand, Pennington and Young (1989) provide a longer list of seven methods of teacher evaluation that cover both the professional development and the hiring/firing aspects. These methods are: “teacher interviews, competency tests, student evaluations, student achievement, classroom observation, peer review, and faculty self-evaluation” (p. 619). Danielson and McGreal (2000) provide a similar list but add such new methods as *structured reflection* (which is presented as a different method than self-assessment), *assembling of a professional portfolio*, and *questionnaires given to parents* (pp. 47-53).

Pennington (1989, p. 168), on the other hand, classifies evaluation tools into two types: fluid-response instruments (conversations, letters, and open-ended questionnaires) and fixed-response instruments (limited response questionnaires, rating scales, tests, and different kinds of summative descriptive data).

Moreover, it may need to be clarified that in addition to supervisors who usually conduct classroom observations, the literature shows that many other educators might participate in this process. According to Danielson and McGreal (2000), such educators can include “mentor teachers, department chairs, and central office personnel” (pp. 57-8). Bailey (2006) adds other possible participants in the evaluation process, such as “regional inspectors, school-based supervisors, students, peers, self, people outside the program” (p. 184).

1.3.3 Criteria of Teacher Appraisal

The area where viewpoints seem to vary the most in teacher evaluation is that of the criteria of teacher evaluation. At a time when most scholars in the field of education agree on the importance of having a set of standards or criteria against which teachers’ work can be compared (Daresh, 2001; Danielson and McGreal, 2000; Lally and Myhill, 1994), and that for a teacher evaluation system to be successful “a clear, visible, and appropriate set of evaluation criteria” (McGreal, 1988, p. 13) is required, nevertheless, many of these educators still recognize the extreme difficulty of “determining the standards” (Bailey, 2006, p. 206) due to the complexity of the educational environment to the extent that some of them state that “it is virtually impossible to identify universal criteria for language teacher evaluation” (p. 198).

Danielson and McGreal (2000) argue that teaching standards or criteria state “what teachers should know and be able to do in the exercise of their profession (p. 32). They go on to say that when educators start classifying the criteria, however, they seem to ignore the “what teachers know,” and divide these criteria in terms of “what teachers do in the course of their professional practice” (inputs) and the results they achieve (outputs) (p. 33)

On a similar note, Bailey (2006, p. 213) attributes the complexity of evaluating teaching effectiveness to the fact that this effectiveness is influenced by such factors as “the content being taught, the learners, ages, and cultural values of the educational system.”

Despite the complexity of evaluating teachers’ performance and effectiveness, most educators agree that teacher appraisal is an indispensable tool for enhancing the quality of education at any institution. They also seem to agree that no matter who develops the standards adopted for teacher evaluation, “it is important that the teachers acknowledge them

as being helpful and appropriate before those standards are used for evaluation (Bailey, 2006:212).”

The teacher education literature is full of lists of such standards, and the following is just a selection of some of those lists. Acheson and Gall (1997, pp. 25-26) list nine characteristics of successful teachers. The characteristics are *clarity, variety of materials and methods, enthusiasm, task-oriented approach, avoidance of harsh criticism, indirect teaching style, emphasizing content covered in tests, providing an overview, and using questions at many levels.*

Goodwin and Stevens (1993, p. 166) offer a similar list of generally accepted characteristics of “good” teachers that shares three elements with the previous list: *enthusiasm, clarity, and avoidance of harsh criticism.* The list, however, adds the following new criteria: knowledge of the subject area, stimulation of interest in the subject area, organization, concern and caring for students, use of higher cognitive levels in discussions and examinations, use of visual aids, encouragement of active learning and student discussion, and provision of feedback.

Ramsden (1992) prefers to talk about principles of effective teaching that are expressed in terms of the actions of a good teacher. These revolve around teachers’ interest and clarification, their regard for pupils and their education, suitable evaluation and feedback, clear objectives, promoting student independence; gaining knowledge from learners and other resources on the impacts of teaching and the manner in which it may be improved. Finally, Brown and Lee (2015, p. 546) present a list of 30 characteristics of good language teaching, which he then classifies into the four major groups *background knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities.*

1.4 Extant Research on Teacher’s Perception of Teacher Appraisal

Several studies have been conducted on teachers’ perception of teacher appraisal. Although they do not all necessarily focus on the purpose, methods, and criteria of teacher appraisal, some of the findings offer valuable insights for the current study.

In a study at Nene College, Northampton, Smith (1995) examined staff appraisal in higher education by surveying the opinions of appraisees, appraisers, and senior management regarding various aspects of the performance review system. The results showed that most appraisees and appraisers thought that appraisers should be line managers rather than peers and that classroom observations should be part of the appraisal system. The opportunity for staff to air views and raise issues during the appraisal interviews was also identified as a particular advantage/purpose of the appraisal process.

In a similarly designed study of local secondary schools in Hong Kong, Lo (1998) conducted a survey to explore the perceptions of both appraisers and appraisees of the teacher appraisal system there. His findings showed that both appraisers and appraisees “have a positive attitude towards teacher appraisal” and that while middle managers advocate both formative and summative appraisal, teachers “prefer the formative appraisal.” As for appraisal methods, both groups considered classroom observation effective, with most teachers agreeing to be observed by subject panel heads but not by principals. While both

groups agreed that examination of teachers' overall performance and self-evaluation are effective methods, they both disagreed with regarding parent evaluation as an effective method in the appraisal system. As for criteria, both groups agreed that "skills, attitude, and knowledge are important criteria in teacher appraisal." The "skill for and knowledge about classroom teaching are considered the most important criteria in setting up the appraisal system."

In response to a study by Kyriacou (1997) which examined teacher appraisal from the perspective of 41 appraisers and where the results indicated that appraisers generally felt that teacher appraisal had been of value to both the appraisee and the appraiser, Bartlet (1998) decided to explore the perceptions of all staff involved in the appraisal process and thus collected data from senior managers, appraisers, and appraisees from three comprehensive schools concerning their perception of teacher appraisal, which resulted in a different, more complicated, picture than that in Kyriacou's study. This time reactions to appraisal varied greatly among appraisees, depending on a number of significant factors such as whether the respondents were appraisees only and not appraisers as well; their status and position within the school hierarchy; their age, and how long they had been teaching. While younger, newer teachers thought that appraisal was important in terms of career advancement, more experienced appraisees saw appraisal as a "compulsory chore" and felt that they had little to gain and could therefore only lose from this process, expressing fears of appraisers using confidential, personal information as some kind of "hold" over them in the future. On the other hand, Bartlet maintains that in some cases, several appraisees did manage to utilize the appraisal process to highlight their unhappiness about their current positions.

2. METHOD

2.1 Context

The program at the Institutes of Nursing (ION) is a three-year Diploma program designed for students who hold an official Secondary School Certificate from the United Arab Emirates or its equivalent. The language of instruction at the Institutes is English. In addition to the major nursing-related courses students are required to take throughout the three years, one English course that matches the students' language proficiency needs is offered each semester. The ultimate goal of the English program in the ION, according to the ION *Program Package*, is "maintaining students' academic and professional functioning since English is the language used in all health care facilities in the multicultural society of the UAE, and it is the language that can help them become lifelong learners in their field of specialty."(p. 3)

According to the ION Instructions on Classroom Observation (MOH-ION-DOC-INS-ACD-006), "The primary purpose of the observation is improving the teaching and learning processes at the Institutes of Nursing." In reality, however, the results of the teacher appraisal process are used for both professional development and management-related purposes.

ION teachers (both nursing and English) are currently evaluated principally through two methods: classroom observation (twice per semester) and student evaluation (once for each course per semester). The scheduling of classroom observations in the English Department may be placed at the stricter end of Bailey's (2006, p. 85) scale, where the

administration decides the observation's date and time, and teachers are not informed of the observation until the session begins. However, teachers have a copy of the checklist they are assessed against and have a very good idea of what they are being evaluated on. As for Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), teachers have a clear idea and a copy of the list of criteria they are being evaluated against.

2.2 Participants

Due to the small number of teachers that represented the population of the study, I decided to study the whole population (i.e., all 20 English teachers at the three branches of the ION). All participants are non-native speakers of English with their tertiary-level EFL teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years. Most participants were females (70%) and spoke Arabic as their mother tongue (90%). Their qualifications ranged between Ph.D. (N = 1), M.A. (N = 11) and B.A. (N = 8).

2.3 Limitations

The results are subject to bias, as teachers who might disagree with certain items already applied at the ION might not want to criticize these since the researcher is at the same time their direct supervisor. On the other hand, this relationship with the researcher might motivate participants to take the opportunity and voice their opinions and concerns. The high percentage of teachers writing their names on the questionnaire and those who came to discuss specific items after handing in the questionnaire suggests that such a bias could not have altered the findings much. This limitation calls for caution in interpreting the results of the study.

2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations of working with fellow teachers were observed. Teachers were given the choice to participate without pressure. They were informed of their participation in a study about their perceptions of teacher appraisal before being given the questionnaire. I explained that everything they said would be confidential, as the names of those tutors who decided to write their names would not be mentioned in the study report. Data were presented as given. Numbers (e.g., T1, T2, etc.) were used to refer to different teachers in reporting the study.

2.5 The Pilot Study

The final version of the questionnaire was pilot tested with eight EFL teachers at a private school in Dubai. The eight participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire and provide feedback on the clarity of the items. Some minor changes were made to the form to make it more understandable within their environment (e.g., replacing "branch manager" with "principal" and "ION" with "school," etc.). After recollecting the forms and tabulating the results, a number of changes were made to the final questionnaires after consultation with my module leader and local tutors.

2.6 Instruments and Procedures

Study participants (N = 20) were administered the faculty appraisal questionnaire (see Appendix A). To answer the three research questions of the current study, the questionnaire was divided into the following three sections:

2.6.1 Purposes of Appraisal

To assess teachers' perception of the purpose behind conducting teacher appraisal, participants were provided with a 10-item, 4-point Likert-type scale. Each of the ten items represented one of the major purposes of teacher appraisal as reported in the literature. Participants were then requested to react to statements by making one of four possible choices: *strongly agree*, *tend to agree*, *tend to disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. Of the ten items, three statements (items 1,2 and 3) represented *Individual staff development* purposes, two statements (items 4 and 5) represented *school improvement* purposes, three statements (items 6,7 and 10) represented *Individual personnel decisions* purposes, and one statement (item 8) representing "school status decisions," and one statement (item 9) represented the purpose of eliciting information about a program before making an intervention. The first four categories were based on the work done by Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983), whereas the fifth category was inspired by Bailey (2006).

2.6.2 Methods of Appraisal

I also wanted to assess teachers' perception of the best methods of teacher appraisal, and therefore the second section of the questionnaire consisted of a 14-item, 4-point Likert-type scale. Each of the fourteen items represented one of the major methods of teacher appraisal as reported in the literature (see Section 1.3.2). This time participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed that those items were effective methods in an EFL teacher appraisal system by making one of four possible choices: *strongly agree*, *tend to agree*, *tend to disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. Of the fourteen items, four statements (items 1,2,3 and 4) related to "classroom observation" by different observers, five statements (items 5,6,11,13, and 14) related to written work produced by teachers or their students, two statements (items 9 and 12) related to teachers being evaluated at the end of the course (by students or their future employers), (d) two statements (items 7 and 10) representing methods that are usually associated with objective measurement, and (e) one statements (item 8 which falls at the other end of the continuum in terms of how strict the process is.

2.6.3 Criteria of appraisal

Finally, I wanted to assess teachers' perceptions of the best criteria for teacher appraisal. Therefore, the third section of the questionnaire consisted of a 20-item, 4-point Likert-type scale. Each of the twenty items represented one of the major criteria of teacher appraisal as reported in the literature (see Section 1.3.3).. Participants were then requested to react to statements by making one of four possible choices: *very important*, *important*, *rather important*, or *not important*. Of the twenty items, six statements (items 2,12,15,16,17 and 19) related to teachers' *background knowledge*, (b) nine statements (items 4,5,7,8,10,13,14,18

and 20) related to teachers' *pedagogical skills*, and (c) five statements (items 1,3,6 ,9 and 11) related to teachers' *interpersonal skills*. Most of the items in this section were taken from Goodwin and Stevens (1993), whereas the later categorization of different criteria followed Brown and Lee's (2015, p.546) categorization of "Good Language –Teaching Characteristics."

All three sections of the questionnaire were followed by some space for adding other items (purposes, methods, or criteria) or writing their comments. As soon as I got the approval to conduct the study from the ION administration, I started distributing the questionnaire to Sharjah branch teachers on an individual basis, each in her free time. Teachers in the other two branches received the questionnaire also in Sharjah, where they came for a professional development workshop. Most of them finished it within their 45-minute break, whereas four gave it back only some 15 minutes after the end of the workshop. Every time I gave out the questionnaire, I made sure to remind tutors of the content of the introduction, where I stated the purpose of the questionnaire and assured them their data would stay anonymous. Most teachers, however, wrote their names on the questionnaire paper and said they were prepared to be interviewed later, if necessary, while a few with strong opinions on certain issues came to me and made sure that I understood their point of view as will be clarified in the results section. A few teachers asked for an explanation of certain items, especially items 8 and 9 in section A (provide evidence to external institutions, and provide baseline data about the normal state of affairs) and item 10 in section C (Provision of feedback), asking me, "Feedback for whom?"

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 16.0. The results generally showed that teachers had a positive attitude towards teacher appraisal, especially for professional development. This is in line with findings in the works of Lo (1998) and Kyriacou (1997) but goes against Bartlett's (1998) findings since all participants in this study fall within the "more experienced" category of teachers that his study showed to view appraisal as a "compulsory chore" of little value. However, care should be taken in interpreting this attitude since the researcher is the teachers' direct supervisor (see limitations section).

3.1 Purposes of Appraisal

All teachers agreed that individual staff development was an appropriate purpose for conducting EFL teacher appraisal. Among individual staff development items, conducting teacher appraisal *to provide constructive feedback to individual teachers* received the greatest endorsement, with 90% of the teachers expressing their strong agreement with it, whereas a smaller majority (70%) tended to agree that teacher appraisal should be conducted to identify *teachers' strengths and weaknesses*.

All teachers also seemed to agree that school improvement was an appropriate purpose for conducting EFL teacher appraisal. Among the two school improvement items, a vast majority of teachers (80%) strongly agreed that teacher appraisal should be conducted *to*

provide direction for staff development practices, and a smaller majority (70%) tended to agree that it should be conducted *to improve the quality of teaching* at the ION.

As for Individual personnel decisions as a purpose for teacher appraisal, teachers seemed to have mixed opinions. At the time that all teachers seemed to agree that *helping in making decisions on granting promotions* was an appropriate purpose for conducting EFL teacher appraisal, with 60% of them stating that they strongly agreed with it, the two items related to using appraisal results for *taking decisions on renewing or terminating teachers* were disagreed with by six teachers. Only four teachers strongly agreed with them in both cases.

The item about *providing evidence to external institutions* also received a mixed response and was the only item in this section that teachers strongly disagreed with! All in all, six teachers disagreed with it being used as a purpose for evaluation, while the other 70% agreed with it – 20% strongly agreed with it.

Finally, the item about using appraisal for *diagnostic purposes* was accepted by a vast majority (90%) and disagreed with by only two teachers (10%).

Thus, as debate continues over what constitutes an appropriate evaluation purpose, teachers in this study seem to agree more with the use of teacher appraisal for professional development for the staff and the institution than for personnel decision-making purposes.

These findings seem to agree with studies conducted by Lo (1998), as well as Danielson and McGreal (2000), who maintain that, unlike legislators and policymakers, teachers “tend to think that teacher evaluation should be designed for professional development and improvement of teaching.” (p. 9)

3.2 Methods of Appraisal

The four items about classroom observation received a mixed response, mainly depending on the person doing the observation. While all teachers agreed with being observed by their English supervisor – Director of Eng. Dept. - (with 70% expressing strong agreement), respondents were equally divided regarding being observed by their branch managers and their peers as a method of teacher appraisal. It should be noted that strong disagreement responses outnumbered strong agreement ones in both items. As for being observed by the nursing supervisor (ASP), the majority (60%) seemed to disagree, and again strong disagreement responses outnumbered those with strong agreement.

As to evaluating teachers using written work produced by the teachers or their students, teachers seemed to agree with the concept, with all of them agreeing with the use of *the quality of the tests prepared by teachers* as well as *the quality of their marking of tests* in addition to *teachers' lesson plans* in teacher appraisal. A vast majority (90%) also agreed with using *portfolios* for teacher appraisal. The only item about *using students' written work* was also accepted by most teachers (80%).

Evaluating teachers at the end of the course also received a mixed response depending on who was doing the evaluation. *Asking students to evaluate teachers* was accepted by a

simple majority of teachers (60%), but at the same time was strongly disagreed with by 30% of teachers.

Having *students' future employers evaluate teachers*, on the other hand, was rejected by most tutors (70%), with 20% strongly disagreeing with it.

Using test results as an “objective” method of appraising teachers also received mixed responses depending on who was taking the test, for while 80% of teachers accepted *using students' test results* for teacher evaluation, 60% of teachers rejected *asking teachers to take tests* and then using these for faculty appraisal.

Finally, most teachers (70%) seemed to agree with *using self-evaluation* for teacher evaluation, with 30% expressing strong agreement.

Thus, and in line with findings by Smith (1995) and Lo (1998), all participants seem to agree with the importance of classroom observation as an effective tool for teacher appraisal as long as it is done by their direct supervisor. Teachers' disagreement about being evaluated by their branch managers or their peers (with *strongly disagree* outnumbering *strongly agree*) as well as their clear disagreement with being evaluated by the nursing supervisors (ASP) or by such external stakeholders as students' future employers, also agree with results found in Lo (1998) where most teachers preferred to be observed by their “subject panel heads but not principals” (p.iii) nor parents, and Smith's (1995) study participants' preference to be observed by “line managers rather than peers.” (p.189)

One possible explanation is that teachers have suspicions about these professionals' lack of necessary knowledge and expertise in language teaching, which makes them unable to give a fair and accurate evaluation. One reason a teacher (T1) volunteered to give me about why she indicated she agreed with being observed by her branch manager was that “she [the manager] needs to know what's happening in the classroom.” Teachers' strong agreement with using self-evaluation as a tool for teacher appraisal also goes in line with Lo's (1998) findings.

Teachers' narrative comments (see 3.4 below) also reflected concerns about the teacher appraisal process. Two teachers expressed dissatisfaction with having only unannounced classroom observations. One possible explanation is that both announced and unannounced observations were used until last year when a decision was made to make both observations unannounced.

3.3 Criteria of appraisal

This is the section where teachers' results varied the least (the highest statistical range was 2). The results revealed that teachers seem to believe that background knowledge is a very important criterion in faculty appraisal. Except for item 15 (see below), most participants (between 70% and 90%) marked all the other five items as very important. The only criterion teachers seemed to disagree with was the item about teachers' *knowledge of teaching and learning theories* (item 15). Six teachers indicated that such knowledge is only somewhat important. Ten other participants were not as enthusiastic about marking it as very important as they did for all the other *background knowledge* items.

As for teachers' pedagogical skills, again, teachers seemed to agree on the importance of this criterion. The criteria that most teachers seemed to consider very important ranked in the following order: *organization, classroom management, flexibility and adapting lesson as it unfolds, and perception of students' linguistic needs*. The *provision of feedback* criterion received a 50/50 rating between important and very important, and the item about *using a variety of teaching techniques* received a very similar rating, with only one teacher considering it "somewhat important. The only two criteria where teachers seemed to disagree were the *use of visual aids* (which garnered the most extreme results in this category with eight teachers considering it very important, while six teachers marked it as only somewhat important), and the criterion about the *use of higher cognitive levels* where teachers' responses seemed to center around the *important* rating.

Most teachers (70-80 %) also seemed to agree that *teachers' interpersonal skills* were very important, with only two tutors marking the item about *avoiding harsh criticism* as *somewhat important*.

3.4 Teachers' Narrative Responses

Most teachers communicated to me that the items included in the questionnaire covered all that they had in mind and that they could not think of anything else to add. Still, five teachers wrote some comments.

The section that received the most narrative comments was the other "methods of appraisal" section, where one teacher (T1) wrote, "Areas of teacher significant contribution, outside duty, for example, students' activities, tutoring, voluntary assignments, etc." and she felt so strongly about this point that she came to me after handing me the questionnaire telling me about her efforts in similar projects in her previous place of work and the many hours she spent doing them and how frustrated she was that these activities were not taken into consideration when evaluating teachers.

Another teacher (T8) wrote about "announced and unannounced classroom observation," and she also came and told me about her opinion about the importance of having both kinds of observation, which is not the case in our department since they revealed different aspects about teachers' abilities.

A third teacher (T9) wrote "student inquiries," This time, I asked the teacher what she meant by student inquiries. She said that supervisors sometimes get useful information by asking students about teachers' performance individually or in small groups.

A fourth teacher (T11) wrote, "self-evaluation is good for the washback effect," apparently in an attempt to explain her rating of the self-evaluation criterion.

A fifth teacher (T15) didn't write anything in this section but still started a chat with me after handing in her questionnaire about unannounced classroom observation and how it makes her stressed and unable to do her best. Despite acknowledging that some tutors deliver differently when they know when they are observed, she felt that announced observation is a more appropriate form of appraisal.

The section about other “criteria of evaluation” also received a few comments. One teacher (T1) wrote “collegiality.” When I asked her what she meant, she explained that she meant having a positive attitude towards one’s colleagues. She told me about instances in her previous place of work where a teacher with a negative attitude had a considerable negative impact on the whole department.

Another tutor (T8) wrote, “arriving on time, assigning homework, encouraging students always to use English inside the institute, being fair and respectful.”

A third teacher (T9) wrote “monitoring absenteeism, attending on time, using humor, relating material to context,” while a fourth teacher (T15) wrote “changing classroom / learning environment, providing extracurricular activities and materials,” and she told me about the importance of changing the teaching environment by taking students outdoors or to the library every now and then to motivate them further.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings indicate that ION EFL teachers have a positive attitude towards teacher appraisal. In terms of purpose, teachers seemed to prefer formative appraisal conducted for professional improvement purposes to summative evaluation aiming at making personnel decisions. Regarding evaluation methods, teachers seemed to agree to be evaluated by their supervisors rather than by non-EFL supervisors, students, or external evaluators. They preferred to be assessed using classroom observation and checking their written work (tests, portfolios, etc.) rather than asking them to take tests. As for the evaluation criteria, the results revealed that teachers strongly agreed with most of the evaluation criteria in the literature but were less enthusiastic about such criteria as knowledge of learning theories, use of visual aids, and using higher cognitive levels in discussions and examinations.

In conclusion, teacher appraisal is a very important mechanism for enhancing the quality of ION education. While it is unrealistic and infeasible to adopt a standardized appraisal system that can suit both the nursing and the English programs, the currently used appraisal system can be utilized as a common core program or a guideline for the preparation and operation of teacher appraisal that can assist individual educational programs to work out their own evaluation programs.

Based on the findings of the study, the overall recommendation that can be proposed for the preparation and application of a teacher appraisal system in the English Department at the ION would be the implementation of an EFL appraisal system designed to encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching and improve their professional growth; a program which benefits the teacher in terms of professional development, through which strengths are commended and areas where support is necessary are identified. According to the study, such a program will likely gain ION teachers’ positive support.

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APPENDIX A**Faculty Appraisal Questionnaire**

I am conducting a research study on EFL teachers' perceptions of faculty appraisal. I would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire. I would also like to assure you that your anonymity and that of the ION are guaranteed.

SECTION A:

To what extent do you agree that the following are appropriate **PURPOSES** for conducting EFL teacher appraisal?

	STRONGLY AGREE	TEND TO AGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. To provide constructive feedback to individual teachers				
2. To recognize and help reinforce outstanding performance				
3. To help identify the weaknesses of teachers' overall performance				
4. To provide direction for staff development practices				
5. To improve the quality of teaching at the ION				
6. To act as a reference for renewal of contract				
7. To help in terminating incompetent and unproductive teachers				
8. To provide evidence to external institutions for purposes of school licensing and accreditation				
9. To provide baseline data about the normal state of affairs before introducing any changes				
10. To help in making decisions on granting promotions				
Others (please specify) -----				

SECTION B:

To what extent do you agree that the following items are effective **METHODS** in an EFL teacher appraisal system?

	STRONGLY AGREE	TEND TO AGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. Classroom observation (by the Director of the English Department)				
2. Classroom observation (by Branch Managers)				
3. Classroom observation (by Academic Support Person)				
4. Peer classroom observation.				
5. Checking teachers' marking of students' written assignments				
6. Checking quizzes and tests prepared by teachers				
7. Students' achievement as reflected in their examination results				
8. Using a self-evaluation system whereby teachers evaluate themselves				
9. Students evaluate teachers using a questionnaire				
10. Asking teachers to take standardized tests				
11. Using a teacher portfolio				
12. Evaluation by future employers (health care facilities)				
13. Planning documents (sample lesson or unit plans)				
14. Samples of student work or other evidence of student learning.				
Others (please specify) -----				

SECTION C:

To what extent do you think that the following items are important **CRITERIA** in an EFL teacher appraisal system?

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
1. Enthusiasm				
2. Knowledge of the subject area				
3. Stimulation of interest in the subject area				
4. Organization				
5. Clarity of presentation				
6. Concern and caring for students				
7. Use of higher cognitive levels in discussions and examinations				
8. Use of visual aids				
9. Encouragement of active learning and student discussion				
10. Provision of feedback				
11. Avoidance of harsh criticism				
12. Knowledge of teaching and learning strategies				
13. Use of a wide variety of teaching techniques				
14. Classroom management				
15. Knowledge of teaching and learning theories				
16. Understanding of the linguistic systems of English phonology, grammar, and discourse				
17. Fluent competence in speaking, writing, listening to, and reading English				
18. Perception of students' linguistic needs				
19. Keeping up with the field through regular reading and conference/workshop attendance				
20. Being flexible and making decisions according to how the lesson develops				
Others (please specify) -----				