The Implementation of Innovative Formative Evaluation Tools

for the Novice Teacher

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Abstract

As of the year 2010, every new teacher (novice) in the State of Israel must be subject in their first year of teaching to a series of uniform evaluations. This series includes a verbal formative evaluation in the first half of the school year which provides the novice teacher feedback on his educational and pedagogical performance and provides guidelines for the continuation of his work. For this reason it was decided to focus on formative evaluations in four areas to measure successful teaching: Role Perception and Professional Ethics, Field of Knowledge, Educational and Learning Processes, and Participation in the Professional Community. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the tools of formative evaluations of novice teachers and their implementation in the field. The study was conducted using the Qualitative Approach. Sixty-four evaluators participated in the study. The findings of the study refer to only two of the four categories of evaluation tools: Educational and Learning Processes and Field of Knowledge.

Keywords

formative evaluation, novice teachers, formative evaluation tool

1. Introduction

1.1 Evaluating Teachers

Studies concerning the evaluation process of beginning teachers recently received wide attention in the literature (Darling-Hammon, 2006; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1977). With an emphasis on structured assessment tools and not random feedback (Park et al., 2014).

Skriven (1967) suggested the distinction between Formative Evaluation and Summative Evaluation—two terms which receive different interpretations. One can relate to the Formative Evaluation as an evaluation that is designed to provide feedback to improve and develop and Summative Evaluation is used for selection and certification. Sergiovanni (2000) and Isore (2009) claim that Formative Evaluation of teachers is designed to provide feedback for performance improvement and professional development, identifying the teacher's strong and weak points, to assist the teacher in everything connected to understanding teaching, improving basic teaching skills,

broadening their knowledge, and how to use the educational tools that are available to them.

In the past few years there have been attempts to change the traditional evaluations of teachers in the direction of using evaluations as a basis for decisions regarding allocation, tenure, registration, awards and choosing staff for leadership positions (Darling-Hammon, 2010). It was discovered that evaluations based on observation by pedagogical counselors and principals that accompany the feedback and teaching process are liable to improve the effectiveness of the teacher and his teaching methods (Milanowski, 2004). They can be powerful predictors of teachers' contributions to the learning achievement of the students. It can be used to evaluate novice as well as veteran teachers.

1.2 Evaluation of Novice Teachers in Israel

As of the year 2010, every new teacher (novice) in the State of Israel must be subject in their first year of teaching to a series of uniform evaluations. This series includes a verbal formative evaluation in the first half of the school year which provides the novice teacher feedback on his educational and pedagogical performance and provides guidelines for the continuation of his work, and a Summative Evaluation which is conducted towards the end of the school year, which provides a final feedback of the first year and is used as the basis for the novice's right to pertain a teaching license (CEO regulations, 2004). In 2013 the State of Israel began evaluating the novices using Formative Evaluation tools that were created for that purpose.

1.3 Novice Teachers

Entrance to the field of teaching in Israel is divided into a three year program, which includes the first year of novice teaching followed by two more years. The novice teacher works in the field of education as a teacher in all respects with a minimum of a one third work schedule and participates in novice workshops in a pedagogical institution. He is mentored for the first year and must complete the evaluation process in order to receive a teaching license. The principal and the mentor are responsible for the performance of the novice evaluation.

1.4 Formative Evaluation Tool

In a research survey (Maulana et al., 2013) six areas were identified that were worth observing which reflect quality teaching: a safe learning environment that creates motivation; efficient management of the classroom; clear instruction; active learning; adjusting the teaching to the needs of the pupils and teaching learning methods. Six areas were also mentioned in other studies (Danielson, 2013). Following the study of other structured assessment tools worldwide, it was decided to focus on formative assessment within four indexes of successful teaching in Israel:

1.4.1 Role Perception and Professional Ethics

Commitment to the success of the pupils in the following aspects: cognitive, emotional, ethical, social, investment in teaching, responsibility/written work plan and accountability towards involving the parent in the educational process.

1.4.2 Field of Knowledge

Expertise in the subject matter and its teaching using professional language. Familiarity with the learning program of the subject matter. Matching resources and teaching processes to the characteristics of the subject matter. Connecting to other fields of study and/or ethical aspects with the characteristics of the pupils.

1.4.3 Educational and Learning Processes

The goals of the lessons and their adaption to the classroom conditions. Conducting the classes: structure, and utilization of time and flexibility. Commitment to differential work to reach every pupil. Variable teaching methods, learning and evaluation. ICT technologies in teaching and learning. Activities to encourage high level thinking. Activities to create the pupil's involvement in social and ethical outlooks. Participation of the students and interaction in the classroom. Giving feedback in order to advance learning. Feedback to improve teaching. The appearance of the classroom and its organization. An active learning environment. Establishing rules of organization and management. The essence of the teacher-student relationship and their routine meetings.

1.4.4 Participation in the Professional Community

Communal learning and personal reflection. Participation in frameworks of professional development and application of its teaching. Involvement in the field of knowledge community.

The tool is built as an indicator which includes behavioral descriptions of each of its components, on the levels of performance: basic, experienced and outstanding. In addition, there is a level that is below the basic level. The use of this evaluation indicator allows for a formative evaluation that describes the expected behaviors on a continuum of professional development and allows to distinguish between different qualities of the instruction. In addition, it has the ability to identify the strong and weak points of the professional development of the teacher. This is in contrast to a tool which is based on a numerical scale that does not coincide with the expected performance of the teacher at various stages on the scale.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the tools of formative evaluations of novice teachers who are at the start of their teaching career and its implementation in the field. Intelligent use of these evaluation processes can contribute to the professional growth of the teaching staff in their professional identity, their perception of teaching as a career and their actual teaching performance, to improve the quality of instruction of the teaching staff for the purpose of advancing the learning of the pupils (Department of Specialization and Teaching Admissions). Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine if the evaluators of beginning teachers as a formative tool can use assessment tools and if this tool is effective.

2. Method

The study was conducted using the Qualitative Approach in the Constructive Interpretative Paradigm. Content analysis of the open answers of the evaluators to the novices using the formative evaluation tool. An analysis of the open answers was conducted using Content Analysis where the answers were sorted into categories with the same common denominator. At the end of this process there emerged a process of conclusion according to the various categories (Shakedi, 2003). Analysis of the open questions was carried out by two assessments, where the first reading and categorization of the answers was done by each evaluator separately and then afterwards compared with the other evaluators' categorizations. A second reading of the answers was done to finalize the categorizations that were found. Sixty-four evaluators (principals and mentors) participated in the study, of which 31 were women and 33 were men.

3. Result

The evaluators were asked to point out the strong points in the novice's performance. The following is a summary of the answers: After analyzing the findings four main categories of mentor comments were found: 1. Learning processes, 2. Interaction with the pupils, 3. Role perception, 4. Relationship with teachers.

3.1 Learning Processes

All the evaluators referred to this category. Several topics were found within this category:

3.1.1 Classroom Management

Most of the evaluators referred to the structure and didactics during the course of the lesson. In addition, many of the evaluators referred to the authoritative ability of the novice in the classroom. Another aspect that the evaluators emphasized is the novice's efforts to encourage the pupils to think and to spark interest by means of challenging questions during the lesson. Also, the evaluators pointed out the novice's desire to interest the pupils by using a variety of methods.

3.1.2 Mastery of the Subject Matter

Most of the evaluators referred to the novice's mastery of the subject matter and marked them positively for mastery.

3.1.3 Teaching Method

Many evaluators referred to the proper use of various teaching methods and innovative tools. Very few evaluators referred to the lack of varied methods during the lesson.

3.1.4 Evaluation

A number of evaluators referred to the novice's ability to be reflective and accept feedback.

3.2 Interaction with the Pupils

Most of the evaluators referred to the interaction of the novices with the pupils. The evaluators emphasized the positive personal interaction between the novice and their pupils, their concern and commitment to the pupils. In addition, the evaluators noted the relationship between the novice and

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pupil from an emotional and educational perspective.

3.3 Role Perception

Many evaluators attribute great importance to how the teacher perceives his role. The evaluators referred to the novice's high motivation and the dedication they feel to the role of teacher. They note the novice's aspiration to excellence and professionalism. Their dedication to the pupil's success and their efforts and diligence in teaching them ethics and leadership.

3.4 Relationship with Teachers

Very few evaluators referred to this category. It seems that this subject concerns the evaluators less when relating to the novice.

The evaluators were requested to answer on points for improvement in the novice's performance. The following is a summary of their answers: After analyzing the findings the evaluator's answers can be divided into five categories:

1) Discipline in the classroom

The evaluators expect the novices to improve their ability to handle discipline problems and to improve their assertiveness when standing in front of the class.

2) Class management

A number of evaluators referred to adhering to the timeframe in the lesson and expected the novice to establish clear goals at the beginning of the lesson.

3) Inspiring motivation in the pupils

The evaluators expect the novices to motivate the pupils while adapting resources and teaching processes that are relevant to the subject matter and the pupils. For this reason, they list a number of suggestions: a variety of teaching methods, use of learning strategies, using various tools, using examples to illustrate the point and recognizing the diversity amongst the pupils.

4) Mastery of the subject matter

The evaluators place great importance on mastery of the subject matter and expect the novice to have a vast and comprehensive knowledge of the discipline along with the ability to relate it to previous knowledge and expand upon it from other sources. In addition, the evaluators expect depth when constructing the lesson.

5) Teacher-student relationship

Comments were made amongst the evaluators on how to improve the relationship between the novice and the students in a number of aspects. The emotional aspect, the social aspect and the educational aspect.

The evaluators were asked to propose operative suggestions and activities to broaden the novice's work in school. Their answers are as follows: After analyzing the findings the evaluator's answers can be divided into five categories, details of these categories are as follows:

1) Assignment of mentor or teachers

Most evaluators suggested continued assignment to a mentor. The novices should increase their

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observation of other teachers, as some evaluators called it—"*modeling*". They suggested a joint learning session with the teaching staff of that subject matter or with the mentor for the purpose of improving the teaching method of the novice. In addition, a relationship between the mentor and novice may help the novice in solving social problems in the classroom. When there is a relationship between the mentor and novice, the mentor can comment and enlighten on the subject matter.

2) Suggestion to increase the teacher's authority

The mentors suggested to increase the authority of the novices by setting boundaries and clear rules in the classroom. There were those who suggested to focus on the topic of discipline by means of workshops or relevant reading material. Another idea that was raised by the mentors is treatment of discipline using personal dialogue with the children that have discipline problems. Another suggestion that was offered in this category was taking attendance at the beginning of the lesson to emphasize to the students not to be late. In addition, the novices should emphasize the topic of correct learning habits during the lesson.

3) Professional development

A number of evaluators suggested to the novices to continue their professional education. To attend educational seminars in their subject matter while continuing to teach additional classes in their subject.

4) Prepatory activities before the lesson

A number of evaluators suggested prepatory activities for the lesson. Prepatory activities relate to preparing lesson plans for the pupil. Some of the evaluators pointed out that the novice must prepare lesson plans in advance, including the goals of the lesson, in order to improve their teaching skills. In addition, good planning will result in efficiency and correct time management.

5) Activities during the lesson

This category raised a number of subjects that the evaluators suggest the novice use during the lesson. 1. Some of the evaluators pointed out that the novice must be aware during the lesson of the diversity of the pupils, differential instruction, to relate to the fringes of the class and to get all the pupils to participate. 2. The novices must be flexible towards the pupils and to give them an opportunity to participate and to raise creative ideas in the class. 3. The novices must improve their method of asking questions. 4. The novices must relate their subject matter to other topics and to give expression to ethical aspects.

4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine if the formative assessment tools used for beginning teachers effective and are the evaluators implementing the assessment tools in the field. Already Israel (2014) emphasized in his study the necessity and importance of the structured assessment tool because it provides guidance to the evaluator during the feedback stage and guidance to beginning teachers.

The findings of the current research indicate that the evaluators do not relate to all the subjects included in the formative assessment tool that was developed by the experts. The assessment tool relates to four

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topics: Role comprehension and professional ethics, field of knowledge, educational learning processes and partnering with a professional community. The results showed that the evaluators related to only two out of the four categories: educational learning processes and field of knowledge.

In Learning and educational processes, the findings showed that the evaluators related to the learning process with an emphasis on the subject that was being taught and its organization, for example: preparation of the lesson, class management, teaching methods, teacher's authority, discipline and recognizing the diversity amongst the pupils. In addition, the evaluators referred to the teacher-pupil relationship. In the Field of knowledge, the results showed that the evaluators related to the expertise in the subject matter and its instruction in a professional language. The researchers (Choy et al., 2013) also examined the role comprehension of beginning teachers during the first three years of their work and reported that the field that showed significant growth during the first year was pedagogical knowledge on class management in general and lesson planning and management in particular.

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