

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES ON PROCESSING TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Abstract

The present article reveals the findings received from the interview process of the secondary school teachers in Kazakhstan. The interview questions covered a wide range of issues: teachers' awareness of the teacher performance appraisal system, preparedness to the National Qualification Test, and understanding of the stages in the performance appraisal process, accessibility and transparency of the information about performance appraisal in Kazakhstan. The findings reveal that there is a significant amount of teachers feeling inadequate or insufficient support from their educational institutions and a low level of autonomous and self-independent teachers' work on getting prepared to the teachers' performance appraisal process.

Key words: teachers' performance appraisal, teacher certification, education, school teachers, national qualification test.

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ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ЖҰМЫСШЫЛАРДЫ АТТЕСТАЦИЯЛАУДАН ӨТКЕНДЕ ОРТА МЕКТЕП ҰСТАЗДАРЫНЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

Аңдатпа

Бұл мақалада Қазақстандағы орта мектеп мұғалімдерінің сұхбаттасуынан алынған нәтижелер ашылады. Сұхбат сұрақтары кең ауқымды мәселелерді қамтыды: мұғалімдердің мұғалімдердің қызметін бағалау жүйесі туралы білуі, Ұлттық біліктілік тестілеуге дайындық және өнімділікті бағалау үдерісінің кезеңдерін түсіну, Қазақстандағы өнімділікті бағалау туралы ақпараттың қолжетімділігі мен ашықтығы. Зерттеулер көрсеткендей, мұғалімдердің едәуір бөлігі өздерінің оқу орындары тарапынан жеткіліксіз немесе жеткіліксіз қолдауды сезінеді және мұғалімдердің жұмысын бағалау үдерісіне дайындық бойынша автономды және дербес мұғалімдердің жұмысының төмен деңгейі бар.

Түйін сөздер: мұғалімдерді аттестациялау, біліктілік санаты, педагогтерді аттестациялау білім беру, аттестаттау, мектеп мұғалімдері, ұлттық біліктілік тесті, мұғалімдерді дайындау.

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ОПЫТ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ СРЕДНИХ ШКОЛ В ПРОХОЖДЕНИИ АТТЕСТАЦИИ ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИХ РАБОТНИКОВ

Аннотация

В данной статье представлены результаты опроса среди учителей средних школ Казахстана. Вопросы в анкетировании охватили широкий круг проблем: осведомленность учителей о системе аттестации педагогов, готовность к национальному квалификационному тесту и понимание этапов процесса аттестации, доступность и прозрачность информации об аттестации в Казахстане. Результаты показывают, что значительное количество учителей ощущают неадекватную или недостаточную поддержку со стороны своих учебных заведений и низкий уровень автономной и самостоятельной работы учителей по подготовке к аттестации педагогов.

Ключевые слова: аттестация учителей, квалификационная категория, аттестация педагогов, образование, аттестация, школьные учителя, национальный квалификационный тест, подготовка учителей.

Introduction. According to our research, full-time secondary school teachers' face many problems with perception and identification of the core structure of the teachers' performance appraisal system in Kazakhstan.

Teacher performance appraisal is a form of assessment of the employee's performance, based on certain conditions and requirements for a person in the position held [1].

In Kazakhstan, the teacher performance appraisal system is regulated by the official documents.

The educational documents regulating the process of teachers' performance appraisal are issued by the decrees of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and registered by the Ministry of Justice. These regulative documents are open-access that means that every teacher is provided with an opportunity to be acquainted with the documents without any payments or complicated processes.

Moreover, in most schools there is a vice-principal or deputy teacher on methodological works who is responsible for conducting explanatory sessions with teachers. This person receives any educational official documents to familiarize their educational institution and provide equal opportunities to all the teachers.

However, misconception, disinformation and wrong consideration of the teachers' performance appraisal system takes place.

This, consequently, leads to inadequate and inappropriate preparation process where teachers do not apply necessary skills and knowledge, do not attach their teaching results and achievements to their portfolios, do not pass the National Qualification Test which is a necessary stage in the teachers' performance appraisal process [2].

The result is a high teachers' fail rate that discourages teachers and makes them avoid any further attempts to obtain the higher category or even to confirm the current one [3]. Pre-service teachers and recent graduates feel frustrated and demotivated to take the national Qualification Test and other stages of the performance appraisal process.

The aim of this research is to analyze the causes of teachers' unawareness and unpreparedness to the performance appraisal. The analysis is based on the survey findings that are discussed in the main part of the present article. Highlighting the important reasons for inadequate or insufficient preparedness is done by comparing strategies based on several factors: teachers' self-independent research, awareness from the vice-principal, and accessibility to the credible information. Further, the research takes into consideration the perspective of teachers on the various aspects of preparation for the performance appraisal and its effectiveness. The article describes the theoretical foundations of teacher performance appraisal, including its definition, principal

taxonomy, and the duration of the study. The significance of the research does not limit to simple reporting the problems but also provides the information that can be recommended to the educational institution aiming at transparent teacher performance appraisal process.

Main part. The present study is conducted in the form of a survey. Survey is a method of collecting information about the object under study during direct (interviewing) or indirect (questionnaires) communication between the interviewer and the respondent (interviewee) by registering the respondents' answers to the questions arising from the goals and objectives of the research [4]. For the research, a questionnaire has been chosen with the aim of covering various regions of the country, and different groups of teachers regardless their age, work experience, education, work mode, workload, and residence.

First, a literature review has been done to equip ourselves with the previous studies findings, official documents regulating the teacher performance appraisal process, and samples of the National Qualification Test.

The dissertations and research articles on teacher performance appraisal system in Kazakhstan for the last 3 years were not found. However, the web-search revealed many journalists reviews, and obsolete and current decrees and other documents.

The Adilet database shows that the initial document regulating the terms and conditions of the teacher performance appraisal process in secondary schools has been amended for eight times since 2016. [5] The latest version of the document was issued on 14 May, 2020.

The above mentioned factors highlight the relevance of the study conducted – a systematic and holistic approach was not taken to explain and prepare for the performance appraisal process.

With the help of the questionnaire, it is possible to obtain information that is not always reflected in documentary sources or available to direct observation. We justify this survey method by taking into account that verbal information obtained through this method is much more comprehensive and sophisticated, and generally more reliable than non-verbal information. It is easier to process and analyze the data quantitatively, and, in addition, using computer and smartphone software makes the process fast and accessible. Another advantage of the method is its versatility. It lies in the fact that the questioning consists in the fact that both the motives of the activity of individuals and the results of their activity are registered.

We have chosen Google Forms as a way of conducting the questionnaire because of the following reasons:

- Simple interface;
- Many teachers have Google software and accounts on their smartphones, tablets and computers;
- Many teachers are aware of using Google tools, including Google Forms;
- Easy collection of the information and data from the respondents.

The following research questions are designed and developed through the prism of secondary schools teachers who teach Social sciences and STEAM-teachers in Kazakhstan:

RQ1. Do you know your qualification category?

If the respondent chooses the “Yes” option, the RQ1 (b) appears:

RQ1 (b). What’s your qualification category?

RQ2. Are you aware of the teachers’ performance appraisal process?

RQ3. Which stages in the teachers’ performance appraisal process do you find most difficult? Why?

RQ4. How did your preparation for taking the performance appraisal vary from year to year?

RQ5. Which methods of preparation for the performance appraisal do you consider more effective?

The present article describes the mixed method research. The qualitative data are collected through the open questionnaire. The teachers across the country responded to two or three (depending on the answer for the first research question), and three open-ended questions about the perception of the teachers’ performance appraisal process and self-identification in Kazakhstani system.

The open-ended questions were used to elicit the participants' opinion regarding the level of difficulty and reasons. The first question, and a supplementary to it, are assumed to be answered as a multiple-choice question with two options. To respond to RQ2, a closed questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, adopted from Griffiths [6] was used to collect quantitative data, which according to Cohen et al. [7] describes a range of possible answers. The collected data were scrutinized and analyzed to answer the research questions.

The participants of the present research are 135 full-time secondary school teachers of different school subjects across Kazakhstan (Table 1).

14,5% of the respondents have worked less than 2 years in an educational institution. 32,4% of the teachers have a work experience of 2-5 years. Teachers who have been employed for a school for more than 5 years comprise 53,1%. The participants were selected from the secondary schools from all the fourteen regions and three cities of the national significance.

Table 1. Participants of the study

	Regions	Cities of national significance
Less than 2 years of work experience	14	6
Between 2-5 years of work experience	25	19
More than 5 years of work experience	47	24

To the first questions, most teachers (95%) were able to answer positively that led them to the supplementary question RQ1 (b). The other seven teachers struggled to identify their qualification categories. Among these seven teachers, five teachers stated their work experience less than a year.

However, according to the acting “Rules and conditions for performance appraisal of the teachers holding positions in educational organizations that implement general educational curricula of preschool education and training, primary, basic secondary and general secondary education, educational programs of technical and vocational, post-secondary, additional education and special educational programs, and other civil servants in education and science”, starting from 2021 university graduates are required to take the National Qualification Test to confirm that they are aware of pedagogical skills and knowledge [8]. This decision is considered to be a good way of preparing the pre-service teachers for their future teaching and learning experiences at schools.

The RQ2 was a multiple-choice question assuming the Yes/No answer. More than a half of the respondents – 67% – answered that they are aware of the teachers' performance appraisal process. Yet, we are not able to check their full understanding here.

However, the respondents answered anonymously, so we assume that their responses were correct and fair. In addition, this research question was used as a guide for further questioning.

This question acts as a scaffolding step for higher-order thinking skill question. The third research question about the most complicated part of the teachers' performance appraisal process was answered as an open-ended one. The teachers wrote different stages of the performance appraisal process. After their responses were coded, the following performance appraisal stages emerged from the survey:

- National Qualification Test;
- Preparing a portfolio;
- Getting certificates;
- Getting learners' results at advanced levels;

- Disseminating pedagogical experiences at various levels.

The teachers also gave the following reasons for considering these stages complicated:

- Disinformation at school levels;
- Disconnection between school and city/regional educational departments administrations;
- Teachers' low level of teaching expertise;
- Learners' low performance indicators;
- Complicated questions in National Qualification Test;
- Inadequate preparation for the National Qualification Test;
- Lack of resources (such as time, equipment, textbooks);
- Huge workload;
- Insufficient professional development courses;
- Professional development courses that are not free;
- Inability to take a course due to technical problems;
- Living in a rural/suburban area;
- Inappropriate information about the requirements for a particular qualification category;
- Low amount of time given to be prepared;
- Misleading information about special folders to be assigned to a portfolio and its parts.

The RQ4 revealed the problem of a huge fail rate among teachers who tried confirming or obtaining a qualification category. Almost a third part of the respondents – 31% – claimed that they went through the teacher performance appraisal process for several times.

Many of these teachers stated the National Qualification Test as a reason for failing at the performance appraisal process. They responded that they had to retake the Test for the second or even the third time. The teachers used the following adjectives to describe the National Qualification Test: “stressful”, “awful”, “difficult”, “hard”, “impossible”. Unfortunately, it is obvious that all these adjectives have negative connotations.

For stating the effective methods of preparation for the performance appraisal, the respondents gave the following:

- Learning by heart the sample tests;
- WhatsApp groups of teachers where they share their experiences and support each other;
- Paid photos of the tests from real National Qualification Tests taken during the attestation period;
- Nazarbayev Intellectual School courses;
- Cambridge-related professional development courses and methodologies, such as CELTA, TKT, etc.

Conclusion. The present study reflects the secondary school teachers' perception and preparedness to the teachers' performance appraisal in Kazakhstan. In addition, this research illustrates the teachers' relationships with their working experiences and qualification category obtained/not obtained.

The Adilet system has tabs that allow us to view all the editions and their dates. The initial version of the Rules was approved by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 27, 2016 No. 83. Registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan on February 29, 2016 No. 13317.

Then we had eight Orders on making changes and amendments into the Rules. In 2020, there have been implemented two changing processes – on April 7, 2020 and on May 14, 2020.

The first research question was responded to after triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data.

There was a correlation between the teachers who are not aware of their qualification category and the working experience.

The open-ended questions that used higher-order thinking skills revealed that most of the teachers considered preparation measures ineffective, inappropriate, and insufficient.

Moreover, the most complicated part of the teachers' performance appraisal was marked as the National Qualification Test. Many teachers are not aware of the structure of the test and where they could find the materials to be prepared for the Test questions. Furthermore, teachers were so desperate in their attempts to obtain or confirm a category, which is mandatory during the certain period of time, that they had to cheat the examination committee and get the illegal pictures of the test and prepare in advance.

Implication and limitation. The findings received from the current study have a positive contribution to educational practices in teachers' evaluation, methodology, teacher training, and performance appraisal. The research indicated the necessity of explanatory works at schools, connection of city/regional educational departments with school administration, training teachers/mentors/coaches/trainers, and facilitating the self-independent process of adequate and appropriate preparation for the teachers' performance appraisal. Being a mixed method research, it is recommended to supplement the present study with a Case Study method to interview teachers to obtain deeper understanding and insights in performance appraisal system, to explain their problems, to discuss possible solutions and to work out a scheme for continuing the present research.

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