

**Evaluation and Professional Development Practices
in Tasmanian High Schools**

by

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Declaration

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Evaluation and Professional Development Practices in Tasmanian High Schools

Abstract

This study reports on teacher evaluation and professional development practices in Tasmanian high schools. It was conducted within a context of increasing regulation of teachers through legislated registration and directed standards. The thesis in this study is that there is insufficient linkage between teacher evaluation and professional development. The study investigates whether Tasmanian high schools monitor teaching, and verify whether teacher learning leads to explicit pedagogical outcomes.

By considering factors such as organisational theory, teacher competence, evaluation objectives and approaches, and the impact of change, a list of ideal objectives and characteristics for the evaluation of teachers is established. By examining organisational support of new pedagogies, the application of stage theory to determine individual needs, and validation of training to ensure that learning has been applied, a similar list of ideal objectives and characteristics is obtained for professional development.

A sample of 193 high school teachers was surveyed to determine the extent of teacher evaluation by supervisors, and independent reflective pedagogical practices. It also examined professional development participation, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Teacher perceptions of their ability to affect their performance management were analysed. The state wide survey is complemented by case studies of four high schools to reveal extant evaluation and professional development practices and attitudes. Surveys of documentation and teacher attitudes are supported by student focus group discussions to yield an insight into classroom realities.

The state wide survey revealed that formal evaluation and classroom observation were uncommon, and that one third of the sample rarely engaged in scheduled discussions about pedagogy. Teacher attitudes to professional development were positive, but one in four teachers were dissatisfied with its management and outcomes. Surveyed teachers felt collectively strong and individually weak to influence extant evaluation and professional development practices. Only one case study school used evaluation as other than an intermittent selection tool, but half of the teachers in this school felt no ownership of, and lacked trust, in the process. Professional development choices in all case study schools were often based on enjoyment, and outcomes for teaching and learning were rarely validated.

The research suggests that the establishment of evaluation or external implementation of teacher standards may be undermined by current professional development practices that are neither based on classroom needs, nor validated to ensure pedagogical outcomes. Collective independent utilisation of established standards methodologies by teachers themselves to establish reflective pedagogy could be the most effective way of enhancing teaching quality.

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