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7) Literature Review of Best Practices in Use of Peer’s Self-Reflection of Instruction for Evaluation

There are two key points of agreement across this brief collection of literature on self-evaluation of teaching. First, the authors agree that although self-evaluation is not an appropriate summative evaluation tool, it can be an effective tool for improving teacher performance (i.e., formative assessment). Second, the authors agree that in order for self-evaluation to improve teacher performance, it must be used systematically and involve discussion with others, such as a mentor.

Summative vs. Formative Usefulness of Self-Evaluation

The authors agreed that self-evaluation does not provide information that is useful in making promotion and tenure decisions. This is due in part to a lack of agreement between teachers’ evaluations of themselves and students’ evaluations of the same teachers. Centra (1979) reported that teachers tended to evaluate themselves more positively than students did, but that the two types of evaluations did identify similar strengths and weaknesses. Using self-evaluation as part of a summative evaluation may also lead to bias on the part of those being assessed. By using self-evaluation only for formative purposes, participants have more incentive to recognize areas of improvement as to explain steps they have taken to improve areas of weakness.

According to Seldin (1999), “if the purpose of self-evaluation is for teaching improvement, the form should include diagnostic questions. Unfortunately, too many colleges and universities use the same self-evaluation form as a blanket to cover both purposes. The result is that the form serves neither well.” (p. 107). Further, he suggests the following questions on standardized forms:

1. Is the teacher’s self-evaluation consistent with information obtained from other sources?
2. Does the self-evaluation reflect similar strengths and weaknesses that turn up in other assessment forms?

We suggest the inclusion of these questions as well:

4. Does the self-evaluation discuss ways in which the instructor has responded to past feedback?
5. Does the instructor take appropriate steps to resolve problems, meet challenges and/or handle criticisms?

We have mocked up a form for use in self-evaluations that you can find on page 38.

A System for Effective Self-Evaluation

Centra (1979) explained that self-evaluation should “encourage the teacher to examine closely what he or she is doing by answering a series of probing questions regarding teaching methods or by viewing
video or audio replays of their classes” (p. 48). Fink (1995) emphasized that the goal of self-evaluation is to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching performance.

According to these authors, self-evaluation should focus on the categories of teaching effectiveness already identified by this group, including objectives and activities, textbooks and other materials, lecture notes, assignments and projects and exams and grading (Centra, 1979). Instructors can provide evidence of their work in ‘selected sample’ portfolios, and can narrate how these tools work within their classes (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Teaching Portfolio Items

Fink (1995) suggested that information to inform a meaningful self-evaluation can be most effectively gathered from five sources: self-monitoring by the teacher, audio and video tape recording, students’ test results, feedback from students, and feedback from an outside observer. This list makes it clear that self-evaluation is best considered as one element of a tightly integrated system of examining teaching effectiveness.

All three authors strongly suggested the use of audio and video recording as data for self-evaluation. They emphasized that if recording is to be effective however, it needs to be accompanied by a highly structured system of analysis—either with questions to guide the teacher’s viewing, or through a process of teacher and mentor viewing together (Seldin, 1999).

In addition to attending to what should be evaluated and what data is needed to do so, it is important to consider the most effective way to encourage meaningful self-reflection. The authors agreed that the self-evaluation process must be guided by questions and each provides sample instrumentation. Seldin (1999) suggested that it is useful to have the faculty member complete the same evaluation form as
students and then compare results. He also emphasized that effective summative feedback and effective formative feedback require different instruments.

Once teachers have completed a thoughtful, guided reflection on their teaching, the authors suggested that the results be incorporated into a teaching portfolio or a faculty growth contract (Centra, 1979; Seldin, 1999). Seldin specified that faculty portfolios should not be the “brag sheets” often associated with the academic annual review process. Rather they are representative collections of work accompanied by thoughtful and reasoned self-assessments. Faculty growth contracts are most useful when they identify specific, measurable and realistic teaching goals and a mechanism by which to evaluate progress toward those goals.

References


Rubric for Gauging Peers’ Self-Evaluations

Directions: Please attach to the peer’s self-evaluation.

Instructor’s Name: ___________________ Evaluator’s Name: ___________________
Date: _______________ Course: _______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Explanatory Value:** In the self-evaluation, the instructor  
• articulates appropriate instructional choices for the discipline, subject, course, level, etc.  
• shares his/her teaching philosophy  
• supports atypical instructional choices with evidence | Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Not Applicable Comments: |
| **2. Responsiveness to Concerns:** In the self-evaluation, the instructor  
• discusses ways in which the instructor has responded to past feedback  
• reveals how the instructor has taken appropriate steps and which steps to resolve problems, meet challenges and/or handle criticisms | |
| **3. Consistency with Other Data Sources:** The self-evaluation  
• is consistent with information obtained from other sources  
• reflects similar strengths and weaknesses that turn up in other assessment forms  
• offers adequate explanation of contradictory information obtained elsewhere | |
| **4. Future Instructional Growth:** In the self-evaluation, the instructor  
• identifies areas for future growth/goals  
• explains ways in which the instructor plans to meet their instructional goals | |

Suggestions: