Teacher response to feedback from evaluators: What feedback characteristics matter?

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Marzano Research
Background
The importance of teacher effectiveness is well supported by studies that document variation in teachers’ ability to produce student achievement gains (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2010). Increasing confirmation of the importance of teachers’ contributions to student learning has led to an interest in identifying and supporting effective teachers through teacher evaluation systems. In a well-designed evaluation system teachers receive sufficient evidence-based feedback to guide their reflection on their strengths and challenges in order to improve their practice (Coggshall et al., 2012). As states and districts develop and implement new teacher evaluation systems, they are exploring ways to use evaluation findings to provide individualized feedback systems that will facilitate improved teaching and learning practices (Kane & Staiger, 2012).

Purpose
This study addressed the following research questions:

• What are teachers’ perceptions of the usefulness and accuracy of the feedback they received as a part of their evaluation system and what are their perceptions of their evaluator’s credibility and their access to resources related to the feedback?
• How are the perceptions of the usefulness of feedback, the accuracy of feedback, evaluator credibility, and access to resources interrelated?
• How are the usefulness of feedback, the accuracy of feedback, evaluator credibility, and access to resources related to response to feedback?

Setting/Participants
This study included a purposive sample of teachers from seven school districts in two central states. The sample comprised 317 preK–12 teachers being evaluated using the district’s new teacher evaluation system; with direct student contact in a classroom setting; from urban, rural, and small town settings; and taught various subject areas.

Design
The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey, pilot tested in a previous study (Cherasaro, Brodersen, Yanoski, Welp, & Reale, 2015), was used to gather data to address the research questions (table 1).
Data Collection and Analysis
The survey was administered online during spring 2015, with a response rate of 76.7 percent, (243 of 317 teachers responding). To examine teachers’ perceptions of feedback (research question 1), frequencies and percentages were calculated. To examine the relationships among characteristics of feedback (research question 2) and how characteristics of feedback are related to response to feedback (research question 3), the study team calculated correlations between various pairs of variables. To more thoroughly assess the influence of performance feedback on teachers’ response to feedback, structural equation modeling, using maximum likelihood estimation was used. To determine adjustments to the model, researchers examined the correlational analysis, the path coefficients and modification indices for the hypothesized model, and considered changes that made theoretical sense. The hypothesized model (figure 1) was adjusted so that usefulness, accuracy, and evaluator credibility were not three independent but related aspects of perceived feedback quality, rather usefulness is partially determined by accuracy and evaluator credibility, resulting in the final model (figure 2).

Findings
Research question 1
Most teachers agreed that the feedback they received was useful and accurate and that their evaluator was credible (figure 3 and figure 4). The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that feedback was timely (70 percent), was frequent (67 percent), included specific suggestions for improvement (66 percent); accurately portrayed their teaching (75 percent) and that the observations that informed the feedback represented a typical day in their classroom (76 percent). At least 68 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with all statements related to the credibility of their evaluator (figure 5).

Most teachers reported that they had access to many resources but many teachers reported that they were not able to observe expert teachers modeling skills related to the feedback. The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to professional development (62 percent), had time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies (61 percent), and received support from an instructional leader (60 percent). But only 33 percent reported that they were able to observe expert teachers who modeled skills related to the feedback (figure 6).

Most teachers reported that they tried new instructional strategies as a result of feedback. Sixty percent or more of teachers responded to feedback in one of four ways: trying new instructional strategies (70 percent), seeking advice from an instructional leader (63 percent), trying new classroom management strategies (62 percent), and seeking professional development opportunities (60 percent; figure 7).
Research question 2 and 3

Bivariate correlational analysis found significantly positive correlations between all possible pairs of the following domains: usefulness of feedback, accuracy of feedback, evaluator credibility, access to resources, and response to feedback (table 2). How teachers respond to feedback is most closely related to how useful they perceive it to be. Structural equation modeling analysis revealed a final model in which teachers’ response to feedback was strongly correlated with the extent to which teachers perceived the feedback as useful, which in turn was strongly correlated with how credible they perceived their evaluator to be, which was strongly correlated with how accurately they believed that the feedback accurately represented their teaching (figure 2).

Conclusions

The results from the correlational analysis suggest that teachers’ response to feedback is related to their perceptions of the usefulness of the feedback, the accuracy of the feedback, the credibility of their evaluator, and the resources they have access to. The results from the structural equation modeling analysis further suggest that teachers may be more likely to respond to feedback if they perceive that the feedback is useful than if they perceive that the feedback is not useful. And teachers may be more likely to perceive that the feedback is useful if they believe that their evaluator is credible than if they believe that their evaluator is not credible. The extent to which teachers believe that their evaluator is credible is strongly related to their perception of the accuracy of the feedback. The findings support a model of feedback on teacher performance that suggests characteristics to consider in training and supporting evaluators. Although the findings do not support any conclusions about causality, they support a model of feedback on teacher performance that suggests characteristics to consider in training and supporting evaluators.
References


### Tables and Figures

#### Table 1. Questions by section in the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Question number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background information</strong></td>
<td>Definition of designated evaluator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designated teacher evaluator in the current school year</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of feedback conversation with designated evaluator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of written feedback from designated evaluator</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback characteristics</strong> (Includes five categories of questions)</td>
<td>Usefulness: perceived usefulness of evaluator’s feedback</td>
<td>5 (a–g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accuracy: perceived accuracy of evaluator’s feedback</td>
<td>6 (a–d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility: perceived credibility of evaluator</td>
<td>7 (a–d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to resources: perceived access to professional development and other resources needed to respond to evaluation feedback</td>
<td>8 (a–d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness: actions teacher took in response to evaluation feedback</td>
<td>9 (a–e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance of feedback characteristics</strong></td>
<td>Importance of the following characteristics when deciding how to respond to feedback:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Perceiving the feedback as useful</td>
<td>10 (a–l)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Having confidence in the accuracy of the feedback</td>
<td>11 (a–b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Perceiving the evaluator as credible</td>
<td>12 (a–e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Having access to relevant resources</td>
<td>13 (a–d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belief about instructional improvement</strong></td>
<td>Belief about whether feedback improved teacher’s instruction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher demographics</strong></td>
<td>Number of years teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade level or levels currently teaching</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject area or areas currently teaching</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 2. Bivariate correlations between usefulness of the feedback, accuracy of the feedback, evaluator credibility, and access to resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Usefulness of the feedback</th>
<th>Accuracy of the feedback</th>
<th>Evaluator credibility</th>
<th>Access to resources</th>
<th>Response to feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the feedback</td>
<td>0.547**</td>
<td>0.672**</td>
<td>0.620**</td>
<td>0.596**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy of the feedback</td>
<td>0.708**</td>
<td>0.620**</td>
<td>0.182**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator credibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.356**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.403**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** is significant at $p < .01$
Note: No significant path coefficients were found

**Figure 1.** Hypothesized model

*** is significant at $p < .001$

**Figure 2.** Final model

*** is significant at $p < .001$
Feedback was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.

- Strongly disagree: 5%
- Disagree: 10%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 15%
- Agree: 48%
- Strongly agree: 22%

Feedback was provided as frequently as I needed it.

- Strongly disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 11%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 15%
- Agree: 42%
- Strongly agree: 25%

Feedback included specific improvement suggestions.

- Strongly disagree: 5%
- Disagree: 14%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 16%
- Agree: 50%
- Strongly agree: 16%

Feedback included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.

- Strongly disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 17%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
- Agree: 43%
- Strongly agree: 11%

Feedback included specific classroom management strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.

- Strongly disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 21%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
- Agree: 39%
- Strongly agree: 9%

Feedback included specific suggestions to improve my content/subject knowledge.

- Strongly disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 24%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 28%
- Agree: 32%
- Strongly agree: 9%

Feedback included recommendations for finding resources or professional development to improve...

- Strongly disagree: 9%
- Disagree: 28%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
- Agree: 32%
- Strongly agree: 8%

The evaluation system is accurate enough that different evaluators reviewing the same evidence would likely give the same ratings.

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 6%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 15%
- Agree: 49%
- Strongly agree: 27%

I would receive the same feedback if my evaluator examined different evidence.

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 10%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 12%
- Agree: 49%
- Strongly agree: 26%

The feedback I received was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.

- Strongly disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 11%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 17%
- Agree: 49%
- Strongly agree: 20%

The classroom observations or walkthroughs that informed the feedback I received represented a typical day in my classroom.

- Strongly disagree: 6%
- Disagree: 14%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 22%
- Agree: 43%
- Strongly agree: 16%

**Figure 3.** Responses to usefulness questions

**Figure 4.** Responses to accuracy questions
Figure 5. Responses to credible questions

- My evaluator had sufficient understanding of the established teacher evaluation system to effectively evaluate me.
  - Strongly disagree: 14
  - Disagree: 12
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 52
  - Agree: 31

- My evaluator had sufficient knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.
  - Strongly disagree: 4
  - Disagree: 6
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 50
  - Agree: 28

- My evaluator had sufficient knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.
  - Strongly disagree: 4
  - Disagree: 16
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 45
  - Agree: 26

- My evaluator had sufficient knowledge of my subject/content to effectively evaluate me.
  - Strongly disagree: 7
  - Disagree: 14
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 45
  - Agree: 25

- My evaluator had sufficient understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.
  - Strongly disagree: 6
  - Disagree: 11
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 44
  - Agree: 24

Figure 6. Responses to access to resources questions

- I had access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.
  - Strongly disagree: 6
  - Disagree: 10
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 21
  - Agree: 45
  - Strongly agree: 17

- I had time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback.
  - Strongly disagree: 10
  - Disagree: 13
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 16
  - Agree: 45
  - Strongly agree: 16

- I had access to an instructional leader who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.
  - Strongly disagree: 7
  - Disagree: 13
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 20
  - Agree: 44
  - Strongly agree: 16

- I was able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.
  - Strongly disagree: 14
  - Disagree: 26
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 28
  - Agree: 25
  - Strongly agree: 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I changed the way I plan instruction as a result of my feedback.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sought advice from an instructional leader as a result of my feedback.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried new classroom management strategies in my classroom as a result of my feedback.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sought professional development opportunities (formal or informal) as a result of my feedback.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried new instructional strategies in my classroom as a result of my feedback.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Responses to response to feedback questions