How to appraise performance of teachers: A New Zealand experience

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Abstract

This paper describes the appraisal process for measuring teachers' performance in New Zealand. It argues for two changes in the appraisal process in order to improve performance of teachers. First, teachers' expectations from the school should be included in their appraisal process, in addition to ensuring compliance of governmental edicts; and secondly the purpose of teachers' performance evaluation should be continuous improvement of performance and not only accountability of teachers. This paper may provide useful insight to organisations that are reviewing their employee performance measurement process.

Keyword: Teachers' Performance, Key Performance Factors, Evaluation of Teachers, Teachers' Perspective, Performance Measurement.

Introduction

This paper advocates for listening to the teachers' voice in evaluating performance of New Zealand's teachers. The focus of teacher's performance measurement in New Zealand is currently primarily on compliance to professional standards of teachers. The paper argues that teachers' performance measurement should move its focus towards continuous improvement of teachers' performance with respect to the standards, as opposed to merely being in compliance to them. The paper posits that a transactional relationship exists between the teachers (employee) and the school (the organisation) as proposed by the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) as well as by Kenny (2001). This transactional relationship allows the teachers and the principal (or principal's nominee) to do trade-offs in terms of work load, training, or other issues required to continuously improve teachers' performance. The transactional approach to evaluating teachers' performance is expected to lead to a greater buy-in from the teachers and improved teamwork between the teacher and the principal in order to improve teachers' performance.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part explains the background, purpose, construct and methodology guiding this investigation. The second part describes the findings of this investigation. The third part discusses the implications of the findings of this research. The last part concludes this paper arguing for a transactional approach for evaluation of teachers' performance that is oriented towards continuous improvement of teachers' performance in addition to ensuring compliance to a set of standards and/or governmental edicts.

Background

Since 1997 it has been mandatory for schools' (BOT) boards of trustees in New Zealand to establish a performance management system in the schools (Ministry of Education, 1997b). The schools' performance management system, has three components; appraisal of teachers' performance, appraisal of principals' performance and an overall review of schools' operations (Ministry of Education 1997c). From the year 2000, the professional standards for teachers (Ministry of Education, 1999b) developed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) have been incorporated into the schools' performance measurement system (PMS) in New Zealand. The professional standards describe the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes a teacher should exhibit in carrying out his/her role in three areas: teaching, school wide responsibilities, and management responsibilities. The standard formalises the schools' expectations of teachers' performances, and is used in the schools' PMS to evaluate performance of teachers (Ministry of Education, 1999b).

Purpose of the study

This study was undertaken to ascertain what teachers expect from schools in order to improve their performance. It also reviewed the current teachers' appraisal process in New Zealand in order to improve teachers' performance. The author has also discussed the findings of other researchers in the arena of teachers' performance measurement and proposes a modified approach for appraisal of teachers' performance. The study was intended to provide feedback to the schools'

management reviewing teachers' appraisal process in order to improve teachers' performance.

After reviewing the documents[1] on which the current appraisal of teachers' performance is based the role of MoE and Education Review Office (ERO[2]) both governmental entities, in shaping the teachers' appraisal system in New Zealand appears to be pivotal. This was also concurred by Gratton (2004); Malik and Davey (2011). The author is of the view that this appears to be necessary for two reasons. Firstly, in order to establish accountability of public funds invested in education (Piggot – Irvine, 2000), (Fitzgerald et al. 2003). Secondly owing to the resource limitations (in terms of managerial skills) of most schools in New Zealand to develop their performance management system from scratch.

However, teachers' performance measurement from the perspective of bureaucratic institutions such as MoE and ERO is driven by accountability and administrative compliance (Jos and Tomkins, 2004); while for teachers a set of seven key performance factors (KPFs[3]) influence their performance (Malik and Davey, 2011). The author contends that for this reason teachers' performance measurement in New Zealand is currently skewed towards the accountability and administrative compliance of teachers as opposed to meeting expectations of teachers from the school in order to improve their performance. Cardno (1999) also argues that performance measurement of teachers is based primarily on the directives of the MoE (Ministry of Education, 2001, 1999a, 1999b, 1998, 1997a, and 1997b) and does not adequately reflect the expectations of the teachers from the schools' management. Gratton (2004) also reported that teacher's appraisal system in New Zealand were ineffective and did not improve teachers' performance. Hipkins and Hodgen (2004) carried out a survey of secondary schools in New Zealand their data

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[1]Ministry of Education (1989, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c,1997d, 1999a, 1999b), Education Review Office (ERO,1995).
[2]The Education Review Office (ERO) carries out several different types of reviews and evaluations - education reviews, home-school reviews, cluster reviews of education institutions and services, contract evaluations and national evaluations on education topics and reports to the BOT and the Government as well as to the public.
[3] As displayed in Figure 2.

indicate that teachers are not satisfied with the state of affairs in the schools. Therefore, it appears likely that schools' management may not be meeting most of teachers' expectations, a situation that may lead to reduction in teachers' cooperation with the schools, teachers' dissatisfaction with their schools or even withdrawal of teachers from active involvement with their schools as argued by Freeman (1984).

Construct and methodology

This investigation has been guided by the Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). New Zealand's schools are ascertained to have eight key stakeholders; three of them are governmental institutions that is the Ministry of Education (MoE), Education Review Office (ERO), and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). One key stakeholder is a statutory body that is the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the remaining four include teachers, students, parents and the community (Malik and Davey, 2011).

Kenny (2001) argues that a transactional relationship exists between an organisation and its stakeholders such as employees, or teachers in the case of schools. In order for the employees to perform at their best the organisation has to meet the expectations of its employees while the employees in turn have to meet the expectations of their organisations. Hence, it is imperative than when evaluating the performance of teachers it should also be evaluated as to what degree the school is meeting their expectations. In other words performance of teachers results from joint efforts of the teacher and the school, not merely the solo effort of teachers.

The choice of research methodology was influenced by the objectives of the research; which was to ascertain teacher's expectations from the schools' management in order to improve teachers' performance, in line with the pragmatist approach advocated by Patton (1990) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). Since teachers' perceptions and expectations were collected in the shape of their comments and views the methodology of this investigation was qualitative. Data was collected by document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis

was employed while reviewing official publications from the MoE and ERO as well as the documentation provided to the teachers by the four schools in New Zealand. Thirteen teachers belonging to four different secondary schools of varying decile[4] numbers were purposively randomly selected and were interviewed to reflect teachers' expectations from schools in order to improve their performance. The findings of the research were shared with the interviewees to validate the findings.

Document analysis

Secondary school teachers are assessed across nine dimensions (Ministry of Education, 1999b) namely, professional knowledge, professional development, teaching techniques, student management, motivation of students, Te Reo me Ōna Tikanga (language of Maori, the original inhabitants of New Zealand), effective communication, support for and cooperation with colleagues, and contribution to wider school activities. The professional standards classify teachers into three levels. These levels start with beginning classroom teachers, followed by classroom teachers, and then experienced classroom teachers, which is the highest level. Teachers' performance standards along the nine dimensions rise progressively as teachers move ahead in their career from beginning to experienced classroom teachers. The nine assessment dimensions also meet the requirements of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC)[5].

All teachers in consultation with an appraiser[6] usually in January/February work out a mutually agreed statement of expectations that includes professional development objectives, incorporating all of the professional standards at the appropriate levels (including performance indicators) in written form. It must include the teacher's plan

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[4]Decile numbers reflect the socio-economic status of the families that send their children to school in New Zealand. 10 indicates the highest socio-economic status and 1 the lowest. Government funding to lower decile number schools is greater than that of higher decile number schools.

[5]The New Zealand Teachers Council is an autonomous Crown Entity that registers and regulates teachers in New Zealand. For further details on NZTC see www. http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/

[6]An appraiser is appointed with the consultation and agreement of the person being appraised and the appraising authority (Head of Department or Principal).

(statement of expectations) for the year on improving the nine dimensions of performance as outlined in the professional standards and in line with the level to which the teacher belongs, in addition to at least one development objective.

Usually at the end of the second term[7] an interim appraisal, which is optional, is carried out. During this process the statements of expectations can be modified. The interim appraisal may include an interview, observation of teaching, and preparation of an interim report. Towards the end of the fourth term the teacher, having completed his/her self-appraisal, meets with the appraiser to discuss his/her performance for the year ended, as well as for the next year. Methods of assessment are agreed in advance as part of the performance expectations. The procedures for appraisal involve observation of teaching, interview, self-appraisal, and preparation of a report.

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[7] Secondary schools in New Zealand have four terms in a year, the academic year ends in December.
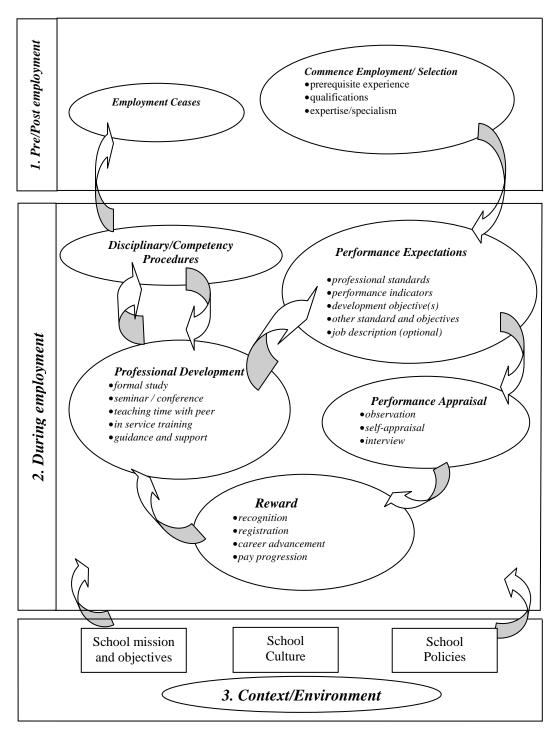
Figure 1: Contemporary teachers' performance measurement approach (Ministry of Education 1999a).

Figure 1 shows the teachers' performance measurement process, which schools are currently using to evaluate teachers' performance (Ministry of Education, 1999a) in New Zealand. The teachers' performance measurement approach shown in Figure 1 has three parts: 1) pre/post-employment, 2) during employment, and 3) context/environment. Teachers are appraised during employment as shown in part 2 (during employment) of Figure 1. Appraisal of performance influences teachers' salary progression (Ministry of Education, 1999a) as well as teacher registration requirements at New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC). Schools provide support to teachers primarily in the form of professional development so that teachers can meet the performance expectations of the schools. Although the schools' context/environment is considered to have a bearing on teachers' performance, the details of how to go about measuring it and making it a part of teachers' performance evaluation is not detailed in the current approach of teachers' performance measurement as shown in Figure 1.

Teachers' Expectations

In this investigation the data obtained via semi-structured interviews of teachers was coded. The codes were developed deductively from the literature review and the stakeholder theory that guided this investigation; as well as inductively using the grounded theory approach as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Lofland (1971), Bodgam and Biklen (1992) among other scholars have also argued in favour of this deductive cum inductive approach (midway approach) for coding data, as this research investigates the application of theory (stakeholder theory) to solve a problem (evaluating performance of teachers in order to improve their performance).

In this investigation the two themes: (i) teachers' perceptions about schools' performance factors, and (ii) attributes of each performance factor formed the two axial codes (Strauss, 1987). It was around each of these two axes that a cluster of codes thematically linked to each other appear in the analysis. In terms of the structure of the codes, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that most researchers use a two-level coding scheme. However, in this research each code was kept as a separate identity in the NViVo2 software used for the analysis for ease of iteration.
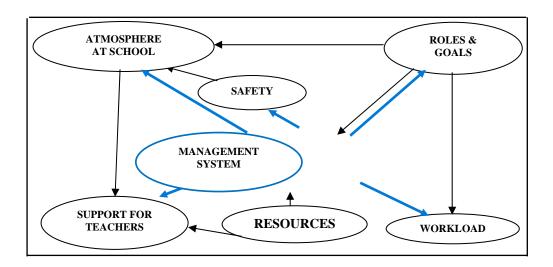
Figure 2: Interactions of teachers' KPFs

The two themes grouped the codes into categories while the ideas and concepts that were thematically linked formed the basis of each code. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews of 13 teachers were coded iteratively into 43 codes that were grouped around the two themes. Patterns and cross patterns of themes were then identified as explained by Eisenhardt (1989) on the basis of which the mutual interactions of KPFs were ascertained as shown in Figure 2.

#	KPFs of Teachers	Attributes of each KPF
1.	Atmosphere at School	1. Relationship between teachers.
		2. Relationship of teachers with students
		3. Relationship of students with teachers and the school
		4. Management traits such as **fairness, transparency and compassion**.
		5. Other features of school atmosphere.
2.	**Roles and Goals**	1. Clarity of Roles for each teacher.
		2. Clarity of Goals for each teacher in all his/her Roles.
		3. Other salient features of teachers' roles and goals. It also includes breaking down of schools' mission and objectives to specific Roles and Goals for each teacher.
3.	**Management**	1. Management System and the teachers. (includes a

	System	teachers' performance measurement system that is responsive to teachers' expectations)
		2. Management System and the parents. (feedback / feed forward from parents)
		3. Management System and the students (bullying, truancy, discipline and feedback)
		4. Other salient features of the Management System. (reduces paperwork, accessibility)
4.	Support for Teachers	1. Supportive management team that provides opportunity for professional development.
		2. Supportive management system that provides information about each student.
		3. Supportive environment at school (collegial atmosphere).
		4. Other features of support for teachers include support for classroom management particularly where unruly students are involved.
5.	Workload	1. Systemic workload. This includes workload created by the management system at school such as attendance, obtaining parental consent for trips, class interactions, assessments, reviews, supervision of non-curricular activities etc. This workload can be characterised into classroom contact hours and non-contact hours.
		2. Other salient features of workload. For example teachers complained that non-contact workload (administrative) workload is continuously rising in order to meet accountability requirements of MoE.
		3. Teachers' expectations of workload include the fact that number of students per class will not be increased from 30.
		4. Teachers' suggestions for managing workload
6.	Resources	1. Teaching resources such as workbooks, software, hardware, teaching aids and tools, Magazines and Journals etc.
		2. Learning environment that is partly influenced by the atmosphere at the school and also to some degree by the physical facility at the school.
		3. Other features of resources such as counselling and mentoring for teachers, psychological assessments and counselling for students.
7.	Safety	1. Meaning of safety. This attribute defines safety for

		teachers in New Zealand that is composed of four components. Namely **physical safety** from being assaulted often by students. **Emotional safety** from being humiliated and harassed. **Professional safety** from being sued often by rich parents and finally safety of **health** by working in a safe building that is healthy and safe.
		2. Management System. This attribute details how the schools' management system influences safety at schools.
		3. Other features of safety which are often school specific.

Table 1: Profile of the seven teachers' KPFs

This investigation has identified that teachers in New Zealand have a set of seven expectations from the schools' management so that they can perform their very best. Teachers expect schools to provide them with a i) safe environment, ii) where the atmosphere is collegial, iii) the management system in the school is responsive to teachers' expectations and assists teachers to support the students, iv) the teachers' workload is manageable, v) their roles and goals are clearly delineated vi) teachers have access to adequate resources and finally vii) adequate support are provided to teachers.

Figure 2 depicts the seven KPFs of teachers. It also shows how the KPFs influence one another. The arrow-heads in Figure 2 indicate the affect one KPF may have on another KPF. The KPF: Management System, that affects five (as shown by thick arrows) other KPFs, is of greater significance, as improvement in this KPF can have a very significant positive impact on five other KPFs.

The seven KPFs of teachers are further explained in Table 1, each KPF has three to five attributes that describe it in greater detail. It may be noted that each attribute of a teachers' KPF actually reflects the expectations of each key stakeholder of the school, as perceived by the teachers. For example the KPF 'Management System' contains four attributes. Out of the four attributes two reflect teachers' expectations while one each reflects parents and students' expectations as perceived by the teachers. One of the attributes of the KPF: Management System is teachers' performance measurement system, shown in Table 1.

Developing teachers' performance measurement system holistically that reflects teachers' expectations from the schools' management in addition to the expectations of the school from the teachers may influence positively the atmosphere at the school, workload of teachers, support for teachers, and the roles and goals of teachers as depicted in Figure 2.

Discussion and implications of the findings

Rumler and Brache (1995) are of the opinion that organisational performance are measured at three levels; i) at the organisational level ii) at the process level and finally iii) at the individual performance level. This concept of cascading performance at different levels of the organisation is also advocated by Neely (2003) and Kaplan and Norton (1996). The performance measurement system at New Zealand's secondary schools has a school review process that is similar to measuring organisational level performance, the other two components of schools' performance measurement namely performance evaluation of teachers and principals are both at the individual performance level.

Hence, it appears that New Zealand's secondary schools' performance measurement system lacks performance measurement at the process level. The author is of the view that this may have happened as the development of the schools' PMS has been driven primarily by governmental institutions (MoE and ERO) who are external to the school, in the sense that they are not directly involved in the process of learning and teaching and being governmental institutions (MoE and ERO) they are primarily focussed on accountability and regulatory compliance.
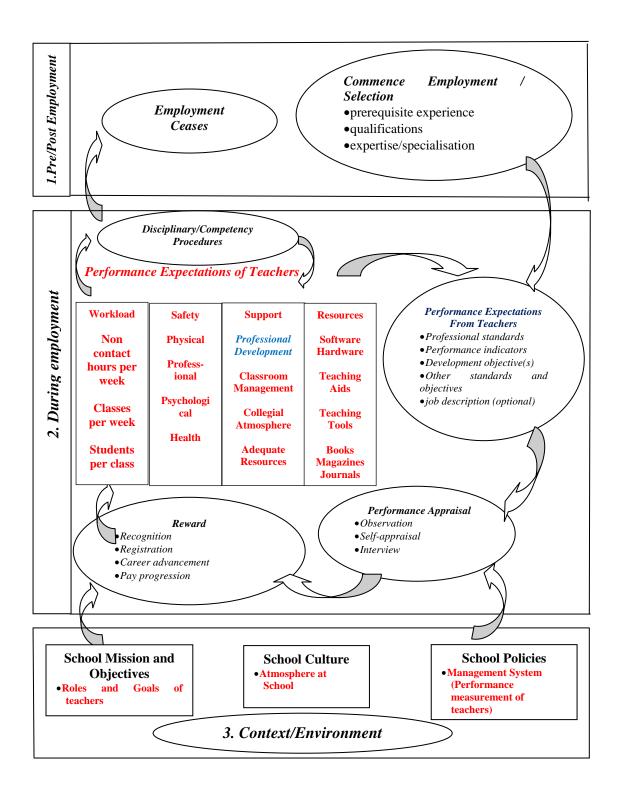
Figure 3: Modified teachers' performance measurement approach for New Zealand.

The researcher is of the opinion that it is up to each schools' management to identify which key process to measure or upgrade in order to improve the schools' performance. However, as teachers have indicated that the KPF: Management System affects five other KPFs (see Figure 2) it is cardinal to teachers' performance at a school. Since teachers' performance system is one of the four attributes of the KPF: Management System (as shown in Table 1), the researcher is of the view that incorporating teachers' expectations into performance evaluation of teachers should be a top priority for all schools who wish to improve teachers' performance.

Teachers' performance measurement system in New Zealand currently focuses on accountability and regulatory compliance of individual teachers in New Zealand. Thereby teacher's performance is considered solely the responsibility of each individual teacher, as is reflected in the preparation of the annual statements of expectations by each teacher, followed by his/her annual appraisal.

Yariv and Coleman (2005) who investigated under-performing teachers in schools have argued that in-house support and a sensitive approach by the heads of school as well as the Principal's desire to see the teacher succeed rather than fail have been the most prominent reasons for improvement in teachers' performance.

Offering a high level of support, observing someone's lessons, encouraging them to watch others, giving detailed and honest feedback, all these may lead to success with a teacher who actively seeks to improve, but fail if the teacher is stressed, resistant, or simply appears not to have the inner resources to change existing practices (Wragg et al., 2000, p.7)

In many countries such as Finland, and Shanghai-China teachers' performance at the school level is a matter of concern for the schools head as well as the teachers and the practice of individual teachers is open for inspection by other teachers of the school (OECD, 2010). Efforts to improve teachers' performance are actively supported by peers and are part of the daily job of a teacher and not necessarily only part of an annual appraisal process and restricted to such special annual or term initiative. It may be beneficial if the process of improving teachers performance is expanded beyond the annual (or term) appraisal process and made a part of the

day to day activities of teachers in New Zealand, where peers support individual teachers in continuously improving their performance. This may happen, if the focus of the teachers' appraisal process moves from only compliance to a set of standards to continuous improvement based on the same set of standards, as has been experienced in Finland and Shanghai-China (OECD, 2010).

Out of the seven teachers' KPFs in New Zealand only one that is support is partially reflected in the schools' PMS, and even in terms of support the current approach only mentions professional development of teachers as shown on Figure 1. The schools' current PMS ignores the fact that teachers in addition to professional development require other forms of support in order to maximise their performance, such as a collegial work environment, adequate teaching resources, training to manage unruly children, as well as counselling for teachers as detailed in item #4 of Table 1.

Since six out of the seven teachers' KPFs such as: atmosphere at school, safety at school, resources available for teachers, roles and goals of teachers, and workload of teachers are not reflected in the current teachers' performance measurement system in New Zealand. Hence, a modified teachers' performance measurement approach is outlined in Figure 3. The modified teachers' performance measurement approach reflects the expectations of schools' management from teachers, as well as the expectations of teachers from the schools' management. The teachers' expectations are reflected by seven KPFs[8] identified in this investigation in addition to that of teachers' registration to the next higher category, and pay progression. The modified teachers' performance measurement approach is based on the transactional nature of interaction between teachers and schools' management during the appraisal process of teachers.

The schools' "Performance Expectations of teachers" depicts the schools' expectations of teachers on one side of the transaction, while four teachers' KPFs:

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[8] Teachers seven KPFs are: Workload, Safety, Support, Atmosphere at School, Management System, Roles & Goals, and Resources.

Workload, Safety, Support, and Resources portray individual teachers' expectations of schools on the other side of the transaction. The remaining three KPFs of teachers (Management System, Roles and Goals, and Atmosphere at School) reflect teachers concerns about the context/environment of the school which may be depicted in the school's policy, culture, and the school's mission and objectives as shown in Figure 3. It is to be noted that the contemporary teachers' performance measurement in New Zealand recognises (see Figure 1) that the schools' context / environment affects teachers' performance but does not provide any explanation as to how it is to be measured. The modified teachers' performance approach suggests that the teachers KPF Management System may reflect school policies, the KPF Atmosphere at school may reflect school culture and the KPF Roles and goals of teachers may reflect the schools' mission and objectives.

It is the author's contention that as the modified performance measurement approach of teachers is based on teachers' expectations, in addition to that of the schools' regulatory/governmental stakeholders it will improve the buy-in from the schools' teachers. The transaction between the expectations of teachers and management is expected to make the process of teachers' performance measurement more flexible, thereby more accurately reflecting each teacher's performance, within the particular context of each school[9].

The modified approach recognises that teachers cannot succeed in isolation and in addition to support from the schools' management need an appropriate school environment. Hence, the modified teachers' performance measurement approach has designated three teachers' KPFs (Management System, Roles and Goals, and Atmosphere at School) as reflections of the schools' context and environment. These three KPFs set the context in which performance measurement teachers is to be measured. Hence, we suggest that the state of each schools' context as defined by these three KPFs be ascertained and attached to each teachers' performance

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[9]Given that the population of New Zealand is not evenly distributed throughout the length and breadth of the country. There are schools with more than 3000 pupils in some urban centers such as Auckland, while there are schools with barely 100 students in some rural locations.

appraisal. Thereby, establishing the link that teachers see in their performance, the role of schools' management and the particular context of the schools where they serve.

Conclusion

This paper explains a four step process for measuring performance of teachers, which may be applicable to other professions too. First, the context of the school as reflected by three KPFs (i) Atmosphere at school (ii) Roles and goals of teachers (iii) Performance management system needs to be established. Secondly, the expectations of the schools' management from teachers needs to be ascertained. Thirdly, teachers expectations from the school needs to be ascertained. Fourthly, the objective of performance measurement of teachers should be continuous improvement of teachers' performance not merely compliance to a set of standards.

The author contends that although this preliminary research is set exclusively within the New Zealand school system, the three core issues; that is the failure of teachers' performance measurement to recognise the expectations of teachers from the schools' management, consequently often leading to inadequate support for teachers from schools' management; absence of any linkage between teachers' performance and the context of the school; and focus on compliance rather than continuous improvement of performance are problems that teachers globally may identify with. Hence, in spite of the fact that this investigation is based on data collected from State secondary schools of New Zealand, the three core issues related to evaluation of teachers' performance as discussed in this paper are expected to resonate far beyond the shores of New Zealand.

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