

Differential Teacher Effectiveness: towards a model for research and teacher appraisal

Review by Rob Clarke, MA in Education

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Campbell, R.J., Kyriakides, R. D., Muijs, R. D. and Robinson, W. 'Differential Teacher Effectiveness: towards a model for research and teacher appraisal' in *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 29, No. 3, September 2003

This article describes some of the historical background to the teacher effectiveness movement and possible refinements to our practices in this area of education. The authors define 'effectiveness' as "...the power to realise socially valued objectives agreed for teachers' work, especially, but not exclusively, the work concerned with enabling pupils to learn (2004:354)". I wonder if this definition of 'effectiveness' that the authors attempt to describe seems to me to be somewhat vague in the context of teaching and learning, however I guess this is an extremely difficult thing to define!

They give five problems with current concepts of teacher effectiveness; one of which is that "...the technology of measurement has been creating the concept of effectiveness rather than the concept requiring an appropriate technology (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs and Robinson 2003:350)". Another key point they make is that the teacher effectiveness movement has not investigated leading edge or innovative teaching. Yet another problem, which I'm sure won't surprise anyone, is that our measures seem to be based mainly on a cognitive gain model of measuring education which is simply not adequate in my opinion.

They provide quite a clear description of the problems associated with current views of teacher effectiveness and show how these are somewhat limited. Some of the criticisms raised include that teacher effectiveness tend to encourage generic performance at the expense of differential (or I wonder individual) performance, the lack of context-sensitive aspects in any of the current measurement tools, and that there are politically driven desires to gain insights into the cost-effectiveness/measurement of education. This resonates for me in my current situation because the 'appraisal' process at my school does not even take into account the views of the individual who is being appraised! Hmmm.....

They give five dimensions for differential teacher effectiveness:

1. Differences in activity.
2. Differences in subject and/or components of subjects.
3. Differences in pupils' background factors.
4. Differences in pupils' personal characteristics.
5. Differences in cultural and organizational context.
 - Why doesn't this take into account any differences that are based on the teacher themselves???

The authors identify two functions that their approach to 'differential effectiveness' has:

1. To guide research design in the future and
2. To provide a more equitable and appropriate model for the evaluation of teachers' performance (as opposed to teacher evaluation!!!).