

The IOTA and Teaching Competence

Mitsuo Adachi

Over fifty years of time and effort have been devoted to evaluating teachers. "Probably no aspect of education has been discussed with greater frequency, with as much deep concern, or by more educators and citizens than has that of teacher effectiveness—how to define it, how to identify it, how to measure it, how to evaluate it, and how to detect and remove obstacles to its achievement." Howsam stated that more than 2,000 studies had been reported on teaching competence over these fifty years. The research continues.

What is teaching competence? What are the attributes that define the competent teacher?

Suppose the readers are asked to list the qualities of the competent teacher. The list may include the following attributes.

1. Warm
2. Considerate
3. Friendly
4. Honest
5. Sensitive
6. Empathetic
7. Fair
8. Democratic
9. Enthusiastic
10. Well-rounded
11. Responsible
12. Human
13. Flexible

No doubt the list can be increased.

Examine the qualities again and ask yourself these questions. What qualities do I want in the school custodian? What qualities do I want in the doctor? What qualities do I want in the taxi driver? What qualities do I want in the parents? What qualities do I want in the children?

The responses seem obvious. The qualities for the competent teacher should also be reflected in the school custodian, the doctor, the taxi driver, the parents, and the children.

There is no doubt that these qualities for the competent teacher are important. However, these qualities are important for all people. The implication for the evaluation of teaching competence seems clear. There is a need to examine other attributes that more clearly signify the competent teacher and teaching competence.

The IOTA, the acronym for the Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities, is a comprehensive and objective instrument for the evaluation of teaching competence. The IOTA evaluates the teacher on 27 specific categories which go beyond the qualities discussed previously. Based on the rationale that what is to be measured must first be defined, the IOTA has been developed from an acceptable definition of teaching competence. *The Role of the Teacher in Society* is the definition or the criteria.

The Role of the Teacher in Society defines teacher competence in six areas. These are:

- Area 1. Director of Learning
- Area 2. Counselor and Advisor
- Area 3. Mediator of the Culture
- Area 4. Link with the Community
- Area 5. Member of the Staff
- Area 6. Member of the Teaching Profession

The IOTA measures teaching competence against this acceptable criteria from which 27 factors have been deemed important for the total teaching act. The twenty-seven scales reflect the "whole teacher."

The first fourteen scales are classroom observation scales, that is, these scales are teaching activities which are observable in the classroom. Scales fifteen to twenty-seven are the interview scales. There are factors in the

professional job of the teacher which cannot be observed in the classroom. The interview process is utilized to evaluate those factors which are not observable in the classroom.

Each of the twenty-seven scales of the IOTA has five levels of teacher performances. The levels of performances range from the top level to the least acceptable level and are written in behavioral terms. These five performance levels for each of the twenty-seven scales are scrambled to eliminate the "halo" effect, that is, the first performance level specified may not be the top level of teacher performance. It may be the mid-level or the least acceptable level of teacher performance. The observer collects data and lets the instrument, the IOTA, determine the competency level of the performances. The focus is on objectivity on twenty-seven separate categories which constitute the professional job of the teacher.

The twenty-seven scale titles of the IOTA are as follows.

Observation Scales:

1. Learning Centers
2. Variety in Activities
3. Use of Materials for Instruction
4. Classroom Control
5. Learning Difficulties
6. Individualization of Instruction
7. Development and Implementation of Classroom Goals
8. Opportunity for Participation
9. Student Opinion
10. Creative Expression
11. Development of Student Initiative
12. Social Climate
13. Subject Matter Preparation
14. Current Application of Subject Matter

Interview Scales:

15. Peer Relationships
16. Participation in School Staff Activities
17. Articulation of Classroom Program to Total School Curriculum
18. Parent Participation in School Activities
19. Utilization of Community Resources
20. Personal Professional Responsibility
21. Professional Self-Evaluation
22. Teacher in the Community
23. Skill in Enhancing Multi-Cultural Relationships
24. Evaluation of Individual Student Progress by the Teacher

25. Development of Student Self-Assessment
26. Work with Specialized Services
27. Assists Students in Exploring Vocational Opportunities

The IOTA is a criterion-referenced measurement as contrasted to the norm-referenced measurement. W. James Popham and T. R. Husek state that "a norm-referenced measure is used to identify an individual's performance in relation to the performance of others in the same measure." Standardized tests and intelligence tests are examples of norm-referenced measurements. Are the students above or below the national norm? How does the school district compare with the national norm? Is there a State norm? Our orientation is norm-referenced.

On the other hand, criterion-referenced measurements are

"those which are used to ascertain an individual's status with respect to some criterion, i.e., performance standard. It is because the individual is compared with some established criterion, rather than other individuals, that these measures are described as criterion-referenced. The meaningfulness of an individual score is not dependent on comparison with other testees. We want to know what the individual can do, not how he stands in comparison to others. For example, the dog owner who wants to keep his dog in the backyard may give his dog a fence-jumping test. The owner wants to find out how high the dog can jump so that the owner can build a fence high enough to keep the dog in the yard. How the dog compares with other dogs is irrelevant."

The IOTA, a criterion-referenced measurement, does not measure a teacher's performance against other teachers; the teacher is measured against himself. Self-evaluation becomes an important consideration in this framework.

Another factor which needs emphasis relative to the IOTA program is that the IOTA is used only for the improvement of instruction. It is not to be used for rating teachers for retention or dismissal purposes.

The acceptance of the IOTA approach to the evaluation of teaching competence is increasing. The feedback from hundreds of teachers throughout the nation indicates a high degree of acceptance of evaluation of teaching competence which is criterion-referenced and improvement of instructions as its goal. The Madison School District in Phoenix, Arizona, is using an IOTA

based program for its teacher evaluation program. Phoenix Union High School District has a five year program whereby all teachers in the system will participate in the IOTA program.

In addition to Arizona, the IOTA program has been accepted with enthusiasm in many school districts in the following states: California, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, New York, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming. The IOTA has been received with enthusiasm by the educators in American Samoa.

The latest innovation in the IOTA program has been the involvement of parents and community leaders with teachers and administrators. A deeper appreciation of the professional job of the teacher is reflected by the parents and community leaders who have participated in the program. The opportunity for educators and the non-educators to discuss teaching competence openly has been a most valuable experience.

The leaders in the IOTA movement do not see the IOTA as a panacea for all the problems faced by educators. However, the acceptance of the program by educators throughout the nation indicates that the rationale upon which the IOTA is based is sound. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when it is criterion-referenced. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when it is for the improvement of instruction. Teachers will accept evaluation of teaching competence when self-evaluation and not rating is emphasized. The IOTA is a professional approach to the evaluation of teaching competence.

Mitsuo Adachi is Associate Professor of Education with the Field Services Division. He holds a B.Ed. in Secondary Education and an M.Ed. in Educational Administration from the University of Hawaii and an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Supervision from Arizona State University. Dr. Adachi was associated with the public schools in Hawaii for twenty years as a teacher and administrator. He is a Director and Consultant for the Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA) program for the National IOTA Council.

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