The People and the Policy: The Possibilities and Limitations of Current Supervisory Appraisal Practices for Experienced Secondary Teachers in Ontario

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Many Ontarians have lost faith in their teachers. In the court of public opinion, teachers are greedy, entitled, and highly fallible. Quality of teaching is questioned, and the belief that ineffective teachers are “protected” by their federations, persists. Raising the issue of teacher quality, and examining the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) policy, at this time, has enormous implications. Are Ontario’s teachers held to the highest standards? Are there mechanisms and tools within the TPA policy that would promote authentic and sustained teacher development while at the same time offering provisions for the removal of those who do not demonstrate improvement? The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore these questions and to examine perceptions of current supervisory appraisal practices of experienced secondary teachers in Ontario as held by teachers, administrators, and teacher labour union representatives. This study took a grounded theory approach and was propelled by a social constructivist interpretative framework. Three main sources of data were collected: document analysis, surveys, and interviews. All data were rigorously coded and analyzed, iteratively, in order to develop a comprehensive and rich narrative of the perceptions of the stakeholders in regards to the possibilities and limitations associated with current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario and the potential for authentic, lasting impact upon teaching practice. It is a central finding of this study that conflicting notions of teaching, and indeed in the expectations of the role teachers inhabit in education, create a tension within which clarity and consistency in implementation of the TPA process are casualties.
Additional findings of this study are: (1) the TPA policy presupposes a particularly narrow view of teaching and teacher learning; (2) there are significant inconsistencies in implementation of the TPA process across the province; (3) problems in implementation are derived from the dueling objectives of the policy; and (4) for a large faction of study participants, the TPA process does not serve as a vehicle for teacher growth and development. Possibilities, however, within the current model of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario, are presented, as well as recommendations and directions for future inquiry.
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Chapter I: Overview and Introduction

Since its inception in 2001, the Teacher Performance Appraisal for Experienced Teachers in Ontario has been the singular, formalized vehicle for teacher evaluation in Ontario schools. As an amendment to the Education Act, the Quality in the Classroom Act (2001) mandated a uniform system of teacher appraisals that would endeavor to address government priorities of both accountability and growth in teaching quality. According to the amendments, every teacher in Ontario would be evaluated “with respect to the areas of competency, which are based on the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Standards of the Teaching Profession” (Larsen, 2009, p. 8). Areas of competencies, as set out by the OCT, fall into five main domains: Commitment to Pupils and Pupil Learning, Professional Knowledge, Teaching Practice, Leadership and Community, and Ongoing Professional Learning (Technical Manual, 2009, p. 20). The Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) in Ontario was established using a clinical observation model. Every five years, experienced teachers engage in the TPA process, which includes a pre-meeting with their supervising administrator (principal or vice-principal), a classroom observation, a post-observation meeting with their supervising administrator, and a summative report. As part of the summative report, teachers are assigned a rating of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Summative reports are permanently kept in employee files.

Political and Economic Context of the Teacher Performance Appraisal Policy in Ontario

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. The current sociopolitical context of Ontario holds enormous implications for (a) the way in which educational stakeholders view teachers and conceptualize teaching quality, and (b) the tone and culture of interactions between union representatives, teachers and administrators in the context of teacher evaluation. I begin by providing a brief background of the TPA policy, followed by a discussion of the current political context as it relates to this study, as well as an

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1 Prior to 2007, there were four possible ratings available to assess teacher performance, which included: Exemplary, Good, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory. Since 2007, administrators may assign either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory in a summative report of teacher performance.
overview of the implications of raising the issue of teacher evaluation at this point in time in Ontario. A brief discussion of the purpose of this research is also presented herein.

Ontario’s TPA was legislated in 2001 as an amendment to the Education Act as one piece of a broader set of public sector reforms put forth by the government of former Premier Mike Harris and its “Common Sense Revolution”. The introduction of the TPA ran concurrently with the first full-census assessment of Grade 9 mathematics in Ontario, and just a year before the first full-census administration of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), both administered through the Education Quality and Accountability Office of Ontario (EQAO). The message, to the taxpayer, was that Ontario’s education system was “broken, produced ‘mediocre results’ and needed to be fixed immediately” (Larsen, 2009, p. 6). This messaging fed what Downs (1972) described as the second stage of the Issue-Attention Cycle (IAC), that of “alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm” in which the Harris government proposed solutions in the form of regulation and standardized appraisals of teachers in Ontario (p. 39).

More than a decade later, the issue of teaching quality in Ontario has moved its way through the stages of Downs’ (1972) IAC and sits, albeit restlessly, in the Post-Problem Stage. Downs (1972) describes this stage in which the issue has been “replaced at the center of public concern” and has moved into a “prolonged limbo” with only smaller, “spasmodic recurrences of interest” (p. 40). Labour disputes, however, of the past three years, have given way to such recurrences.

Many Ontarians have lost faith in their teachers. In the court of public opinion, teachers are greedy, entitled, and highly fallible. Quality of teaching is questioned, and the belief that ineffective teachers are “protected” by their federation, persists. Raising the issue of teacher quality, and examining the TPA policy, at this time, has enormous implications. Are Ontario’s teachers held to the highest standards? Are there mechanisms and tools within the TPA policy that would promote authentic and
sustained teacher development while at the same time offering provisions for the removal of those who
do not demonstrate improvement? How does the TPA hold teachers accountable? These are questions
that are brought to the surface in raising the issue of teaching quality in Ontario at a time when teachers
are heading back to the negotiating tables with the provincial government and local school boards.

The current political context for teaching and teachers in Ontario is, unsurprisingly, entangled
within its economic context. While it is largely considered that the recession ended in Ontario in 2009,
the effects have been lasting and cloaked in the rhetoric of austerity. The release of the Commission on
the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services, known as the Drummond Report, in January 2012, predicted
an “exploding deficit that would soon exceed $30 billion” and recommendations to avoid “what was
framed as a catastrophic fiscal meltdown” included public service cuts, layoffs, and privatization
(Hennessy & Standford, 2013, p. 7). The Liberal government, under the leadership of Premier Kathleen
Wynne, as with her predecessor Premier Dalton McGuinty, has committed to balancing the budget by
2017/2018 while working with a persistent $8.5 billion deficit going into the new year. Such
determinations have shrouded recent negotiations between the Ontario Government and each teacher
union in Ontario who all, as of the Fall 2015, were in a legal strike position. Premier Wynne’s
government has insisted on “no new money” for schools, and as such, any gains made by teachers
during negotiations, would need to be “found” elsewhere (i.e., fewer educational assistants, increased
class sizes, larger numbers of supervision minutes for teachers each week, as well as the elimination of
preparation time for teachers in areas of Guidance, Student Success, Special Education, and
Cooperative Education). Effectively, teachers are being called upon to do much more, with less.
Simultaneously, Ontario’s Ministry of Education, through the Literacy & Numeracy Secretariat (LNS)
has been ramping up efforts, over the past several years, to grow student achievement, measured almost
exclusively by standardized test scores. Funds have been funneled into boards and earmarked for
collaborative professional learning opportunities to get teachers moving toward more innovative and
effective ways of teaching. Boards have adopted several research-based instructional strategies as “Essential Practices” that move teachers away from the traditional “chalk & talk” lecture-style to more facilitative, collaborative, student-directed, technology-infused, inquiry-based learning. Issues of austerity measures as well as that of Ministry priorities in literacy and numeracy are critical to a discussion of both teacher growth and teacher performance appraisal as these conditions frame the way we identify “good” teaching, and see the role of administrators as either managers or instructional leaders.

The most significant advantage to raising the issue of teaching quality in the current political and economic context is that it reignites the conversation about the standards for teaching in Ontario, as well as how best to attract, retain, and develop highly effective teachers for Ontario’s students. Raising the issue of teacher quality, at this time, further provides an opportunity to reexamine the professionalization of our teachers as we reconsider what role they play in their own development and preservation of high standards.

**Pan-Canadian Scan: Regional Comparisons of Teacher Performance Appraisal**

Across Canada, education falls under the jurisdiction of individual provinces and territories. As such, there is significant variability in systems of education, policies and practices, in particular those related to teacher evaluation, between regions. For context, a brief overview is provided here to clarify current policies and practices related to teacher performance appraisal across Canada. Teacher appraisal in Ontario will be discussed in length in subsequent sections.

**British Columbia.** According to both the Provincial Collective and Board Level Agreements, evaluations of teachers in British Columbia (BC) are neither cyclical nor regular. An evaluation may be requested by teachers (although no more than 10% of teachers in a school may do this in any given

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2 The use of “we” in this sentence, and periodically throughout this document, is intended to engage the reader in the collective of education stakeholders including teachers, administrators, parents, students, policy makers, and taxpayers.
year) or the administrator. Teachers must be given one day’s notice for formal evaluation visits, of which there must be a minimum of three. Each classroom observation visit must be followed by a discussion of observations including both positive assessments as well as suggested areas for improvement. Vice-principals in BC do not qualify as evaluators. According to Board Level agreements, “a less than satisfactory performance cannot lead to dismissal unless there has been three consecutive reports written by not fewer than two evaluators indicating less than satisfactory performance” (BCPSEA, 2006, p. 58).

**Alberta.** In Alberta (AB), teachers must provide an Annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan—not doing so may lead to disciplinary action. Growth plans may be submitted to a principal or a group of teachers delegated by the principal but cannot be used as part of the evaluation process unless the teacher agrees. Evaluations in AB are neither cyclical nor regular. Evaluations of AB teachers may only be conducted by the principal:

> At the (a) written request of the teacher, (b) for the purposes of gathering information related to a specific employment decision, (c) for purposes of assessing the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice, or (d) on the basis of information received through supervision, the principal has reason to believe that the teaching of the teacher may not meet the teaching quality standard. (Alberta Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 5)

According to local agreements, great care should be taken in the initiating an evaluation. According to the Alberta’s Ministry of Education (2008):

> Reasons for the initiation of an evaluation of a teacher on continuing contract can be quite diverse but they should not be frivolous, petty or vindictive. In short, they must first be professionally defensible. A single complaint about a teacher should not, as a matter of course, start an evaluation. A series of complaints or a complaint accompanied by other concerns may be sufficient. (p. 6)

In AB, the focus is on supervision. Providing ongoing, frequent, and authentic supervision of teachers is fundamental to the province’s policy of appraisal.
**Saskatchewan.** The philosophy that propels teacher appraisal in Saskatchewan (SK) is that it is a process entirely separate from professional development. Regina’s Board of Education, for example, requires that performance evaluation “must be conducted by administrators”, and that it “is a planned, documented and fair process” (Regina Public Schools, 2015, p. 1). In SK, as with AB and BC, teacher evaluation is neither cyclical nor regular and is conducted, generally, in the case of new hires, on teachers who have requested a performance evaluation, and for teachers “for whom an administrator has requested performance evaluation” (Regina Public Schools, 2015, p. 1). Evaluations of SK teachers include three to five formal observations, each followed by consultations. Data for each evaluation may include: general classroom organization and management (documented through classroom observations), personal reflections of the teacher, context of teaching assignment, interactions with colleagues/parents/ students, participation in activities, professional learning plans, as well as observed skills. A teacher in SK whose performance does not meet provincial standards, is placed in a program of “intensive assistance” (Regina Public Schools, 2015, p. 6). Should no improvement, or inadequate improvement be shown, the teacher is placed on Contract Review (Regina Public Schools, 2015, p. 8).

**Manitoba.** Teachers in Manitoba (MB) are appraised using a Supervision for Growth Model which is intended to assess performance, provide opportunities for learning, and encourage personal responsibility while providing time and assistance to facilitate improvement (Frontier School Division, 2011, p. 30). Within this model, teachers in MB are assigned to either of two career tracks: Administrative or Developmental. The Administrative track provides structures and procedures for professional growth and evaluation. There are four categories for the Administrative track including: Probation (first year teachers), Performance (new hires to Manitoba), Promotion (teachers looking to move to administration) or Competence (teachers experiencing difficulty). Evaluation on the Administrative track utilizes a clinical observation model—with the amount of supervisory classroom visits contingent upon the categories within which the teacher falls (i.e., one for Probation, three for
Performance). For the Developmental track, teachers are provided with the processes, time and resources to enhance professional growth including coaching by administrators, peer coaching, mentoring, or self-directed learning. The tracks have some similarities in that teachers in either track complete an Annual Growth Plan, as well as all documentation is kept in an employee’s file. Ultimately, a school principal determines track placement in consultation with each teacher. Track placement is reviewed on an annual basis. It is important to note that teachers could be on both tracks at the same time, for example, pursuing self-directed learning (Developmental) while also pursuing a promotion (Administrative).

Yukon. In the Yukon Territory of Canada, probationary teachers are evaluated at least twice each year while career teachers are evaluated once each year, unless circumstances require additional evaluations. Under the current policy of teacher evaluation in the Yukon:

when the evaluating administrator identifies poor performance or conduct that the administrator believes may lead to a recommendation for the teacher’s dismissal…the administrator will admonish the teacher in writing and make reasonable effort to assist the teacher in correcting the poor performance or conduct; and establish a reasonable time for improvement, not to exceed two months. (Yukon Board of Education, 2002, p. 1)

According to the Yukon Teachers’ Association Handbook (2012), evaluators must be “formally trained to do teacher evaluations and teachers be made aware of how they are to be evaluated” (p. 35). Policy further stipulates that “teachers of French as a second language should be evaluated by persons who are qualified to evaluate in French” (Yukon Teachers’ Association, 2012, p. 35)—a caveat not commonly stipulated in other regions in Canada. It is critical to also note that “any evaluation of a teacher or administrator should take into consideration the unique educational circumstances of the community” (Yukon Teachers’ Association, 2012, p. 35).

Northwest Territories. All teachers in the Northwest Territories (NT) are appraised with the same process. Beginning teachers and teachers new to the NT are formally evaluated in each of their
first two years while experienced teachers with two or more years of teaching in NT are evaluated on a five-year cycle (more frequently if the principal deems necessary). All appraisals are carried out by school principals, and include at least three classroom observations as part of data collection. Policy documents related to teacher performance appraisal in the NT clarify that a formal process of evaluation “does not take the place of the ongoing support, guidance, and monitoring that is part of the supervisory responsibility of the principal” (NWT, 2004, p. 2).

**Nunavut.** Teachers in Nunavut (NU) move through a formal evaluation process once every four years with probationary teachers evaluated once every probationary year. Teacher evaluations in NU are both formative and summative. Formative assessments are not placed in a teacher’s file, include two or more evaluations, and contain specific strengths and weaknesses with specific commitments to provide assistance to strengthen areas of weakness. Summative assessments, however, occur near the end of the school year, are a “snapshot in time that recognizes the cumulative growth that has taken place over the year”, and are placed in a teacher’s permanent file (NTA, 2014, p. 114). NU teachers may request a summative evaluation at any time. Policy documents related to evaluation of NU teachers stipulate that “at no time is it appropriate for consultants, fellow teachers, students, DEA, board members, parents or members of the community or other parties to participate in the formative or summative evaluation process” (NTA, 2014, p. 115).

**Quebec.** As of 2015, there is no formalized process for the evaluation of teachers in Quebec (QC). The professionalization of QC teachers continues to be a long-standing and highly contentious issue. As of this writing, there is neither a singular code of ethics by which standards of teaching practice may be set, nor is there a consideration of teachers as professionals. Proulx (2014) described the issue of evaluating teachers’ performances in QC as “sensitive” and argued that resistance to an evaluation process stems from both a “fear that abusive measures might be taken [by principals or boards]” and the presumption that teachers are generally “reluctant to the notion of their pedagogical
activities being monitored” (p. 8). While QC does, since 2001, have an official competency guide for the initial training of teachers, it is not used as a tool for the evaluation of teachers. It is important to note that in cases of suspected or alleged unethical teacher behavior, it is the Ministry of Education that investigates.

**New Brunswick.** Teachers in New Brunswick (NB) are evaluated using the Charlotte Danielson model of teacher supervision with a focus on the four domains of Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Professional Responsibilities, and Instruction (AESD, 2012, p. 1). Levels of performance for each domain are assigned a rating of Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, or Distinguished. As a representative example of how the domains are used to support teachers for growth in NB, the Anglophone East School District utilizes “Accountability Tracks” including Probationary (Track I), Professional Growth (Track II), Professional Assistance (Track III), and Remediation and On Review (Track IV). All tracks, with the exception of Track II, require frequent and formalized classroom observations, as well as written feedback and reporting. According to district policy, participation in Track II is “recognition that a teacher is meeting the proficient level of all domains” and therefore will be supported through continuous informal feedback and ongoing appraisal rather than formal written evaluations (AESD, 2012, p. 2, italics added). Self-assessment, and regular monitoring by school principals (including frequent walk-throughs) provide the ongoing assessment of teacher performance. Should difficulties be evident, the Director of Schools places a teacher on an evaluation track. Teachers and principals in NB are part of the same federation and as such, a principal cannot place an individual teacher on a specific evaluation track.

**Nova Scotia.** In Nova Scotia (NS), processes for teacher performance appraisals are determined by individual school boards. An example, however, representative of the spirit and practices of appraisal for teachers in NS can be drawn from the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) that stipulates essentially three stages of appraisal: Supervision for Growth, Evaluation, and Performance
Review. With an emphasis on ongoing supervision with feedback, the HRSB conducts an annual process for all teachers called Supervision for Growth. In concert with a teacher-driven annual growth plan, administrators (or any individual in a position of supervision which can include principal, vice-principal, or department leads) make frequent informal visits to classrooms. Dates of informal visits, as well as written notes related to the observation, are documented and shared with the teacher following each visit. At any time, should concerns about teacher performance be identified, a recommendation to switch to either Evaluation or Performance Review may be submitted by a principal. Evaluations are conducted of all permanent teachers every three years using a clinical observation model. Evaluations must include at least three formal classroom observations and documented feedback must be provided after each observation. A Performance Review is a summative process which may be initiated any time by a principal in cases “where significant concerns have been identified through the Supervision for Growth and/or Evaluation Process” and may lead to the recommendation for the termination of a teacher’s contract (HRDSB, 2007, Sec. 3, Article 3.1). A Performance Review must include at least four classroom observations with a conference after each visit. Each of the three processes of teacher appraisal within the HRSB are based on Indicators of Quality Teaching including Planning and Preparation, Engaging all Students in Learning, Creating Effective Learning Environments, and Professional Practice.

**Prince Edward Island.** Teacher evaluation processes for teachers in Prince Edward Island (PE) are determined by individual school boards. Current practice, however, for both the French and English language school boards is the use of the Charlotte Danielson model of teacher evaluation with four domains including: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Professional Responsibilities, and Instruction (AESD, 2005, p. 1). There are effectively three forms of teacher assessment in PE. Formal Evaluations, Professional Growth Plans, and Progress Reports. Formal evaluations are conducted of all probationary teachers, and of permanent teachers when such an evaluation has been
requested by the teacher, principal or Superintendent of Education. Professional Growth Plans are an activity for which any teacher may volunteer to participate. Teachers give notice to their principals that they wish to participate and meet with principals to discuss goals in one of two areas: (1) an instructional/student goal, or (2) professional goal. Teachers maintain documentation to verify the completion of activities (i.e., a teaching portfolio). Teachers meet with principals during the school year to discuss achievement. Last, Progress Reports are completed each year for probationary teachers and every three years for permanent teachers. In any of these assessment processes, should it be determined that a teacher is not meeting standards of practice, the teacher may be required to undergo a Competency Review which includes collection of evidence, professional support, feedback, and documentation. A final written report is then submitted by the principal to the Superintendent of Education with an overall performance rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. An unsatisfactory rating may result in the termination of a teacher’s employment.

**Newfoundland & Labrador.** Evaluation of teachers in Newfoundland & Labrador (NL) is generally determined by local school board; however, there are elements common to each school district. For example, all tenured teachers are placed on a five-year appraisal cycle and evaluations are facilitated by principals or assistant principals. In their appraisal year, teachers must (a) complete a self-assessment and (b) a student questionnaire, as well as one of the following: administrator survey of effective teaching, parent questionnaire, or peer questionnaire (third party surveys are not shared as part of the appraisal process). NL teachers may request classroom observations as part of their Professional Appraisal Growth Plan (observations can be made either by the administrator or by a professional peer which is defined as a teacher working at the same site as the teacher being appraised). Unique to NL, teachers in an evaluation cycle are offered both the opportunity and the resources to form a professional peer discussion group and/or develop a professional portfolio. Timelines and benchmarks for growth are developed in consultation with the teacher and the evaluating administrator.
Summary. The variation among regions in Canada on both policies and practices related to teacher evaluation is vast. Fundamental ideological differences exist not only in how each region recognizes the professionalism of its teachers, but in how it sees fit to cultivate and support teaching practice. Differences also arise in areas of, for example, administrators and teachers being represented by the same federation (as is the case in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick), whether teachers should be formally evaluated on a cycle (like in Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Yukon Territory, and Nunavut, but not in Alberta, British Columbia, or Quebec), and the explicit recognition of the need for differentiation of evaluation practices to reflect a teacher’s placement in the career cycle as is prioritized in both Manitoba and New Brunswick’s dual track systems. While allowing for variances in size, demographics, and political context, a discussion of these differences among regions in Canada assists in providing talking points for a discussion regarding how a region views its teachers and the work that they do, the mechanisms it activates to support these teachers, and the role of all school level players (teachers, federation officials, and administrators) in the ongoing supervision and assessment of teachers. It is significant also to note the distinctions among regions whose teachers belong to the same federation as its principals, and those for which a separation of the two parties has been initiated.

Problem Statement

The research problem for this study is the lack of research-based findings on a broad range of stakeholder perceptions regarding current teacher performance appraisal practices. In Ontario, stakeholder perceptions of the outcomes of teacher appraisal practices have undergone only limited examination. According to Cleveland, Murphy and Williams (1989), “performance appraisal systems often involve multiple, conflicting goals” and the result is several unintended, and negative outcomes for the key stakeholders involved in the process (p. 130). As such, the findings of this study may help school and district administrators, as well as Ministry officials, teachers and teacher labour unions, in
decision-making processes related to the opportunities and limitations that exist within the current implementation practices of teacher appraisal in Ontario. These findings may also hold implications for the Ontario College of Teachers and universities who provide both initial and continuing teacher education. Additionally, from these findings, a framework may develop that would allow for the most dynamic, collaborative, and ultimately effective practices in teacher evaluation in order to engage teachers, identify and remedy deficiencies, while promoting ongoing teacher professional growth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide education stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of perceptions held by teachers, administrators, and federation representatives regarding the limitations and possibilities of current teacher appraisal practices in Ontario. An understanding of the participants’ perceptions of their own experiences with teacher appraisal practices may provide insight into the most effective and productive modes of delivery of teacher performance appraisal. Further, an understanding of the ways in which current teacher appraisal practices are implemented may provide insight into how better to use available tools to optimize opportunities for teacher professional growth. In Ontario, school leaders and teachers need research-based evidence to determine the most effective, sustainable, and relevant modes of teacher performance appraisal.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study and informed both data collection and analysis were:

1. What view(s) of teaching do current appraisal practices for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario connote?
2. How do dynamics of power and professionalism amongst and between organizational participants promote or hinder teacher development through the process of teacher performance appraisal?
What are the similarities and contrasts that emerge from the lived experiences of teachers, administrators, and union officials in the implementation of current secondary teacher evaluation practices in Ontario?

**Definition of Terms**

- **Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA):** current practice of formalized experienced teacher evaluations in Ontario. The TPA was legislated in 2001 as a component of the *Quality in the Classroom Act*, as an amendment to the *Education Act*. A clinical observation model for assessing teacher performance carried out with each experienced teacher in Ontario on a five-year cycle.

- **Teacher Evaluation:** The process of systematically assessing the quality of teacher performance for the purposes of maintaining professional standards and/or contributing to decisions regarding tenure, promotion or termination. Based on a common set of predetermined standards. Typically, the process of evaluation is carried out by school administrators such as principal or vice-principal.

- **Teacher Supervision:** The process, either formal or informal, of supporting the practice and professional learning of classroom teachers through classroom visits, constructive feedback, and the provision of teaching resources and professional learning opportunities. Typically carried out by administrators (either principal or vice-principal).

- **Ontario College of Teachers (OCT):** A self-governing body established in 1996 with the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, mandated to “license teachers in Ontario, set and maintain professional standards for the teaching profession, implement a disciplinary process, and accredit teacher education programs” (OCT, 2014).

- **Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF):** Established in 1919, OSSTF currently represents the interests of almost 60,000 public high school teachers, occasional
teachers, educational assistants, psychologists, and other educational workers (osstf.on.ca, 2015). The OSSTF provides protective services (i.e. negotiations, grievances/arbitrations, pay equity and safety, and benefits), educational services (i.e. teacher education, and testing), as well as communications and political action (i.e. social justice, status of women, and equity).

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that the participants of this study would: (a) be honest during the completion of the surveys as well as during interviews and, (b) be able to accurately recall, in detail, their personal experiences with the teacher appraisal process in Ontario.

Limitations were used for the purposes of identifying “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Cresswell, 2012, p. 199). The participant pool was limited to teachers, administrators, and federation representatives, but did not include the perceptions of parents, students, tax payers, government officials, or representatives of the OCT. This study was further limited to experienced public secondary teachers who had experienced at least one TPA out of the Ministry of Education’s New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) program, and did not include teachers employed in private schools in Ontario.

Delimitations and Scope

The delimitations of this study were as follows: (a) study participants were contract (i.e. permanent) teachers, administrators, and OSSTF officials and (b) study participants were employed and/or engaged by public secondary schools in Ontario at the time of participation. In addition, I elected to neither (a) interview students or parents, nor (b) observe teacher appraisal activities such as pre or post conferences or classroom observations.
Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may assist district and school administrators, Ministry officials, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF), classroom teachers, as well as the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), as well as universities that offer initial and continuing teacher education, in the decision-making processes regarding experienced teacher appraisal practices. School and board administrators may use the recommendations of this study to inform their teacher evaluation practices as well as to reexamine the training and preparation of school administrators in conducting performance appraisals. Policy makers and government branches may use the findings to evaluate the value of current teacher appraisal practices in Ontario.

The findings of this study may increase the awareness as to the intended and unintended outcomes of current experienced teacher appraisal practices in Ontario and may assist education stakeholders by providing additional evidence on this important topic. Parents and members of the general public (tax payers) may gain enhanced insight into the intent and value of teacher appraisal practices. Researchers could use the findings to further examine the ways in which teacher appraisal practices may impact teacher performance and, ultimately, student achievement. Legislators may further use the findings of this study to inform decisions regarding the support, development, and allocation of funds associated with teacher appraisal activities.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of current experienced secondary teacher appraisal practices in Ontario. The conceptual framework for this study included ideas regarding quality teaching and quality teachers, the distinctions between purposes and effects of supervision and evaluation, tensions between professionalism and bureaucracy, the integral role of teacher efficacy in the process of appraisal, and the intricacies of examining a policy from its origins
through to its outcomes. The following chapter reviews the literature associated with these ideas and considers opportunities within current research as well as differing methodologies relevant to this study.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This study aimed to explore education stakeholder perceptions of the implementation and outcomes of current experienced teacher evaluation practices in Ontario. The existing literature demonstrates that while much has been written about teacher evaluation and performance appraisal, and as much has been written about teacher perceptions of evaluation practices, there has been little in-depth exploration of this topic in Ontario. Even fewer studies have engaged the voices and lived experiences of other stakeholders, including administrators and federation officials. The most significant potential in the current research lay in the following areas: (1) broad-based examination of perceptions of teacher evaluation practices that cross subject areas, (2) exploration of the perspectives of other educational stakeholders such as administrators and federation officials, (3) a focus on the perspectives of secondary school teachers, and (4) focused, in-depth examination of specific experienced teacher evaluation practices in Ontario, Canada. To focus this review of literature, however, attention will be devoted to: (a) teacher performance appraisal and institutional theory; (b) teacher evaluation within the field of teacher development; (c) studies that have examined the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) in Ontario; (d) a global view of teacher evaluation, as well as; (e) differing methodologies relevant to this study.

Teacher Performance Appraisal and Institutional Theory

In order to more holistically grapple with how a policy such as the TPA is implemented in the school context, it is critical to examine the context itself. Implications of a view of teaching, be it professional or bureaucratic, along with school structures and power dynamics, provide a clearer picture of the people at work with a policy. These areas are explored here with a determination that theories about how teachers learn must be considered alongside theories of the situations in which they learn.

Teaching reform: Professional or bureaucratic? In order to appropriately examine the policy of TPA in Ontario, it is critical to understand if the policy is founded on a professional or a bureaucratic
view of teaching. Arguably, it is a question of whether policymakers view teaching to be an art or a science, or both. Fundamentally, teachers must hold a pedagogical knowledge base, and indeed, that knowledge can be taught, and subsequently demonstrated. The intricacies of teaching, however, are far more complex. Variables such as the number of students in a class, varying degrees of student ability, wide ranges of student learning needs, as well as cultural, racial, religious, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity, create a scenario in which prescribed actions and behaviors are tested. Teachers need to think and respond spontaneously and adaptively to the dynamic situations in their classrooms.

A bureaucratic, or arguably rational systems approach to teaching, then, is somewhat limited. Due to the loose coupling nature of teachers’ work (away from their colleagues, administrators, and district employees), “teachers for the most part do their jobs behind closed doors” (Davies & Zarifa, 2009, p. 6). This is a critical component of any examination of educational reform. The education system in Ontario, today, bears close resemblance to Weber’s ideal bureaucracy. So many aspects of the school system are closely regulated, monitored, and centrally determined such as credentialing and hiring of teachers, graduation requirements for students, age-grading, and names of courses. As well, in each school district in Ontario, there is a purchasing department, human resource department, payroll department, and within schools there are subject-specific departments, guidance departments, custodial staff, and teaching support staff. The education system in Ontario bears significant levels of specialization, with most processes closely monitored, regulated, and reported. The core processes of education, however—teaching and learning—go largely unmonitored.

A professional view of teaching holds substantial implications for educational policy reform. The professionalization of teachers is a formal recognition of the unique collection of skills and attributes that each teacher brings to their classroom, and recognizes the substantial agency and efficacy necessary to address the dynamic complexities of teachers’ daily work. In contrast, Darling-Hammond
(1997), in her discussion of educational reform policy implementation, asserted that a bureaucratic view of teaching presupposes that there is “one best way” and connotes an “assembly-line” approach to teaching and learning that remains linked to mass education’s industrial origins (p. 38). A professional view, however, requires a reconsideration of these origins, as well as the controls and prescriptions—such as curriculum—that exist in current educational policy which “undermin[e] the teacher’s ability to teach well” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 38).

Teachers have long struggled to establish themselves alongside the “classic professions” such as medicine and law. In Ontario, with labour disputes and disruptions plaguing the last several years, teachers have lost a great deal of currency in the eyes of many educational stakeholders, including students, parents, and taxpayers. Teachers garner neither the salary nor the status of other professions, and continue to try to reconcile the realities of the work they do, with the perception of the work they do. Teacher evaluation practices in Ontario have also yet to reconcile this conflict. As Looney (2011) determined, “no single measurement can capture the full range of teacher performance” (p. 443). Through the TPA, however, policymakers have attempted to standardize the practice of teaching and to essentialize teachers’ work into 26 competencies. This approach fails to consider the breadth and girth of complexities involved in teaching, as well as the structures in schools that would hinder administrators from effectively capturing all the information they would require to make a complete and thorough assessment of teacher performance.

If policymakers hold a bureaucratic view of teaching, they likely believe that teachers’ work is “good” if it “produces desired [measureable] outcomes” (Valli et al., 2012, p. 20). In Ontario’s context of accountability through standardization, educational reform has been inextricably linked to student testing; professional development opportunities have been increasingly targeted at promoting instructional strategies that will increase student achievement outcomes on standardized tests. The paradox is evident in the realization that the current TPA policy makes no mention of student test
results. Emphasis within the policy, then, on equity, lifelong learning, adaptive teaching, and collaboration—as the measures by which teachers in Ontario are currently evaluated, are countered with a culture that publicly recognizes, and politically exploits, failures and successes in student testing achievement gains. In their study of the impact of policy on teacher quality, Valli, Croninger, and Buese (2012) observed that as high-stakes testing was implemented throughout the district, “teaching became less cognitively demanding, [and] more basic skill oriented” (p. 17). Loose coupling should not suggest that teachers are entirely insulated from the impact of policy, and in fact, policy can have enormous effect on teachers’ work, just perhaps not as intended. As Valli et al. (2012) determined, teachers feel “pressure” from their administrators, their districts and indeed the public, to “teach in ways that were in opposition to what they believed to be best practices” (p. 20). In the case of Ontario, a policy of large-scale standardized testing stands in conflict, and effectively works to undermine, the policy of teacher performance assessment by accentuating the chasm between a process-based and an outcome-based view of teaching.

**School structures and TPA implementation.** From a rational systems approach, implementation of the TPA policy would be carried out with consistency and uniformity. The technical manual for the policy is prescriptive in both the clinical observation model it outlines, the list of competencies and “look fors” it provides to support administrators in conducting the appraisals, as well as its inclusion of protocol for timelines and summative reporting. As McDonnell and Elmore (1987) put forth, a policy such as the TPA, mandated and prescribed, presupposes that “the required action is something all individuals and agencies should be expected to do, regardless of their differing capacities” (p. 139). There are, however, conditions within schools that hinder implementation of teacher performance appraisal practices which, as Flessa (2009) argues, represent the problems arising “when macro directions meet micro realities” (p. 331).
From a new institutional theory perspective, there are two structures within the school context that may create inconsistencies and, arguably, deficiencies in the implementation of the TPA policy—loose coupling and weak administrative controls (Davies & Zarifa, 2009). In schools, as opposed to other organizations such as factories or assembly plants, “the parts of the system operate as semiautonomous segments rather than integrated components of a single entity” (Labaree, 2010, p. 123). The physical isolation of teachers, from colleagues, and from administrators, fosters a “closed door” culture in which teachers carry out their daily work with little to no interference, or insight, from others. Many gains have been made in drawing teachers together in collaborative efforts such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC), but studies examining the actual impact of these collaborative activities upon teacher learning and teacher practice are limited. It should also be clarified, however, that not all teachers “come to the table” for collaborative, collegial work. There appear to be, among teachers, “green lights” (those who are frequently active participants in professional learning activities), “red lights” (those who do not participate in professional learning activities), and then “yellow lights’ (those teachers who, albeit infrequently, may at some point choose to participate in professional learning activities, or those whom administrators have “tapped” for an activity but do not fully engage). As will be discussed in subsequent sections, there are currently no tools by which teachers may be compelled to participate in professional learning opportunities. It appears, then, as if generally, teachers’ daily work is carried out independently, often with little to no input from others.

For some teachers, the TPA may be the first instance of a teacher having an adult observer in the classroom. The impact of this has been discussed elsewhere but the central point here is that without daily interactions, or at least, frequent and consistent interactions between teachers and administrators, administrator access to the depth and breadth of evidence required to make an informed, insightful assessment of teacher performance is limited (generally) to a single visit, once every five years.
Evidence gathering, to inform the TPA, and collegial input are only two casualties of the loose coupling nature of schools—the other is administrator preparedness. Loose coupling within schools is characterized by the degree to which tasks are specialized. Administrators, simply put, are not responsible for daily instruction in classrooms. Certainly there are teaching administrators, more common at the elementary level than in secondary schools, but these are few. Administrators have distinctive functions from that of the classroom teacher and as such are generally out of contact with daily classroom instruction. In addition, time out of classroom, limited training in teacher assessment, differing subject-matter expertise, and a lack of resources such as time, create inconsistencies in the ways in which administrators across the province, and indeed even within schools, carry out teacher performance assessments.

Weak administrative control, as a function of loose coupling, may also hinder the implementation of the TPA. Administrators lack the control mechanisms, such as fear and greed that may be utilized by employers in other industries to bring about compliance. As Labaree (2010) describes, school principals “have virtually no discretion in allocating either pay or promotion”, and conversely cannot demote, transfer, or utilize the “big gun of termination” to reprimand ineffective teachers (p. 127). Teaching is not like other professions in which employees may strive for higher positions of responsibilities and increased pay rates. With the exception of department leaders, which as a position of responsibility offers only a nominal pay increase and bears little instructional authority, teachers generally experience only lateral movement—between subject areas and between schools or districts. Teacher salaries, in Ontario, are determined by only two criteria—education qualification and years of service. These conditions make the TPA a low-stakes enterprise. There are no extrinsic benefits to a positive performance appraisal, nor are there any lasting consequences of a negative appraisal.

**Power dynamics in schools.** Much of what has already been discussed here such as tensions between a bureaucratic and professional view of teaching, loose coupling of schools, lack of
preparedness of administrators to carry out performance appraisals, weak administrative controls, and the closed-door culture of teaching have contributed to the inconsistencies and, as argued, deficiencies in the implementation of the TPA. The latter issue, of teaching and school culture, will be expanded upon here.

Traditionally, teaching has been a profession of isolated individuals. Dialogue and discourse, if occurring, stops just short of the classroom door and fails to explore the day-to-day experience of the classroom teacher. Staff, assigned to teach different sections of the same course, may be inconsistent in assessment. Learning outcomes may differ from class to class. Ineffective teachers are left alone—presumably because colleagues feel they cannot intervene. Informal rules and cultural norms dictate that teachers cannot speak or behave in a manner that may be perceived as evaluative of a colleague. This dynamic is one of power and is fundamentally about territory. Current collegial relations among teachers prohibit constructive criticism, questioning of professional judgment and in some cases, crossing the threshold of each other’s classrooms.

The impact of secrecy amongst teachers upon student learning is significant. Rotherman, Mikuta and Freeland (2008), for example, determined that “the performance gap between two average students assigned three effective teachers in a row and those assigned three ineffective teachers in a row was 49 percentile points” (p. 243). In preparation for their review, however, Ontario teachers will undoubtedly put their ‘best foot forward’. Follow up is left in the hands of principals who are far too busy putting out ‘urgent’ fires to adequately address the smoldering ones. But, teachers already know who among their colleagues are ineffective. They know because they have observed telling indications in the work room and they know because they have heard the students talking in the hallway, and they know because they have fielded pointed questions from concerned parents. The problem of ineffective teaching, then, is left virtually unaddressed because, as Ertesvag (2011) insisted, “teachers generally avoid seeking opportunities to share or communicate in ways that impose on other teachers” (p. 1).
This closed-door culture of teaching is further fortified by the power dynamics that exist between teachers, administrators, and labour unions. While mandated with preserving the rights of teachers and fighting to secure safe, productive and fair working conditions, teacher labour unions in Ontario are frequently accused of protecting the weak. Whether there is truth to this or not, the perception, among education stakeholders is that this is the case. As a result, “the culture of most schools militates strongly against genuinely evaluative interchanges between administrators and teachers or among teachers” (Sykes, 1983, p. 107). As Labaree (2010) asserts, “to fire a teacher, [or to engage in what is perceived to be criticism] is so onerous in its requirements for documentation, due process, and battles with the union that most principals don’t even try” (p. 126). The tensions then, and deficiencies in implementation of the TPA, exist because of the territorial power struggle over teachers’ work, and because, as a result of negotiations between labour unions and policymakers, the TPA policy lacks “accountability with teeth” (Fullan, 2010, p. 2). Colleagues cannot question, and administrators are distinctly limited (by threat of union involvement) in the types and manner of feedback they provide their teachers; leaving opportunities for development as a part of the performance appraisal process drastically diminished.

**Teacher Evaluation in the Field of Teacher Development**

The term ‘teacher development’ carries a number of implications. It implies activities such as conferences or workshops designed to introduce new strategies or approaches for classroom practice, and the growth in teachers not only as individuals but also as part of the larger system of schooling. It is the latter that I was most concerned with addressing in this study. A survey of the teacher development literature unearthed myriad conceptions of each of these points of divergence in not only the nature of teachers’ work, but of the differing perspectives and approaches concerning how best to promote teacher development in schools.
My analysis revealed three cognitive approaches to teacher development that were most prevalent in the literature: behaviorist, social constructivist, and humanist. These approaches serve as critical frameworks by which to examine the process of teacher evaluation as a component of teacher development as they offer divergent conceptions of teachers, teaching, and teacher learning. To further engage with each of these approaches, I have superimposed the organizational theories of rational systems, natural systems, and open systems. I have called these three areas: *Rational-Behaviorist*, *Natural-Constructivist*, and *Open-Humanist*. Both cognitive theory and organizational theory are entirely appropriate to this examination because teachers, the work they do and the manner in which they carry out that work, exist in both a learning capacity and as participants in the context of a large organization (schools) and an even larger system (education).

Of these approaches, the one that I have identified as Natural-Constructivist is most closely aligned to my study. Here, I explore each of the frameworks while within each I situate the topic of teacher evaluation.

**Rational-behaviorist approaches to teacher development.** A behaviorist approach to teacher development foregrounds both the environment (of schools) and stimuli (regulations and mandates) in discussions of how best to promote the development of teachers. A behaviorist asks, “what can an external force do to elicit a response?” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013, p. 110). Edward Thorndike contended that “behavior was influenced by conditions of learning” and that “learners’ attitudes and abilities could improve over time through proper stimuli” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013, p. 93). A behaviorist view is, in this regard, symbiotic with a Rational Systems (RS) approach. Labaree (2010), for example, in his discussion of barriers to educational reform, argued that as a function of the loose coupling of school environments, teachers in relative isolation, administrators lacked the mechanisms to compel compliance, what he called “sticks” and “carrots” (p. 12). The assumption of this approach is
that increased regulatory measures coupled with enhanced monitoring and accountability mechanisms, will bring about efficiency.

Some examples of Rational-Behaviorist approaches to teacher development include what Hargreaves (1992) called *contrived collegiality*—that is “formal, specific bureaucratic procedures” designed to compel colleagues to work together (p. 229). Such procedures or practices could include shared planning times, subject-specific departmental workrooms, and team teaching scenarios. The expectation is that teachers working in close proximity to one another will learn from each other. But these efforts, as Hargreaves (1992) warned, are little more than a “quick, slick administrative surrogate” to get “collegiality going in schools where little existed” (p. 230). Mandated attendance at district-wide training workshops also fits into this category of teacher development efforts, as would subject-specific participation in Ministry-initiated collaborative inquiry activities. Based on what is known, however, about adult learning, these practices (and additional regulatory mechanisms) alone will not bring about real learning, or what Katz and Dack (2013) describe as a “permanent change in thinking and behavior” (p. 3).

A Rational-Behaviorist approach, however, can make significant impact on the conditions of teachers’ daily work that may support development. Little (1999) explored myriad ways that the daily work of teachers could be reorganized in schools to enhance conditions such as subject and grade assignments. As a result of her research, Little (1999) observed that “teachers have been shown to teach more conservatively, didactically, and inflexibly when they are not confident in the content they are expected to teach” (p. 240). While an out-of-subject assignment is not the standard in Ontario schools, it does happen. Additionally, new teachers are often assigned to lower achieving classes, while more experienced teachers are assigned to higher achieving groups—which is largely counterintuitive to what we know are the pedagogical challenges of teaching at-risk students. Little (1999) also points to access to information and materials, work spaces, and use of teacher time as areas of concern for
improving the conditions of teachers’ daily work. Jackson (1992) called these efforts of teacher development, “The Way of Independence” and asserted that improving the conditions under which teachers carry out their daily work (i.e., reducing course load, increasing planning time, fewer students, more aides, as well as increasing teacher power and authority in such matters as choosing textbooks, scheduling classes, and overseeing their own evaluation procedures) would, while not necessarily bring about development, significantly impact the context in which development could occur (p. 64).

A Rational-Behaviorist approach to teacher development is critically limited, and therefore alone is poorly suited to teacher evaluation. It fails to consider the highly complex nature of teaching “under conditions of inherent novelty, uncertainty, and chance”, and it presupposes that teacher learning is simplistic and homogeneous (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999, p. xiii). According to Lieberman (1996), current educational reform “requires teachers to reconceptualize their practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before and probably have never experienced” (p. 202). This is a tall order; regulation and additional mandates alone will not be effective in supporting teacher development. While a set of standards, such as that outlined in Ontario College of Teachers’ Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and adopted into the current TPA policy, can certainly contribute to the teacher growth process, essentializing teaching to a list of competencies, “not only deskskills teachers but also reinforces teachers’ practices” as replicable (Broad & Evans, 2006, p. 18). The work of teaching is so thoroughly complex, and, unlike assembly lines, there is no one best way as there are “simply too many variations in the situations, types of content, and types of students encountered across the K-12 continuum” (Marzano, 2007, p. 4). Teaching “defies any simple rationalizing process” and as such, any processes for evaluation must factor in the diversity in participants and contexts of not only the students, but of the teachers (Davies & Zarifa, 2009, p. 6).
**Natural-constructivist approaches to teacher development.** Social constructivists foreground the learner and consider the ways in which knowledge is created within a social context. A Natural Systems (NS) approach, similarly, considers the culture within an organization and explores the ways in which meaning is made through both formal and information interactions. Together, these theories provide a critical framework for examining teacher development. A Natural-Constructivist viewpoint diverges, fundamentally, from Rational-Behaviorist on the point of how to grow teacher practice. A Rational-Behaviorist approach will develop mandates and procedures, which presupposes that “the required action is something all individuals and agencies should be expected to do, regardless of their differing capacities” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 139). In contrast, a Natural-Constructivist approach assumes that “adult development is voluntary—no one can force a person to learn, change or grow” (Clark, 1992, p. 77). From a Natural-Constructivist view, then, teacher development through project or problem-based inquiry is ideal because it is through such activities that learners are “exposed to their peers’ thinking processes” (Applefield et al., 2000, p. 39). Teachers coming together to discuss their practice supports the process of growth through not only exposure (of alternative ideas) but through reflection (upon one’s own practice). Lifting the veil of teaching practice is paramount to teacher learning.

**Teacher learning.** Many recent reform efforts have attempted to address the conditions of teacher learning. Ontario’s Ministry of Education, for example, has allocated substantial funds to be dispersed by local district school boards for the purpose of collaborative teacher efforts such as the Middle Years Collaborative Inquiry for Math (MYCI), and school-based “tech hubs”. These activities fundamentally accept the notion that sustained and positive impact upon teacher practice is not brought about by the more traditional, external expert/workshop model of teacher learning. Such activities recognize that through teacher dialogue and inquiry, teachers grow their practice through reflection, discourse, experimentation and frequent, timely and constructive feedback. Most significant, however,
is that collaborative approaches, and funding for activities that promote job-embedded, teacher-driven, and authentic inquiry, recognize that “there is more to teaching than meets the eye”, that teachers are “reflective professionals”, and that experienced teachers can become “the designers” of their own learning (Clark, 1992, p. 75).

**Teaching culture.** In order to support teacher learning, a Natural-Constructivist would consider the culture that exists in schools. The ways in which teachers engage, or not, with each other, and the manner in which they allow or create opportunities for dialogue and collaboration is critical to teacher learning. As a result of his research, Hargreaves (1992) concluded that there were, essentially, four forms of teacher culture: Individualism, Balkanization, Collaborative, and Contrived Collegiality (p. 220). Within each of these cultures are myriad of informal and formal practices that shape teacher practice, work life, and identity. A culture of individualism, for example, perhaps most traditional and the “overwhelmingly dominant form” of teacher culture, is one in which isolation and secrecy is “less a matter of choice and preference than of habit” (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 222). In such a culture, teachers avoid professional discourse, or any actions or behaviors that may appear to be evaluative of each other. Huberman (1995) described this as the “lone wolf scenario” in which “teachers labor on their own” (as cited in Little, 1999, p. 234).

A collaborative culture, however, of particular concern to Natural-Constructivists, creates an environment in which “teachers are in frequent conversation with each other about their work, have easy access to each other’s classroom, take it for granted that they should comment on each other’s work, and have the time to develop common standards for student work”; in short, an overall “ethos” in which “teacher learning is valued” (Little, 1999, p. 233).

**Teacher career pathways and stages.** In considering the ways in which teachers learn, as well as the ways in which they experience growth in their practice, several researchers have highlighted career pathways and stages as a critical area of study. Fessler (1995) reviewed earlier efforts to define
the stages of teacher career pathways and noted Unruh and Turner’s (1970) framework of three periods for teacher careers included the “initial teaching period”, the “period of building security” and the “maturing period” (p. 173). As with subsequent frameworks, such as Katz’s (1972) Developmental Stages, and Gregorc’s (1973) Four Stages, Unruh and Turner (1970) did not assign a number of years to each stage, nor did they differentiate within the “maturing period” and instead tended to “lump” together all mature teachers” (Fessler, 1995, p. 175). In response, Fessler (1995) considered the Teacher Career Cycle Model (as proposed over three decades ago by Burke, Fessler & Christensen), that, as he asserted, was dynamic and cyclical as opposed to linear (p. 176). Each of these models of teacher career pathways and stages, and others like Burden’s (1982) Model of Stages, presuppose an ebb and flow of teacher knowledge, comfort, identity, and motivation toward improvement—critical to teacher development.

Within this conversation, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) added the *Three Anchors of Teaching Practice* (colleagues, students, courses) as a means by which examination of teacher motivation (impacted by success and failures in these areas) may impact teacher development. Additionally, Huberman (1992) contended that age and life-cycle positioning were particularly important to teacher development and that levels of motivation and disincentives for change fluctuate throughout a teacher’s career. What is appropriate or enticing for a newer teacher, may not be appropriate for a veteran teacher (Huberman, 1992, p. 122). From these frameworks, we have developed far greater understanding of the intricacies of teacher learning in that it is a dynamic, changing, cyclical process that is critically impacted by the conditions, culture, and context in which teachers work.

**Open-Humanist approaches to teacher development.** Open-Humanist approaches to teacher development build upon only minor aspects of a Natural-Constructivist approach. While a Natural-Constructivist perspective would foreground the teacher as learner, and the culture and context of the school as the fundamental factors impacting learning, an Open-Humanist approach would consider
beyond the school walls—not only to address the impact of external forces (media, public perception, community expectations) upon teacher development, but also on the more holistic view of the teacher as a person (such as family life, responsibilities and commitments, health and well-being). In their review of teacher development literature, Broad and Evans (2006) contended that personal life circumstances may impact teacher learning (p. 9). Broad and Evans (2006) also noted that “individual teachers display a personal profile along a continuum of practice related to their competence and confidence in particular aspects of their role over the period of a career” (p. 12).

To this conversation, Fessler (1995) offered a distinction of what he determined to be the Personal Environmental (positive critical incidents, crises, individual dispositions, life stages, family, and health), and Organizational Environment (union, societal expectations, management style, regulations, public trust), as a means of categorizing the host of influences that could impact teacher development (p. 180). As such, Fessler (1995) recommended that policies should be examined to find “new and creative ways” to support teachers at various stages of their careers” and to expand the concept of development to include matters of personal needs and problems of teachers (p. 188). Examples of such efforts, currently in practice in Ontario, are Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), school and district Health and Wellness committees, and, in some districts, access to “Personal Days”. These efforts could be enhanced with an increased ease of transfer for teachers between schools, greater opportunities for sabbaticals, academic leaves or personal leaves, lessened work load, and more input from teachers in matters of scheduling, course offerings, curriculum development, and school structures. In turn, an Open-Humanist approach to teacher development begs examination of current teacher evaluation practices so as to expand opportunities for teacher input, a more holistic gathering of evidence, and a greater consideration for the teacher as a learner and as a person.

Summary. There is an abundance of literature to support the field of teacher development. Certainly there are alternate international perspectives, for example in regions of war, political
upheaval, and extreme poverty, from which contributions have been made to this field. It was my intention, however, to provide a comprehensive overview of the concepts, findings, and recommendations of the research related to teacher development in regions that bear distinct commonalities in demographics and political contexts with Ontario. In order to clarify the differing approaches to teacher development, as found in the literature, I engaged both cognitive and organizational theories to develop three critical frameworks for my discussion: Rational-Behaviorist, Natural-Constructivist, and Open-Humanist. Each of these frameworks provide a meaningful lens to examine current evaluation practices as each holds critical implications to better understand the intent, mechanisms, and implementation of policy reform efforts.

**Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) in Ontario**

Since its inception in 2001, with full province-wide implementation by 2004, the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) in Ontario, has had only limited examination regarding both its implementation as a policy and its effects upon teacher performance. An extensive search of current literature unearthed only three studies that addressed the TPA in Ontario specifically. Each of these studies will be considered here.

By examining the policy documents that led to the implementation of the TPA in Ontario, and exploring teacher perceptions of the implemented practices, Larsen (2009) learned that, from the perspective of the teacher, there have been several “unintended negative consequences associated with the TPA” (p. 3). Of these, Larsen (2009) identified the most pronounced as being that of “enhancing levels of stress” and creating tensions “in terms of teacher relations with their vice/principals, other teacher colleagues, and students” (p. 3). In her sampling of 150 teachers (125 surveys and 25 interviews) from 55 secondary schools and 60 elementary schools in Ontario, Larsen (2009) discovered that “80 per cent of respondents did not feel that they had the support they expected” from their administrator during the TPA process, and further that a “hush hush atmosphere pervaded most schools,
as teachers felt compelled to keep quiet about their appraisal” experiences (p. 16). In addition, Larsen (2009) learned through teacher participant voices that for the TPA, the majority of the respondents viewed themselves as “actors putting on a show”, and preparing lesson plans that “were much more detailed than usual” (p. 22). Larsen (2009) also learned that teachers were “frustrated” that administrators were reluctant to give any teacher an “unsatisfactory rating” (p. 22). Extra work, frustration, and the feeling of the classroom observation visit as a contrived or inauthentic activity were just some of the unintended outcomes of the TPA in Ontario that emerged from this study.

Similarly revealing of the negative outcomes of the TPA in Ontario, Miller (2009) explored the ways in which minoritized elementary teachers experienced and perceived the fairness and equity of the appraisal process. From his participant base of 169 teachers who worked in six public school boards in Southern Ontario, and six of those whom he interviewed directly, Miller (2009) explored how each teacher had personally experienced the TPA. In his research, Miller (2009) arrived at several conclusions, however, the most notable was that minoritized teachers are “more likely to experience practices of mistreatment from the administrators who appraised them” (p. 180). This conclusion speaks to Larsen’s (2009) findings of “tensions” and strained relationships with supervisors, but also to the imbalance of power that may exist between the appraiser and the appraised (p. 3). As Miller (2009) discovered through the voices of his interview participants, “one of the major reasons for the difficulties associated with personnel evaluation is the intensity of the human interaction and the possibility of an adverse judgment about an individual’s performance” (p. 183). Examination of the current model of teacher evaluation in Ontario, the TPA, raises issues of the atmosphere created by the clinical supervision model as to the role of the administrator as being that of evaluator or instructional leader.

The perspective of the administrator as an instructional leader, but also as an evaluator, is critical to Maharaj’s (2013) study of Ontario’s TPA. In his study, Maharaj (2013) examined administrator perceptions of the effectiveness of Ontario’s TPA process in assessing and improving
teacher practice, and explored such areas as administrator training, sources of data used in evaluating teachers, the role played by subject area expertise, and the degree to which the role as an evaluator affects administrator relations with their teaching staff. In his findings, Maharaj (2013) determined that (a) training for administrators in conducting TPAs “does not appear to be very useful or mandatory”, and does not effectively address how to proceed following an “unsatisfactory” rating; (b) subject area expertise “does matter” when conducting teacher evaluations; (c) there are inconsistencies in the types of data administrators collect to inform the TPA (some relying solely on classroom observations while others factor in pass/fail rates, report card marks, and input from department leaders); and, (d) the TPA process “does not lead to improvements in teacher practice” because there is no follow up for teachers who receive a satisfactory rating (p. 61). The concerns raised by administrators in Maharaj’s (2013) study effectively align with those raised by teachers in the studies of both Miller (2009) and Larsen (2009).

A Global Snapshot of Teacher Performance Appraisal

Teacher evaluation is a vibrant area of study that spans the globe. From an exploration of current literature emerged several studies that have made significant contributions to the understanding of the impact of teacher evaluation practices in order to broaden our scope of consideration for the complexities of teacher evaluation in the school context within Ontario. The studies explored here provide additional insights by considering teacher performance appraisal in various regions around the world. There are vast distinctions in approaches to how countries view, compensate, support, and evaluate their teachers. For example, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), around two-thirds of its member countries provide additional payments for teaching in more disadvantaged areas, half of the OECD countries provide additional compensation for special contributions above teaching assignments such as coaching or working with students with special needs, and among those member countries with available data, 21 offer an additional payment to
teachers that is specifically tied to performance (OECD, 2014, p. 462). Williams and Engel (2012) argued that assessing policies related to teacher performance evaluation must be in concert with discussions around how teaching is viewed. For example, if good teaching is understood as a “trait” then a region’s government will likely focus on “recruiting and identifying those were ‘born’ teachers and [to] discourage or fire those who were not” which we see throughout the United States (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 57). In contrast, if a region’s policymakers view good teaching as a “matter of will” then they will likely focus policy and resources to incentivizing “good teaching behavior”, a concept that is apparent in both Singapore and Mexico (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 57). While a full global scan of current teacher evaluation practices would be a highly valuable contribution to the overall literature, in the interest of this particular study, I have considered a select number of countries upon which to reflect. Two of the countries (Japan and Finland) were selected for examination by virtue of each holding consistently top rankings (that is to say in the top 20) positions in both the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)\(^3\) and Pearson\(^4\) ratings. The United States of America (USA) was selected for examination here by virtue of its proximity to Ontario, Canada, its similar government structure (with federal, regional, and local branches for funding and policy making), as well as the vast connections in its socioeconomic and cultural components to that of Ontario.

**USA.** As of 2014, according to the National Centre for Education Statistics, 49.8 million American students were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. With roughly 13,600 public school districts, over 98,000 schools, and over 3 million teachers, the United States of America (USA) is one of the largest education systems in the world.\(^5\) Schooling is compulsory in the USA, as it

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\(^3\) The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that measures the scholastic performance in mathematics, science, and reading in both member and non-member nations.

\(^4\) Pearson, in collaboration with The Economist and the Intelligence Unit, compiles data from the Global Index of Cognitive Skills and Educational Attainment which compares the performance of 39 countries and one region (Hong Kong).

Schools in the USA receive funding at federal, state and local levels but the determination of standards, accreditation of teachers, as well as curriculum planning is generally held by state governments. As such, policies and practices related to teacher evaluation exist along a wide variance from state to state. It is critical to note, however, that national policies on education such as the 2002 No Child Left Behind impact funding models at the state level. The following review of literature related to studies on teacher performance appraisal in the USA is a representation of the broad spectrum of approaches that currently exist across state lines which include collaborative approaches such as lesson studies or action research projects, mandated professional development participation, value-added models, and, as we see in Ontario, a clinical observation model.

In their examination of teacher perceptions of evaluation practices, Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006) discovered that participants held views of appraisal as “an event [rather] than a process…isolated [as opposed] to collaborative, and with a focus on “competency [instead of] professional learning” (p. 122). In their study of 14 teacher participants, through the process of three focus groups, Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006) endeavored to offer an “insider perspective” as to how a more collaborative, sustained approach to teacher evaluation, in the context of action research projects, could bring about a positive conceptual shift in teachers of the teacher appraisal process bring “artificial” to addressing real issues in teacher practice and classroom learning (p. 123).

Viewing teacher performance appraisals as a vehicle for teacher growth or performance improvement is a consideration also examined in Taylor and Tyler’s (2012) study of the impact of teacher evaluation on classroom practice. With a participant base of 105 midcareer elementary and middle school teachers in Cincinatti public schools, Taylor and Tyler (2012) used student math test scores for grades 4-8 to monitor change in teacher efforts and effectiveness and determined that during the year of and years immediately following teacher appraisal, teacher effectiveness significantly increased (p. 3). The process of evaluation used as the backdrop to their study was quite different to the
Ontario TPA, and included, in addition to supervisor classroom observation and pre and post conferencing, peer observation, video analysis, and extensive, detailed written feedback. As they examined a more subjective and holistic approach to teacher evaluation than that of the clinical supervision model that drives the TPA in Ontario, Taylor and Tyler (2012) developed a compelling case in favor of a more extensive, interactive approach to teacher evaluation, particularly from the perspective of the teacher.

In contrast to the practice-based evaluation explored in Taylor and Tyler’s (2012) study, O’Pry and Schumacher (2012) explored teacher perceptions of a standards-based appraisal system. In their mixed-methods analysis of how teachers valued their appraisal experience, O’Pry and Schumacher (2012) found that “the value a teacher placed on the evaluation process was directly influenced by the principal” and further, that teachers who perceived themselves as “well-prepared” and “well-supported” by their principal, viewed the appraisal process “positively” (p. 326). O’Pry and Schumacher (2012) also determined that “teachers [placed] higher value on the [appraisal] process when they felt they received meaningful and timely feedback and were provided an opportunity for self-reflection” (p. 326).

The USA is largely conflicted in determining the most effective ways to develop teachers and how best to supervise their practices. Approaches vary distinctly between states. While they are not alone in this dissonance, the USA has had enormous difficulty in establishing itself as a major global force in education.

**Japan.** Census reporting from February 2015 provided estimates of a total population in Japan of over 127 million people, with approximately 16 million children of school age. Education for Japanese school children, however, is only compulsory for the first nine years of schooling. In the past decade, most local school districts in Japan have overhauled their processes and policies for teacher evaluation from a ratings based, summative approach to an attempt at more collaborative, professional
growth-centred activities. One such activity for teacher growth in Japan is the practice of lesson study, in which teachers, “new and seasoned, take turns presenting lessons that are practiced and critiqued in a group setting” (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 54). There persists in Japan, however, a focus on national testing results, with school and student specific result reporting, along with regional inspections conducted by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED). It should also be noted here, however, that much of Japan’s academic success may be attributed to the “support and pressure of parents on teachers and schools to do well” as a form of accountability (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 55).

In Japan, teaching is held as a highly respected profession and teachers, traditionally, have been paid better than other civil service employees. Japan is also highly selective of its teacher candidates in phases of both admission to teacher training institutions as well as in hiring. The vast majority of teachers in Japan remain in the profession until retirement age (NCEE, 2015). Japanese teachers have access to a career ladder and are able to move up within schools over the course of their careers from teachers to head teachers to principal. Within each of these steps there are multiple salary grades based on both performance and experience (NCEE, 2015). Under a new system implemented in 2009 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), teachers must prove that they are current on skills and practices every ten years in order to renew their teaching certificates (NCEE, 2015). Perhaps, though, one of the most significant differences in Japan’s education system is that, unlike Ontario, “where teaching is seen very much as a private activity, teaching in Japan is seen as a public activity, with teachers’ classroom performances open to collegial scrutiny and comment” (Doig & Groves, 2011, p. 88). This cultural distinction is critical to any discussion of outcomes of teacher performance appraisal.

While Japan may boast a high performing education system, it is important to acknowledge teacher response to changes in performance evaluation. Katsuno (2010) considered teacher perspectives
on these changes as well as to whether the aforementioned activities were leading to actual, authentic growth in teaching practice. Katsuno (2010) surveyed 1368 teachers from across the country as well as conducted interviews with 12 teachers and four head teachers. Of particular concern for Katsuno (2010) was the degree to which current evaluation practices affected teacher performativity. More to the point, Katsuno (2010) asked, did teachers alter the way they teach in order to meet OFSTED inspection requirements, and, are these changes best for teachers and students? When asked, in regards to the possible merits of the current evaluation practices, whether teachers felt that the process had “improved” their morale and “improved the quality or standard of the school’s work”, no more than 22.0% and 18.9% responded respectively in the affirmative (p. 299). As Katsuno (2010) argued, “given that these are the merits that are most often referred to as the objectives of teacher evaluation, the new schemes are surely failing the teachers” (p. 299). The vast majority of respondents of this study either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the new practices of teacher evaluation “got me to think better about work priorities”, or “helped me to identify my professional development needs” (Katsuno, 2010, p. 300). All the teachers interviewed for Katsuno’s (2010) study, except for one, felt “alienated by the increasing emphasis on measurable aspects of teaching and learning” and were “torn between what the target setting and testing regime required and what they thought they should do with their students” (Katsuno, 2010, p. 305). Ultimately, Katsuno (2010) concluded, based on his findings, that “the proliferation of numerical objectives in which teacher evaluation is playing its part is likely to result in the deterioration rather than the improvement of the quality and standards of education in Japan” (p. 305). Katsuno’s (2010) study provided critical insights into the degree to which teachers are caught in the crossfire of the dueling objectives of any evaluation process that attempts to combine the goals of both accountability and growth.

In a more recent study, Katsuno (2012) considered the professional identities of teachers in a context of testing accountability in Japan. Interviews with six teachers in a northern Japanese
administrative region form the basis for empirical data for Katsuno’s (2012) research. This particular region was selected as it had not performed well in the national testing conducted in April 2010. As a result of their national testing performance, teachers in the region were visited by advisory officers and it was recommended that certain “measures be taken to improve the school’s performance” such as ability groupings of students as well as conducting practice testing (Katsuno, 2012, p. 4). All participants of Katsuno’s (2012) study reported negative feelings related to “increasing pressure to improve the national testing results of their students” (p. 4). From the perceptions of the teachers, “recommendations” made by the advisory officers were loosely veiled threats (i.e., funding withdrawal). One teacher participant vocalized her perception of “real teaching” versus test preparation and commiserated on the notion of visible learning (test results) as opposed to invisible learning (immeasurable growth in student progress) (Katsuno, 2012, p. 5). Another teacher indicated significant changes to her pedagogical approach in order to “teach to the test” by reporting that she had her students “do drills more frequently than before, although [she] doubt[s] the effectiveness of the strategy” (Katsuno, 2012, p. 5). Generally, as Katsuno (2012) concluded, many teachers maintained their professional identity by carrying out the recommendations of the advisory officers in order to raise student testing scores, yet spoke openly that they neither believed in the practice nor the tests themselves, while others appeared to shift their identity so that they were fully accepting of the strategies and approaches that would appear to improve test results, despite the fact that they had not believed this prior to the inspections or the recommendations of the advisory officers (p. 7). While limited in its sample size, Katsuno’s (2012) study contributed meaningful insights into the impact of testing regimes upon not only teacher identities but also on the very nature of the work they do.

**Finland.** Of the 28 countries surveyed in the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for improving school outcomes, Finland is one of only six that does not have such a framework (others include Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Spain) (OECD, 2013, p. 16).
Finland has, however, been one of the top PISA performing countries since the first publication of its scores in 2001. There are many factors that contribute to that success, not the least of which is an exhaustive reform of the entire education system that has taken place in Finland over the past four decades. This reform included the development of a new comprehensive school, with a national core curriculum, for the first 9 years of schooling. Fundamentally, the Finnish believe that all students can learn and all students should have access to quality learning. Schooling is compulsory in Finland up to 16 years of age.

Most surprising of the PISA results, however, is that Finnish schools show a “remarkable consistency across schools [while] no other country has so little variation in outcomes…the gap within schools between the top and bottom-achieving students is extraordinarily modest as well” (OECD, 2010, p. 118). Finland, as it is, “seem[s] to serve all students well, regardless of family background or socio-economic status” (OECD, 2010, p. 118). A significant part of Finland’s educational achievements stems from its particularly heightened regard for its teachers which is propelled by an unusually stringent admissions and recruitment policy. Beginning in the 1970s, Finland adopted a teacher preparation model that requires all teacher candidates to obtain a Master’s degree as a condition of employment as well as a rigorous, intensive in-service training programme for all teachers in all areas of the country. As part of this movement toward professional recognition of teachers, Finland’s teacher evaluation system is based “almost entirely on professional accountability in which teachers are accountable to each other, the school, the children, and their parents” (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 54). During the 1990’s, Finland abolished the school inspection system that was employed to evaluate teachers and now, teacher evaluation is “more group-based, reflective, and participatory” (Williams & Engel, 2012, p. 54).

While Finland may no longer have a formalized process for teacher evaluation, teachers continue to receive ongoing feedback on their practice in order to support growth. One tool of
professional learning and growth employed by Finnish teachers is that of peer-group mentoring. Geeraerts et al. (2015) considered the impact of peer-group mentoring (PGM), a relatively new model of professional development for Finnish teachers, upon the development of skills and knowledge, improved or strengthened professional identity, and the cohesion of a work community. Discarding the traditional model of mentorship, that of a transmission of knowledge from one (the veteran) to another (the beginning teacher), the PGM is driven by a social constructivist view of knowledge creation, a peer group scenario consisting of both novice and more seasoned counterparts, and both formal and informal learning activities. Employing a quantitative research methodology, Geeraerts et al. (2015) surveyed 116 teachers with multiple choice, scaled, and open-ended questions. Results of the surveys indicated that teachers, both new and experienced, believed that PGM helped them to “have more confidence”, get “excited” about their work, increase their knowledge, access new ideas and resources, and “changed” their practice (p. 370). PGM, ultimately, was “unanimously perceived as an essential tool for providing support throughout the various stages of a teaching career” (Geeraerts et al., 2015, p. 366). While having a small data-set and low response rate, Geeraerts et al.’s (2015) study provided unique insights into how growth and development may occur for teachers outside of a formal evaluation process.

A central subtext to Geeraert et al.’s (2015) findings was the necessity for teacher professional agency and autonomy. In any discussion of performance appraisal the question persists: does the evaluation process lead to authentic, sustained growth? Finland’s approach, generally speaking, is to recognize and honour teacher professional judgment and to provide the mechanisms, support, and resources so that teachers may identify their own needs and seek out their own learning opportunities. In an excerpt from his Lessons from Finland, Salhberg (2011) describes how, over the course of the past four decades of educational reform, Finnish teachers have “demanded more autonomy and responsibility for curriculum and student assessment” (p. 23). The demand has been fulfilled effectively
by virtue of the Finnish emphasis on “personalized learning”—so that each student has the opportunity to achieve academic growth, and ultimately, that “teachers are the best judges of how their own students are progressing in school” (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 23). This discussion brings us back to the views we hold of teachers and the work they carry out each day.

Agency, autonomy, and professional judgment are all enmeshed in a view of teaching as either being simply the transmission of knowledge or the cultivating of learning. Kjellin et al. (2009) considered this duality in their comparative study of teacher voices in England, Finland and Sweden in which they considered how teachers view being teachers. In the context of twenty-four focus groups with 110 teacher or student teacher participants, Kjellin et al. (2009), explored the manner in which teachers view their role in supporting students as well as the way in which teachers interact with one another. Results of this study revealed overwhelmingly that Finnish teachers, compared to that of England or Sweden, believe that “being a teacher means that you should be able to develop yourself all the time; a teacher is never completely formed” that many teachers believe the role “of teachers as a listener as well as the teacher being more an educator than just information distributor” and that respondents strongly favoured “the changes from working alone to cooperation” (Kjellin et al., 2009, p. 72). Results, however, also indicated that Finnish teachers tended to discuss subject more than pedagogy with greater consistency and frequency than either Swedish or English teachers. Kjellin et al. (2009) argued that this may stem from a more traditional view of teaching which is to teach subject knowledge (an explanation the research team offered for Finland’s PISA successes) (p. 76). The findings of this study made a meaningful, albeit not entirely generalizable, contribution to discussions about what it means to be a good teacher: subject-matter experts who help students master basic skills and content, or facilitators who support the development of 21st century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication?
**Summary.** The vast distinctions of approaches among the USA, Japan, and Finland, and of course Ontario, propel the assumption that just as with teaching, there is simply no one “best way” to conduct teacher evaluations; however, the results of these studies also indicate a fundamental challenge in the implementation of any singular policy that stipulates multiple or “dueling” objectives. Performance appraisal approaches that intend to both hold teachers accountable while promoting authentic growth and development may be in conflict.

**Differing Methodologies Relevant to the Study**

Existing literature provides a plethora of methodologies relevant to my study. In order to contribute to the body of work on this topic, however, it is critical that the following areas be addressed: (1) a more broadly-based sample of teachers that includes teachers across subject areas; (2) engaging the voices of other key stakeholders including administrators and, particularly, teacher federation representatives; (3) multiple forms of data sourcing to allow for a richer exploration of stakeholder perceptions and experiences; and, (4) a consideration for the degree to which the TPA policy documents (including the technical manual) have informed the actual implementation of the process. In addressing these areas, I aimed to contribute to the literature that currently exists on this important topic by learning from the limitations of sampling, context, and data sources that impacted these previous works.

In their study examining the degree to which teacher evaluation can improve teaching, Taylor and Tyler (2012) gathered a participant base of 105 midcareer elementary and middle school teachers in Cincinatti. While a significant sampling was utilized in their study, it did have the limitation of offering only a singular dimension of the narrative. Taylor and Tyler (2012) utilized mathematics test scores for students in grades 4-8 as markers for the extent to which teacher effectiveness was enhanced through the evaluation process. They did not in fact speak to the teachers themselves. This quantitative study, while significant in its contribution to the discussion regarding teacher evaluation as a tool for professional improvement, lacked consideration of the myriad of factors that may also contribute to
improvement in mathematics test scores and largely essentialized the correlation between teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation.

More so than Taylor and Tyler (2012), in their study exploring the similar notion of teacher performance appraisal activities leading to performance improvement, Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006), endeavored to explore the multi-dimensional nature of the issues surrounding teacher evaluation by considering not only the specific benefits attributed to particular appraisal activities, in their case action research projects, but to the perceptions teachers held of the process itself. As the “front line” players in education, teacher perspectives are quite significant; however, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) encouraged the collection of multiple perspectives because “people do not reason or conceptualize outside of the self’s location” and therefore to offer a more thorough narrative of the impact or outcomes of teacher evaluation practices, we should look to other stakeholders (p. 20) (Cresswell, 2012; Broido & Manning, 2002). Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006) did, however, endeavor to do what Cresswell and Miller (2000) considered to be important; that is, “prolong engagement” with their participants by extending their study over the course of one full school year (p. 128). As Cresswell and Miller (2000) proposed, “being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data” (p. 128). The data collected, however, by Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006) revealed one very significant limitation and that is in their use of focus groups as their primary data source. Focus groups can offer substantial benefits to the exploration of participant voices; however, as Cresswell (2012) asserted, focus groups can: force the researcher to try to find a consensus among respondents, can be dominated by one individual, inhibit the responses of those whose views may diverge from the others in the group, and lead to responses that do not reflect the views of all participants (p. 384). Despite the limitations of few participants, offering a singular stakeholder perspective, and relying on focus group participation, the
study of Hannay, Seller and Telford (2006) brought to the surface some key ideas regarding teacher evaluation, particularly in the notions of conceptualization of the process of appraisal.

Of all current studies on the topic of teacher performance appraisal, the one that is particularly relevant and compelling to my study was that of Miller (2009). In his study exploring the perceptions held by minoritized teachers in Ontario of the TPA, Miller (2009) conducted essentially a three-tiered investigation of document analysis, survey, and interviews. Miller’s (2009) study utilized ideas from the TPA documents to inform his survey and interview questions. He also attempted to engage a broad-base of teacher voices by expanding his survey participant base to a sizable total of six school boards in Ontario. While he deliberately chose to connect with only elementary teachers, Miller’s (2009) study attempted to dig deep and the movement from surveys to face-to-face interviews allowed for this. It is noteworthy that Miller (2009) was very intentional about the story he chose to tell, which was that of the perceived injustices and inequities of only a very specific faction of teachers in Ontario. Overall, however, insights drawn from his work are significant to my study and examination of the TPA in Ontario.

**Summary**

This current study aimed to explore stakeholder perceptions of and lived experiences with the TPA in Ontario. The existing literature demonstrates that while much has been written on the topic of teacher evaluation and supervision, there has been little in-depth exploration of this topic: (a) as it impacts teachers and other key stakeholders such as administrators and federation representatives, (b) that engages participants across subject areas, (c) with a focus on secondary school teacher perspectives, and (d) that which provides an examination of current experienced teacher evaluation practices specifically in Ontario. This study explored the above mentioned four components in order to provide a more holistic, multi-dimensional, and in-depth contribution to the conversation of the limitations and possibilities of current experienced teacher evaluation practices.
Chapter III: Conceptual Framework

Since 2001, reform efforts have sought to improve teaching and learning in Ontario schools through, in part, the uniform and standards-based process of teacher performance appraisal. Ontario is not unique in this endeavor. The arena of research in areas of teacher quality, internationally, is both vast and complex. For the conceptual foundations of my research, however, I focused on five core areas of study on this topic, including: (1) teaching quality and teacher quality; (2) teacher evaluation and supervision; (3) the professionalism and bureaucracy of teaching; and (4) both the intended and unintended outcomes of policy implementation. The concepts that ground this study all serve in the close examination of current experienced teacher appraisal practices in Ontario.

Teaching Quality and Teacher Effectiveness

Quality teachers do not necessarily make for quality teaching. The two terms are substantially different. Quality of teachers may refer to qualifications and credentials, intellectual ability, and pedagogical knowledge. Quality teaching, on the other hand, is far more complex. The sheer diversity of students, classrooms and schools make arriving at a conclusive statement in judgment of teaching particularly difficult. Quality teaching, as asserted by Darling-Hammond (2009), has to do with “strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn” and is “strongly influenced by the context [and conditions] of instruction” (p. 3). It is the latter point of context and conditions that makes the identifying of quality teaching so challenging. So much of the work teachers do is ensconced in the context in which they work. Out-of-subject assignments or a lack of adequate resources, for example, can directly hinder the quality of the teaching. As Larsen (2009) asserted, “the idea [then] that good teaching can be measured and supported through the use of any single evaluation tool is fundamentally flawed” (p. 26). The context and conditions of teaching must be considered in the process of evaluation. From a policy perspective, however, defining quality teaching and quality teachers is only a part of the larger challenge of regulation. As Sykes (1983) argued, these issues present a “series of knotty
difficulties for public policy” (p. 97). For clarity, while previous research has demonstrated the significance of both quality teaching and quality teachers (Sykes, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 2013), this study focuses on quality teaching; that is, the evaluation of performance of experienced teachers. Quality teachers, a discussion which would include qualifications and pre-service preparation programmes, extends beyond the scope of this study.

In his writing, Sykes (1983) placed emphasis on the increasing complexity of teaching. He described how as a society, we are asking more of our teachers than we did in the past (p. 99). The central idea of Sykes’ (1983) article is that “public policy must create magnets to draw [and keep] talent in [the teaching profession], as well as screens to keep the unqualified out” (p. 98). For Sykes (1983), ineffective teaching was framed as being the problem of the varying caliber of teachers admitted into the profession each year as well as the lack of “attractive and satisfying” elements of the profession that would contribute to lowered attrition of high quality teachers—he called these “screens and magnets” (p. 98). While regulatory action needs to consider both, and reform that targets only one aspect of teaching (e.g., in-service evaluation) fails to acknowledge the significance of factors contributing to teaching and learning as a whole, my study has placed particular emphasis on the satisfaction and experiences of current teachers in terms of growth and retention in the profession. Sykes’ (1983) work is vastly echoed in the writing of current scholars such as Darling-Hammond (2013). Like Sykes (1983), Darling-Hammond (2013) called for incentives for teachers and argued that current systems “rarely help teachers improve or clearly distinguish those who are succeeding from those who are struggling” (p. 1). Darling-Hammond (2013) argued that what is required is a “conception of teacher evaluation as part of a system of teaching and learning that supports continuous improvement” (p. 3, italics added). For my study, this places the policy of the TPA in the context of the myriad of other policies that impact or influence the daily work of teachers, including that of appraisal.
Teacher Evaluation and Supervision

Many researchers have attempted to create a distinction between teacher evaluation and teacher supervision. Administrators are frequently called upon to carry out both. According to Gleave (1997), the administrator as instructional supervisor supports teachers “in studying and learning from their own experience” (p. 270), as well as from current educational theory and research, while providing the time and resources to implement resulting changes to practice (p. 270). The concept of the administrator as an instructional leader, but also as an evaluator, is critical to Maharaj’s (2013) study of Ontario’s TPA. In his findings, Maharaj (2009) determined that training for administrators in conducting TPAs “does not appear to be very useful or mandatory”, does not effectively address how to proceed following an “unsatisfactory” rating, and that there are inconsistencies in the types of data administrators collect to inform the TPA (p. 64).

Often conflictingly, the administrator as evaluator also seeks to “ensure that organization goals and expectations are attained” (Gleave, 1997, p. 270). As Range, Duncan, Day and Haines (2012) determined, “the primary role of evaluat[ors] is to provide evidence to support recommendations for retention or non-retention and to ensure teachers are held to rigorous, common standards” (p. 303). Both Miller (2009) and Larsen (2009), however, observed “tensions” and strained relationships with supervisors throughout the appraisal process (Larsen, 2009, p. 3). Confusion and frustration result when a single lens, that is a singular appraisal process, is utilized to capture a “portrait of the classroom” (Gleave, 1997, p. 271). As Oliver (1982) determined, “the role of the supervisor must be clearly distinguished” from that of evaluator, in order to create the safe learning culture critical to teacher growth (p. 29). Ultimately, this conflict that resides in discussions regarding the role of the administrator in teacher performance appraisal, is rooted in the actual conceptions of teaching we hold, how we view teachers, and how we view the work that they do in their classrooms each day.
Teacher Professionalism and Bureaucracy

Teachers have been compared to artists, managers, bureaucrats, and laborers. Accordingly, how we conceptualize the work of a teacher also informs how we might begin to assess the quality of that work (see Figure 1). If we believe teachers to be disseminators of prescribed material, arguably a “bureaucratic” conception of teaching, then certainly the administrator’s job is to make sure that the teacher is implementing the curriculum and procedures of the district according to standards set out by the Ministry of Education. If, however, we believe teaching to be a “profession”, then the evaluation tools we employ must attend to the “elements of creativity or innovation in teaching; to aspects of student motivation beyond the ability to induce compliance with work requirements; or to the multiple, long-term consequences for students of the overall classroom experience” (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1984, p. 30). The tools necessary to appraise a “bureaucratic” conception of teaching, starkly contrast those required to attend to the “professional” conception of teaching.

Figure 1. Tensions between the Professional and Bureaucratic View of Teaching
Discussions of professionalism and bureaucracy are entirely appropriate in considering the utility and limitations of the current process of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario. Friedson (2000) described professionalism as a “set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work” (p. 17). Further described as a “position of considerable privilege” of which “self-control is essential”, the profession of teaching, cannot be “standardized, rationalized…or commodified” (Friedson, 2000, p. 17). Darling-Hammond (1996), in her discussion of educational reform policy implementation, asserted that a bureaucratic view of teaching presupposes that there is “one best way” and connotes an “assembly-line” approach to teaching and learning that remains linked to mass education’s industrial origins (p. 38). A professional view, however, requires a reconsideration of these origins as well as the controls and prescriptions—such as curriculum and evaluation practices—that exist in current educational policy which “undermin[e] the teacher’s ability to teach well” (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 38). The notion of professionalism may create a tension with any process designed to regulate teaching, and, as such, would be an entirely useful lens through which to explore the processes of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

**Intended and Unintended Outcomes of Policy Implementation**

In order to adequately interact with the implementation of an educational policy—to gain a fuller understanding of its impact upon the key stakeholders—it is essential that its outcomes not be examined in isolation. Larsen (2009) proposed a “street level approach” in which the process, in this case the TPA in Ontario, is considered from its outcomes all the way back to its origins (p. 5). To this end, Levin’s (2001) four-stage model of analysis (see Figure 2) is particularly useful. In his model for analysis of policies leading to educational reform, Levin (2001) outlined four stages for examination: (1) Origins; that is, the political climate or “government pressures” that lead to the “problem recognition”; (2) Adoption, which is what happens to reforms between their initial proposal and their
actual passage into legislation; (3) Implementation, which is the “work that is done to move from policy to practice”; and, (4) Outcomes, which is the “available evidence as to the effects of” the policy or legislation (pp. 116). As Levin (2001) warned, some policies may be “substantially rhetorical” with little thought given to actual outcomes (p. 20). In the matter of the TPA in Ontario, it would be significant to explore the policy from its origin to its outcomes to more fully appreciate its intentions in order to gain a more thorough understanding of both its intended, and unintended, outcomes. In this way, we will have greater access to its limitations or pitfalls, or conversely, components that have yet to be utilized most effectively for its original purposes; that is, to promote teacher professional growth and improvement in daily classroom practice.

Levin’s Four-stage Model of Policy Analysis is helpful to understanding that what we see on the street level of a policy implementation (in schools, among teachers, for example) is not necessarily that which was intended at the origin stage. Levin’s (2001) model supports an examination that considers each stage of a policy as a separate entity, while ultimately connected to each of the others. The model assumes that people have immense power of morphing a policy, not only through varied interpretations of the language, but in their actions, and the value they place on the policy itself. Much of policy interpretation, and implementation, can then be considered by how the key actors of implementation choose to act (either in non-compliance, or in modifying the implementation). The outcomes, then, both intended and unintended, may be looked upon separately and with the understanding that what may have been intended by a particular policy, may have grown new legs upon implementation. Considering a policy in this manner is particularly useful in avoiding the pitfall of simplifying the outcome of a policy as being either successful or unsuccessful and provides a deeper investigation in understanding at what point the policy may or may not have jumped the tracks. The circular quality of the model is also useful in presupposing that the TPA policy is not entirely static. Policies, generally, is impacted by the people charged with its implementation. In the case of the TPA, we can see that six years after its
adoption, amendments were made (i.e., rating scale, every five years instead of every four), due in part to feedback from school districts and associations such as the Ontario Principals Council, OSSTF and ETFO.

In order to extend my thinking, I connected Levin’s (2001) model with Labaree’s (2001) theory of the Four Levels of the School System: rhetoric, formal structure, teaching practice, and student learning and whether reform can move through all levels of the system. This was particularly helpful as it allowed me to conceptualize the forces that can work to support or hinder policy implementation and outcomes.

In terms of how I sought to use Levin’s (2001) model, I aimed to explore how the TPA policy may have struggled in each stage. In its origin, the TPA policy rhetoric was to meet two main objectives: hold teachers accountable to educational stakeholders, while also helping them to grow. Those dueling objectives are potentially problematic as the conditions necessary for teacher growth and improvement may be undermined by the process of evaluation—if it does not fit each teacher learning style or offer administrators the opportunity (time and resources) to engage with each teacher in and out of the appraisal process to support growth. Adoption of the TPA policy may also be problematic primarily because of the discretion the policy allows. The language creates enough room for administrators to determine the breadth and girth of the process (i.e., amount and types of artifacts used to assess performance, number and length of observations), and boards to focus on its system-level priorities rather than the individualized needs of each teacher. In its implementation, then, the TPA policy may hold inconsistencies across the province of Ontario, across school boards, and even within schools. Inconsistencies in implementation are a paradox as they simultaneously serve and work against the core objectives of the TPA policy. On one hand, inconsistencies could undermine the appraisal process as an accountability measure, if teachers are not, effectively, being held to the same standards due to a differential in appraisal depth and rigor. If we are not appraising all teachers to the same
degree, we cannot be certain that standards are being met. Conversely, teachers are adult learners. As learners, they each have different levels of interest, motivation, commitment, knowledge and skill. We cannot treat, or in this case, appraise all teachers the same because they are not the same. Different stages of the teacher career cycle, variances in age, different life circumstances, and a variety of other unique individual attributes and needs, requires differentiation in learning conditions. A specific example would be the timeframes outlined in the policy. Upon receiving an Unsatisfactory appraisal rating, an Improvement Plan must be developed and implemented within 15 days. The teacher is placed on Review Status with the goal of being appraised for a second time within 60 school days of the first summative report. This timeframe may not be appropriate for all learners. Real learning, and growth, takes time. As adult learners, it takes time to engage with new ideas, to implement, refine, reflect, and adopt new strategies. So, inconsistencies in implementation of the TPA is not necessarily a bad thing but it is potentially problematic when it comes time to assess the outcomes of the process.

What may be missing from Levin’s (2001) model, or at the very least a limitation of the model, would be a response or evaluation stage. I began to identify this concept when I engaged Labaree’s theory of the four levels of the school system. The implementation stage on its own does not take into account how the policy is being assessed by the actors or the policy makers. It may help us to understand what is actually being carried out in implementation but does not necessarily reflect why choices are being made. I believe that a policy enters an evaluation stage when key players are reflecting on the value and validity of the policy, and that this feedback is being sent back to policy makers (either through non-compliance, unintended outcomes, or verbal, solicited comments). In the evaluation stage, many forces converge that highlight the limitations of the policy—the key players, other stakeholders, the public. What is of concern in the evaluation stage is not simply the feedback regarding the policy but also the tools used to access that feedback. Another form of analysis, then, of a
policy is the degree to which the policy is experiencing ongoing evaluation and responding to that evaluation in order to more effectively meet the original intent or objectives of the policy.

**Figure 2.** Levin’s (2001) Four-stage Model of Policy Analysis

While stages one (Origin) and two (Adoption) were activated in order to provide context for my discussion of teacher performance appraisal, for purposes of data collection and analysis, stages three (Implementation) and four (Outcomes) were foregrounded. Overall, the four-stage analysis offers a potentially useful framework by which a more holistic exploration of the TPA in Ontario may be explored.

**Summary**

A conceptual framework for this study was critical in order to target data areas for both collection and analysis. The concepts of supervision and evaluation, the potential for tension between a bureaucratic and professional view of teaching, indicators of teacher self-efficacy, as well as the progressive aspects of a policy implementation became the cornerstones of this study—what I listened for during interviews, how I analyzed teacher survey responses, as well as the fundamental way in
which I considered the holistic nature of teacher performance appraisal. As a framework, the concepts assisted in shaping the lens through which I was able to consider the meaningful but otherwise highly complex topic of teacher performance appraisal.
This study aimed to excavate and synthesize the perceptions and lived experiences of educational stakeholders of the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) in Ontario. As the current model for experienced teacher evaluations in our province, the TPA has been in practice since 2001 and yet very little has been unearthed of its limitations and possibilities for improvement in teacher performance or for the unintended outcomes of its policy. As provincial educational priorities increasingly look to accountability measures for our classrooms, a close examination of this singular, formalized system of teacher evaluation seems essential.

This study, then, was designed to glean the largest amount of insight, with minimal intervention and intrusion into the lives of the participants. The data collection tools used to explore and describe education stakeholders’ perceptions of current experienced teacher evaluation practices in Ontario were an online survey for teacher participants (with an invitation to participate in a follow up interview), as well as semi-structured interviews with both administrators and union representatives. The focus of the inquiry was the limitations and possibilities of current teacher evaluation practices. I wanted to understand if there have been negative outcomes of the TPA as well as any untapped possibilities within either its policy or its implementation. I further wished to understand how current implementation and practices associated with the TPA have aligned with the original intentions of the policy itself.

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the methodology and to describe the research design and procedures used in this study. This section will describe the research design, the instrumentation selected to collect data, the population and sample identified in the research, as well as data collection and analysis procedures. A brief introduction to all teacher, administrator, and federation representative interview participants is also presented herein.
Qualitative Research Design

In order to develop a detailed and multi-dimensional understanding of the possibilities and limitations of current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario, I elected to pursue a qualitative, non-experimental study design with a constructivist grounded theory methodology. I chose a qualitative approach largely because my objective was to gain insight into the perceived realities of the lived experiences of teachers, administrators, and teacher labour union representatives, and those realities are “multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable” (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 436). I sought to understand the complexities of the experiences, meaning making, and behaviors of my study participants, rather than to “prove or disprove hypotheses”, and therefore a qualitative inquiry was most appropriate (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 6). I determined that a methodology aligned with constructivist grounded theory was best suited to my research objective because I aimed to understand, rather than prove, and I subscribed to Blumer’s (1969) assumption that “human experience is mediated by interpretation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 25).

Here I begin by describing the philosophical assumptions and interpretative frameworks of qualitative inquiry, provide a rationale for my use of constructivist grounded theory, as well as outline the methodology for my study.

**Qualitative inquiry.** As I aimed to explore the perceptions and constructed realities of education stakeholders on the topic of teacher evaluation, I deemed a qualitative approach to be most appropriate. Qualitative inquiry is, in many ways, more about the process than it is about the outcome (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 6). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher develops questions to “investigate topics in all their complexity” rather than to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). According to Cresswell (2013), qualitative inquiry leads the researcher to “look for the complexity
of views rather than narrow the meanings” and therefore the goal is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (p. 25).

**Grounded theory.** Kathy Charmaz is largely credited for her development of constructivist grounded theory (CGT), and subscribed to Strauss’s view of human beings as “active agents” in their own lives, who construct meaning through social interactions (Charmaz, 2014, p. 9). Charmaz’s (2014) CGT encourages a study design that is “systematic, yet flexible”, propelled by rich data and “thick description” (p. 23). A CGT approach is not linear, but rather cyclical—the researcher collects data, analyses the data, collects more data, compare these data to previously collected data, and returns to the field to collect more data. As Charmaz (2014) contends, the flexibility of a CGT approach allows that “a flash of insight or instantaneous realization of analytic connections can happen any time during the research process”, and that as more “pieces” are added to the “research puzzle”, the researcher enjoys the liberty to “follow leads that emerge” (p. 25).

I engaged a CGT approach for this study because I endeavored to allow the data to guide my inquiry. I did not start with a theory, or even a precise conceptual framework, for example, Levin’s (2001) model was engaged only after an initial consideration of the policy documents, but rather was devoted to listening and then connecting dots between persistent ideas. There were many voices heard in this study including that of the teachers, the administrators, and the federation representatives. There were also the voices of those who worked to develop the TPA policy, not only staff of the Ministry of Education but those who provided feedback during the Hansard Debate (2001), including representatives from the Ontario Principal’s Council, Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, Ontario Parent Council, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, and the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, among others—these voices are heard by examining the language of the policy documents themselves. It was these collective voices from which several theories have begun to take form (these are each discussed in Chapter VII).
Data Collection

There were four main sources of data for this study, including: 1) document analysis of the policy of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario; 2) a province-wide online survey for secondary teachers with follow up interviews; 3) interviews with OSSTF representatives and, 4) interviews with secondary school administrators. The data collection processes as well as the study sample for each source will be described herein. The study design of a combination of policy analysis, questionnaires, and interviews allowed for opportunities to capitalize on the primary advantages of each format, which will be discussed here in more detail. These approaches collectively yielded rich detailed data.

Policy analysis. A thorough examination of current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario would not be possible without first considering the policy[ies] that guide them—currently the TPA. As part of my qualitative inquiry, then, I used a policy analysis approach which engaged Levin’s (2001) Four Stage Model, and McDonnell and Elmore’s (1987) conceptual framework for policy instruments. Each of the components of my policy analysis, as presented herein, were carried out prior to participant data collection and informed the protocols for each of the data collection formats of questionnaires and interviews.

Levin’s four-stage model for policy analysis. In order to adequately interact with the implementation of an educational policy—to gain a fuller understanding of its impact upon the key stakeholders—it is essential that its outcomes not be examined in isolation. Larsen (2009) proposed a “street level approach” in which the process, in this case the TPA in Ontario, is considered from its outcomes all the way back to its origins (p. 5). To this end, Levin’s (2001) model for analysis of policies leading to educational reform, outlines four stages for examination: Origins, Adoption, Implementation, and Outcomes. As Levin (2001) warned, some policies may be “substantially rhetorical” with little thought given to actual outcomes (p. 20). In the matter of the TPA in Ontario, it was likely that an exploration of the policy from its origin to its outcomes may assist in more fully
appreciating its intentions in order to identify its intended, and unintended, outcomes. For the purposes of this study, the stages of Origins and Adoption were considered in order to provide context, while the stages of Implementation and Outcomes were utilized to inform data collection protocols and analysis. In this way, I determined that I would have greater access to the limitations of the policy or components that have yet to be utilized most effectively based on its original purposes; that is, to promote teacher growth. Overall, Levin’s four-stage analysis offered a framework by which a more holistic exploration of the TPA in Ontario may occur.

Policy instruments. A policy instrument may be defined as that “through which substantive goals are translated into action” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 149). Once a policy problem has been defined, McDonnell and Elmore (1987) suggested that a decision is made about the “mechanism” that will be used to implement the policy designed to address the problem (p. 144). The choice of mechanism, according to McDonnell and Elmore (1987) is critical, and they assert that (a) there are generally four policy instruments: mandates, inducements, capacity-building, and system-changing, and that (b) each of the four could be used to “address the same policy goal”, and (c) “policymakers often lack information about the full range of instruments available to them” (p. 135). The question for these authors, generally, is “what leads policymakers to select one instrument over another?” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 144).

The concept of policy instruments is particularly useful to an analysis of the TPA in Ontario because it broadens the conversation. It is limiting to simply consider whether a policy has “failed” or “succeeded”, but much more useful to consider whether the tools, or instruments, utilized in implementation, rather than just the implementers, or the policy itself, could have led to its demise or success. Depending on the instrument selected, the policy outcomes could be very different. One instrument may be more appropriate for the policy context than others.
Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal survey. As a tool for data collection, teacher survey questionnaires hold the promise of significant benefits. Standardized questions can provide an “easy way into complex issues and provide a safe environment for the introduction of sensitive topics” (Cresswell, 2012, p. 144). Questionnaires allow the participants to consider ideas and to access their memory for details of their experiences and perspectives while alone, in a quiet moment. This approach also allowed me to access a larger number of teachers, as the medium permitted me to bypass limitations of geography or time.

The most notable limitations of questionnaires are that participants may lack any “personal investment” in completing and returning it, and that the researcher is not present to clarify ideas within the instrument (Cresswell, 2012, p. 383). Having weighed the benefits of questionnaires to these possible disadvantages, however, I determined that (a) they should be used as a complement to other formats (such as interviews), and (b) that the questionnaire responses could provide meaningful entry points to expanded dialogue in interview sessions. For validity purposes, I piloted the Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance (EPTPA) survey (see Appendix A) with three individual teachers; two within my own school district and one from another school district in Ontario. I received feedback from each of these teachers regarding the clarity and language of the survey questions. I applied that feedback, made revisions, and finalized the survey.

Potential teacher participants were invited to participate in the survey associated with this study, and provided with a link to access the Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal (EPTPA) survey (see Appendix A) at www.surveymonkey.com, via email. Email invitations and links were sent out by the OSSTF provincial executive, on behalf of the President, to each district president. District presidents were instructed to forward the email to all branch presidents who were then instructed to forward the email to their branch membership. The link to the survey included the Letter of Information for Survey Participants (see Appendix B). The email invitations and survey links were
distributed at the end of April 2015. The survey was open to responses from May 1st to May 31st, 2015. Data were collected for the purposes of developing a synthesis of the key ideas associated with teacher experiences with and perceptions of current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario, as well as a demographic profile of participants for the purposes of providing description.

Participants. For the purposes of the survey component of this study, the target population was experienced secondary school teachers currently employed by public school boards in Ontario. I aimed to capture the broadest scope of teacher responses, as representative of each district and unique region (both urban and central, as well northern and remote) and as such invited all experienced, public secondary teachers to participate. It was anticipated that for reasons such as absences, short-term leaves, and lack of interest, not all teachers would respond. The most appropriate sampling method for this study, then, was a form of convenience cluster sampling. The convenience cluster sampling needed to meet the criteria for inclusion in the study were: (a) currently serving as a contract (i.e. permanent) teacher in a public school board in Ontario, and (b) currently holds full-time (1.0 FTE) or part-time status. Within these criteria, however, the population is a varied and diverse group ranging in age from 24-65, in years of teaching from 2-30 or more, male and female, and across all subject areas and grade level teaching assignments within the secondary division of public education in Ontario. The population also represented a multitude of racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic groups.

Survey instrumentation. The data collection instrument used in this component of the study was the Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal (EPTPA) survey. The developed survey was a 20-item online survey (hosted by surveymonkey.com). The survey contained 20-items using a combination of Agree or Disagree statements, short answer, and open-ended response questions. The EPTPA was intended to examine concepts such as previous experience with and perceptions of the Teacher Performance Appraisal process in Ontario. The survey also included a section designed to identify demographic particulars of participants such as age, years of teaching, and
gender. Demographic particulars were used to provide descriptive statistics. The conclusion of the online survey hosted an invitation for teacher respondents to participate in a follow-up interview.

**Ethical considerations.** For the completion of the EPTPA survey, the identities of the participants were not known to the researcher. Direct personal teacher information (for example, name, address, phone number, school and school district) were not collected.

**Interviews with teachers, school administrators and OSSTF representatives.** Interviews provide significant opportunities to confirm or delve deeper into ideas. Because it was my intent to engage a maximum of twenty interview participants, a relatively small number, my focus was on “depth rather than breadth” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 2). Through a semi-structured format, with revised protocols informed by results of both the policy analysis and questionnaire, I aimed to utilize the interviews to expand upon or clarify ideas that arose from my analysis of the policy documents and the teacher survey responses. From a CGT approach, this process of revisiting and revising protocols as I moved through the data collection and analysis processes, allowed me to better “crystallize” my understanding of the emergent issues surrounding teacher evaluation practices in Ontario (Dilley, 2000, p. 135).

In order to more thoroughly understand the challenges and lived experiences unique to both school and board administrators at the research site, of the current teacher assessment practices in Ontario, interviews were conducted with teachers (as a follow up to the survey), teacher labour union representatives of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) serving in either Educational Services roles (one who is charged with organizing and coordinating professional development opportunities for union members) or that of Grievance Officers (individuals who provide mediation and support for union members in situations in which a breach of contract with employers has occurred or is perceived as having occurred), as well as administrators (principals or vice-
principals). Several questions had been developed for interview participants (see Appendix B); however, questions were added or omitted as a result of the policy analysis, the EPTPA survey responses, and the natural flow of the conversation in the context of the interview. Each interview lasted at least 30 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed.

**Teacher interview participants.** Teacher interview participants were recruited via an invitation included at the conclusion of the online survey. The invitation outlined the intent of the interview (to delve deeper into ideas shared in the survey and to explore, with more depth, individual experiences with the TPA). I determined that I would conduct interviews with the first ten teachers who responded to the interview invitations. Of the ten teachers, three were unable to coordinate schedules for interviews. In total, I conducted interviews with seven teachers. Each teacher participant, identified with a pseudonym, is briefly introduced here.

**Martin.** When he is not teaching, Martin loves muscle cars and spending time with his two dogs. Teaching for 14 years, in Math and Science, Martin does not have a whole lot of spare time but with the precious little he has, he devotes most of it to sitting on union committees. He likes to contribute and he believes that is a meaningful way to do so. As for being a teacher, while he believes his junior students would call him an “ogre”, he is proud to admit that he has won “Staff of the Year” twice in the past decade. In 14 years of teaching, Martin has experienced Ontario’s TPA twice.

**Stephen.** Married with two children, Stephen tries to carve out some time (when he is not coaching) to play music and do visual arts. At almost 52 years old, Stephen is inclined to say that he “fell into teaching by accident”. His previous career had been on the trading floor of the Toronto Stock Exchange. While the drop in salary was a “shocker”, Stephen liked teaching and had felt “drawn” to it. He is a Science Department Chair, and teaches mostly Physics. Instead of “teacher”, Stephen prefers to describe himself as “someone who sets up conditions for learning”. Since 1990, when he first began
teaching, Stephen has moved through the TPA process, first every three years, and then as of 2001, once every 5 years. As he is looking to retire in four years, this most recent TPA will likely have been his last.

Ellen. Teaching in a small, but growing, city, suits Ellen just fine. She is able to walk to work each day and enjoy both her large garden and the downtown amenities with her three children. Ellen also loves to bike and write, essays mostly. As a History and Civics teacher, Ellen describes herself as “old school” and has a distinct preference for the “chalk and talk” strategy. While her students would likely describe her as “laid back”, Ellen believes they would also call her a “hard marker”. In 24 years of teaching, Ellen has only experienced four performance appraisals.

Rose. Energetic only begins to describe Rose. Heavily involved with both her school and community, Rose loves to coach, run Model UN, and volunteer with therapy dogs. In 20 years of teaching she has coached a variety of sports and clubs, and loves it. As Rose explains, she “chose to not have kids” so her focus and energies have always gone into her students. She began her career in Math but moved to Geography. Rose thinks that her students would describe her as “funny”, “easy going” but “still strict with timelines”. With administrators, however, Rose tends to end up on what she calls the “bad list” because she does not “put up with much” and always speaks her mind. Rose has experienced eight or nine TPAs since she began teaching but cannot recall exactly.

Richard. With a wife, sister-in-law, and a father-in-law, as well as three generations on his own side, all teachers, Richard entered the classroom as a natural course of life. With two kids, now 18 and 20 years old, Richard is busy but he enjoys his work and his life and aims to keep a balance. As an Art teacher, Richard enjoys what he believes to be “a lot more freedom” than his colleagues who teach Math or Sciences. He can be flexible with content in order to better reach student interest and he thinks that his students would describe him as “very outgoing”. Richard believes his ties to the local art
community lend credibility to his teaching. Richard has also had very good working relationships with his administrators. In 20 years of teaching, he believes he has had four or five appraisals, but is not sure.

Mary. As an English teacher, since 2006, Mary has worked for two school boards. Her current one, since 2008, is in a large city and she has moved between three different schools in the district. As a mom of three and a half year old twins, Mary is busy, but she loves it. Mary approaches new course assignments as a welcome challenge. She abhors being on “autopilot” and prefers to “keep it fresh”, which is one of the reasons why, in non-TPA cycle years, Mary has requested evaluations from her administrators. She enjoys the feedback, if it’s timely and specific. In total, including the ones she requested, Mary has experienced five TPAs.

Christine. As a third-career teacher, Christine worked in both the sporting and banking industries before she entered the classroom in 2001. Not married, and with no children, Christine serves long days in the classroom and then on the ice rink as a skating coach. Christine also coaches volleyball and has led four major international trips for her students. Prior to my interview with Christine, she contacted me by phone to offer to send me all of her TPA summative reports since 2001, which I accepted. During that conversation, and later in her telephone interview, Christine made it very clear that while at the start of her career she was made to feel like a “golden child”, at some point during her second TPA, “everything changed”. As a result of this shift, Christine “spend[s] part of everyday afraid” and does not “sleep well anymore”.

Administrator and OSSTF interview participants. For both the administrator and OSSTF representative interviews I began with a convenience clustering and then moved to a snowball sampling approach. A total of three school administrators and four OSSTF representatives were engaged for this study. All administrators and federation representatives engaged with or employed by public secondary schools in Ontario were invited to participate in this study. OSSTF participants were contacted via
email through their provincial executive, and administrators were invited to participate through a notice on the Ontario Principals’ Council website. The first four to respond positively to either invitation were selected to participate. In the case of both the administrators and the OSSTF representatives, too few responses were received, and a snowball sampling approach was utilized to engage remaining participants. Each of the three administrators, and each of the four OSSTF representatives, identified by their pseudonym, are briefly introduced here.

*Raymond.* At 48 years old, married over twenty years to a woman who is also a teacher, Raymond began his career teaching Special Education. After six years in the classroom, Raymond became a vice-principal and then three years later became a principal. About to make another move as a central principal, Raymond had a multitude of experiences with teacher performance appraisal to share—both in the “old” system, and the “new” TPA process. I was connected with Raymond through a Superintendent colleague who contacted Raymond and invited him to contact me. Raymond was willing to lend his voice to this study.

*Michelle.* After six years as vice-principal, eight years as a secondary principal, and the past two years as a central principal, Michelle has conducted countless appraisals of teacher performance, both formal and informal. Not married, and with no children of her own, Michelle describes her long days and both her challenges in, and her commitment to, developing a cohesive teaching community. Michelle was the single principal to respond to the invitation I posted to the Bulletin Board on the Ontario Principals’ Council (OPC) website.

*Paul.* At 50 years old, Paul entered teaching and administration as a fourth career. A vice-principal for six years, and a principal since 2013, Paul communicates a real joy for his role as an instructional leader and puts great emphasis on his commitment to be, but limitations in being, out of his office and in classrooms. Of all of my interview participants, Paul was the only individual that I
approached directly. I have known Paul professionally for several years and he was willing to contribute his experiences and ideas to this conversation.

David. In his fourth year as a district level Professional Services Officer (PSO), David enjoys his work mentoring teachers who are struggling, particularly with their TPA. Teaching since 2001, David felt that he was already supporting teachers in this regard, both formally and informally, so the role of PSO was a logical next step in his career. David contacted me by email in response to an invitation to participate that he had received from his district president. His emails to me were clear on the fact that he saw this topic, of teacher evaluation, as an important one and was willing to share his voice.

Laura. As an Educational Services Officer (ESO) with her district for the past four years, Laura serves as both a communication medium (between provincial and local branches) as well as a support for teachers who are in need of guidance or enhanced learning opportunities. As a teacher for almost 17 years, Laura sees a great deal of potential in the current TPA process. She connected with me to participate in this study in order to share her ideas for change.

Maggie. In her first year as president of her district’s Teacher Bargaining Unit (TBU), Maggie has seen all sorts of scenarios in which OSSTF members found themselves in difficulties leading into or coming out of the TPA cycle. In over 20 years of teaching, Maggie has come to understand the value of collaboration but also the importance of the separation of teachers and administrators. Maggie contacted me by email to offer her voice to this project.

James. As a Grievance Officer for the past several years, and a teacher of over 20 years, James expressed an acute sense of fairness and a great respect for process and procedures. James, married and a father, has used his role with the OSSTF to protect the process afforded to teachers through collective
agreements. He is both enthusiastic and articulate in discussing the complexities of the work teachers do every day in their classrooms. James contacted me by email to offer his contributions to this discussion.

**Ethical considerations.** In order to protect the identities of all interview participants, all identifiers were removed from transcription including names, school, and board locations, as well as the name of colleagues. All participants were assigned pseudonyms for use in this final report.

**Role of the Researcher**

I have been a secondary teacher in Ontario since 2001 and with a public school board in Ontario, since 2005. Over that time I have had countless experiences and opportunities to work alongside, and with, my colleagues. I have come to understand through these interactions, and most recently in my role as an Instruction and Assessment Facilitator within our board, both the traditional closed-door culture of teaching, and the immense value of collaborative teacher professional learning. As a teacher, I have moved through the TPA process three times since 2005. In each of these experiences, I devoted an enormous amount of time in preparation and the pulling together of artifacts to demonstrate my teaching and my growth as a professional. Despite these efforts, however, I was consistently left with the feeling that the process had been completed, forms had been filled, and that the door was closed for another five years. I have not experienced authentic growth and development as a result of my experiences with the TPA in Ontario. The vast majority of my learning and growth as a teacher has occurred organically through frequent personal reflection, formal interactions with my colleagues through work on action research projects and team teaching opportunities, informal interactions with my colleagues through workroom chats and casual classroom observations, and of course through my daily interactions with my students—but not through the process of appraisal.

During the two years I spent as a consultant with our Board, I had opportunities to bear witness to, and engage in, the processes of developing teacher professional learning activities and had myriad
opportunities to hear how both teachers and administrators talked about teaching. Ultimately, I was
drawn to the topic of this study for a number of reasons. First, I was compelled to consider whether
other teachers had shared my experiences with the TPA. While I am aware that this may provide bias to
my views, my experiences and extensive thinking on this topic also provide what I believe to be
important contextual understandings. Second, I wanted to better understand the process of appraisal
from the vantage point of our administrators and our labour union representatives. Third, I wondered if,
in Ontario, we were exploiting the TPA process to its fullest potential and taking advantage of every
possible opportunity within the policy to support our teachers and to bring about real development.
Lastly, I wanted to better understand if there were forces at play (such as power and professionalism)
that may be impacting the ways in which the TPA process is actually implemented at the school level.

I hold neither a position of authority over the research participants nor do I hold a representative
position with the union. There were no concerns regarding coercion or undue influence on the part of
the participants. There is significant separation between myself and the bulk of the target population. I
removed myself from the survey sample for the purposes of minimizing bias and did not complete the
EPTPA survey.

Data Analysis

For this study, analysis of data sources was iterative and ongoing. All qualitative data
(documents, surveys and transcriptions) were read (in order to gain a general sense of material), coded
(in order to identify and categorize recurring ideas and concepts), and read again to code in order to
extract themes to be synthesized. All interview transcripts were emailed to participants with a request
that they confirm, clarify or retract, where necessary, any specific language or ideas contained in the
transcripts. I explained to these participants that I would be using their exact words as part of the final
narrative and wanted to give them an opportunity to consider their contributions. It was my expectation
that this approach to member checking would lend validity to the final report. Memoing was also
ongoing throughout this study, a practice that was particularly helpful in allowing me to document my thinking regarding the decisions that were made in methodology and analysis. Analysis was conducted manually. The results of the qualitative data analysis have been presented as a narrative discussion of central themes emerging within the context of each research question using stakeholder views to challenge accepted or hidden assumptions about the research problem.

**Validity Procedures**

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of not only the data collection but of the interpretation of data within this study, various validity procedures were employed. As I approached this study through a constructivist lens, the degree to which (a) the participants were engaged with the data rather than simply providing it, and (b) the degree to which I chose to present the findings in a rich, detailed and authentic way, were critical. In order, then, to conduct a sound, meaningful methodological approach to this study, and in the gathering of stakeholder perspectives, I employed several procedures for validity including providing thick, rich description in the final report, maintaining an extensive audit trail of all research decisions and activities through memoing, pilot testing the EPTPA survey with three individual teachers, member checking of interview participant transcripts, and attempting to disconfirm evidence in order to recognize the multiple and complex nature of stakeholder views and perceptions.

**Ethical Review**

To conduct this study, I sought, and received, approval by the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Board (Protocol 31333, see Appendix C). For the surveys, names of participants (if included in the comments) were replaced with pseudonyms and all specific identifiers (name of school, school district, or town) were removed from the data set. All electronic data and interview recordings were stored on my personal computer, which was stored in a locked filing cabinet in my personal residence. I was the singular researcher to gather, analyze and report data. In addition to protecting the identity and integrity of the participants, the participants were given a Letter of Information (see Appendices D and
E) that explained the purpose of the study and described the risks and benefits of participation. This letter also outlined the voluntary nature of the study. Participants were informed that they could choose to leave the study at any time, but due to the fact that their responses to the online survey were completed anonymously their data could not be removed.

Summary

This qualitative study utilized both a grounded theory and non-experimental approach to collect data in the aim of gaining insight into stakeholder perceptions of current experienced secondary teacher evaluation practices in Ontario. Four main sources of data were explored including an analysis of the teacher performance appraisal policy in Ontario, an online survey to explore and describe secondary teacher perceptions of teacher performance appraisal practices, follow up interviews with teacher survey respondents, as well as interviews with both administrators and OSSTF representatives. The focus of this inquiry was on the stakeholder perceptions held, and lived experiences of, current appraisal practices for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario. I aimed to more thoroughly understand the limitations and possibilities of current experienced teacher evaluation practices in Ontario in the promotion of teacher development.
Chapter V: Findings

This chapter presents the data that emerged from a close reading of the documents related to the Teacher Performance Appraisal in Ontario, teacher survey responses, and interviews with teachers, administrators, and representatives of the union, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF). From collection and constant comparative method of analysis of all data, several major themes emerged. This chapter focuses on these major themes, which are presented based on the voices from which they were extracted: Policy, Teacher, Administrator, and OSSTF. The presentation of each “voice” includes a combination of excerpts from the documents, survey and interview responses, and, where appropriate, the literature. Together these four voices, and respective themes, provide a rich, detailed narrative of stakeholder perceptions of current supervisory appraisal practices of experienced secondary teachers in Ontario.

The Policy Voice

In order to conduct a thorough examination of current appraisal practices of experienced teachers in Ontario, a critical analysis of all documents related to both the policy and implementation was essential. For this study, I examined three documents. First, I considered Ontario Regulation 99/02 of The Education Act (as well as its amendments) in order to identify the language used to describe both the objectives of the policy as well as the intent of how it should be implemented at the school level. Second, I investigated the dissenting, and supporting, voices of educational stakeholders who were invited to present to the Standing Committee on General Government on Monday December 3rd, 2001. This was an opportunity for interested parties to speak in consideration of Bill 110, and it is known as the Hansard Debate. I sought and discovered a transcription of that committee meeting. Lastly, I performed a close reading, and re-reading, of the Teacher Performance Appraisal for Experienced Teachers Technical Manual (2010) in order to extrapolate the specific directives aimed at teachers and administrators in the carrying out of the TPA process. Within these documents, I found the
nuances of the intentions of the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) policy as well as the interpretation of, and responses to, the policy itself. These documents allowed me to more fully examine the current policy for teacher performance appraisal in Ontario within my conceptual framework. This inquiry also allowed me to unearth the voices that contributed to the policy in its development and in its implementation. While the sheer volume of insights derived from a close reading and critical analysis of each of these documents can easily overwhelm, I determined it most efficient to focus my inquiry into primarily three categories of analysis: Language, Instruments, and Implementation. Each of these categories are presented here with specific reference to each of the examined policy-related documents.

**Language.** Examining the language used in each of the three documents allowed me to consider the ways teachers were constructed and a view of teaching was presented within the current policy of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario. Thomas (2005), in her discussion of US policy documents, determined, ultimately, that an examination of language was useful in understanding policy emphasis, values, and priorities. Thomas (2005) asserted that language may “position” certain parties within a policy but also “construct” stakeholders (p. 46). It was these notions of positioning and construction of which I was most concerned as I examined the documents related to the TPA in Ontario.

As may be expected, there is a bureaucratic and regulatory tone to the language used in Ontario Regulation 99/02. According to the regulation, the appraisal of a teacher “must satisfy” certain requirements and a teacher “must be evaluated with respect to the areas of competency” (O. Reg. 99/02, Sec. 4). The regulation further stipulates that the “performance appraisal must be conducted in accordance” with guidelines (O. Reg. 99/02, Sec. 4). Now, the language is pointed enough to indicate a need for compliance, but also general enough to allow for some discretion on behalf of boards. For example, the regulations outline a series of steps that “the performance appraisal must include…a meeting between the principal and the teacher in preparation for a classroom observation”, and later a
“classroom observation to evaluate the teacher’s competencies” (O. Reg. 99/02, Article 8, Subsection 2). Neither step is presented with timelines or specific direction in approach; in essence, a classroom observation, by virtue of its description within Ontario Regulation 99/02, could last two minutes or an entire school day. Likewise, a meeting between principal and teacher either before or after a classroom observation could be brief and informal (i.e., a quick chat in the hallway between classes) or lengthy, thorough, and formalized. It is clear that the language of the regulation allows for a significant amount of discretion on behalf of not only the school boards but individual administrators. Despite the apparent room for discretion found in the language of O. Reg. 99/02 (as well as its subsequent amendments) there is also an arbitrariness to the description of the process of appraisal as teachers are positioned as passive recipients of evaluation. The language does not stipulate engagement or collaboration for teacher participation in the appraisal process—a sentiment that is also absent from the Teacher Performance Appraisal for Experienced Teachers Technical Requirements Manual (2010).

The Technical Manual (2010) is provided to all teachers and administrators in Ontario public schools. The emphasis is on compliance and competency. Board requirements are “mandated” by the legislation and “compliance with TPA requirements” adds “a measure of accountability” and a “documented process to deal with” teachers who are deemed “unsatisfactory” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 14, italics added). The Technical Manual (2010) offers further indications of a particular view of teaching and learning (not just that of the students, but also that of teachers) in that it points to particular “processes and procedures that can help bring about improvements in teaching” (p. 7, italics added). This is where the complexity in the construct of teaching and teachers within these policy documents is most acute. On one hand, the notion of regulation, monitoring, and “procedures” suggests that teaching can be essentialized to a checklist of competencies and is a simple execution of patterns of behavior that lead to expected results. On the other hand, however, the Ontario’s Ministry of Education, through the language of the Technical Manual (2010) conceded that, in the case of a
struggling teacher or one that has in fact already received an “Unsatisfactory” result on a TPA, the “pathways to improvement that a teacher follows may vary, and the principal’s approach to providing support will differ according to the teacher’s individual circumstances” (p. 39, italics added). The Technical Manual (2010) further stipulates that the TPA was designed to “promote the collaboration and relationship building essential to create and sustain an effective learning community”, and that it is “especially important to see the appraisal system as a supportive and effective way of helping teachers grow and develop as confident proficient Ontario teachers” (p. 7). Herein lies the conflict. Is teaching a science (i.e., is predictable; particular stimulus can bring about desired results) or is it an art (i.e., complex; unique to any given scenario; no singular way to bring about precisely the same result each time)? Or, can it be both? Further, what is the most effective way to bring about teacher development? Through prescription and competency checklists? Or, through “collaboration” and “relationship building”? The TPA documents call for an “establishing [of] learning communities characterized by shared values” that create a “culture of sharing, trust, and support” while concurrently positioning teachers within the policy as the recipients of appraisal, and administrators as the providers of assessment (Technical Manual, 2010, p. 7). These two documents, both the O. Reg. 99/02 and the Technical Manual (2010) each contain language that suggests that the policy itself is without a clear, concise view of teaching and of the relationships that support growth within the profession. The ambiguity in the language, partnered with the periodic conflicting messages within each document has created a scenario in which two objectives are trying to be met and yet they may in fact be counterintuitive. The potential for inconsistency in implementation suggests that clarity is necessary. How teaching is viewed holds particular significance to determining the manner in which its effectiveness is evaluated.

A view of teaching, largely bureaucratic, is also evident within the language found in the transcript of the Hansard Debate (2001). Education stakeholders were invited to attend and speak on a
“clause by clause consideration” of Bill 110. As an amendment to the *Quality in the Classroom Act (2001)*, Bill 110 provided for both teacher candidate (preservice teachers) testing as well as for the TPA (LAO, 2001, p. 1). Administrators, as well as other stakeholders such as the provincial government, Ministry of Education, parents, and students, were positioned within the debate as managers—charged with overseeing that quality in standards would be upheld in the classroom. The Ontario Parent Council, represented by Mr. Greg Reid, expressed how his members (parents) “want that *assurance* that when their son or daughter enters a classroom for the first day, the teacher they rely so heavily on…is fully *capable of providing* all the necessary *knowledge and skills*” (LAO, 2001, p. 3, italics added). Mr. Reid’s comments reflect both the rhetoric of a corporate world (with quality assurance determined by auditing) but also a view of teaching as the dissemination of knowledge.

The language of the Hansard Debate (2001) fails to reflect the shift that has occurred in both academic and practitioner communities over the past decade from a one size fits all approach to classroom instruction to an emphasis on identifying individual learning needs and preferences in our students, and teachers as facilitators rather than agents of curriculum dissemination. Language found in the Hansard Debate (2001) also implicate a view of teachers as those whom provide a service to their customers. Parent and pupil surveys, an original component of the TPA, were viewed as “an opportunity for honest *client input* into the *services rendered*” (LAO, 2001, p. 4). This sentiment was echoed in the comments made by Mr. Frank Gue of the Taxpayers’ Coalition Halton who argued that “we appraise teachers to help them to *turn out* a good *product*, that is, to help them get *results*” (LAO, 2001, p. 15). While there is nothing inherently wrong with characterizing the relationship between teacher and students (and parents) as that of a service being provided, it can be limiting. It neglects to recognize the significance of the role that students, and parents, hold in classroom learning and, indeed, academic success. It also fails to acknowledge the complexities that are encountered by each participant in the learning process (i.e., extensive learning needs, disruptive behaviors, absent or silent parents and
guardians)—effectively evaluating the teacher’s capability in providing a service, without examining the role of clients in the transaction. The Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF), however, also had a chance to speak on the record of the Hansard Debates and provided a somewhat more holistic view of the complexities of teaching.

Represented by Ms. Ruth Baumann, the OTF presented clear arguments, within the context of the Hansard Debate (2001), regarding a view of teaching that recognizes the significance of both differentiation and context. Ms. Baumann argued not only that the expectations of the TPA “be adaptable to different contexts such as when a teacher is requested to teach outside of the area of certification or to take on a particularly challenging class” but that the implementation of the TPA process formally “distinguish between the different stages of different teachers’ careers” (LAO, 2001, p. 6, italics added). It should be pointed out here that despite Ms. Baumann’s contributions to the discussion of the TPA policy, there is currently no distinction (outside of the New Teacher Induction Program) amongst experienced teachers. Overall, the language found in the transcript of the Hansard Debate (2001) is indicative of the larger problem of clarity in intent and objective of the TPA. Conflicting notions of teaching, and indeed in the expectations of the role teachers inhabit in education, create a tension within which clarity and consistency in implementation of the TPA process are casualties.

**Instruments.** Considering the instruments used in implementation offers a critical dimension to a discussion of policy effectiveness. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) argued that an examination of policy instruments, as the “mechanisms that translate substantive policy goals into concrete actions” allows for a more thorough understanding of “local response patterns” (p. 134). For the purposes of comparing different mechanisms, McDonnell and Elmore (1987) proposed four categories of instruments: mandates, inducements, capacity-building, or system-changing and suggested that each leads to a different outcome in policy implementation (p. 144). Within the TPA, the most apparent
mechanism is that of mandates. The policy is designed with an expectation of compliance on the part of school districts, principals, and teachers. Principals “must comply” with each step of the appraisal process (see Figure 3), “must” consider all 16 competencies, and “may add but not omit any content” of the summative form (Technical Manual, 2010, p. 54). Further, the TPA frames the problem, for which the policy was designed to address, as that of teaching quality. With an expectation that compliance with the TPA policy will lead to an improvement in teaching quality, the TPA neglects the variables of “local response” as well as the complexities of teacher quality, teaching and teacher learning.

There are no inducements contained in either the TPA policy or implementation documents. There are no rewards, or incentives, for example, for teachers who obtain a rating of “Satisfactory” in their appraisal. As Labaree (2010) argued, school principals “have virtually no discretion in allocating either pay or promotion…pay levels are set by union contracts, and traditionally they are based on only two criteria: the number of years the teacher has served and the number of credits and degrees the teachers has accumulated” (p. 127). Inducements can be costly, and a cost/benefit analysis may have, in the case of the TPA, ruled out the use of them, but the absence of inducements suggests the limited thinking of the original TPA policy. As McDonnell and Elmore (1987) determined, the limited thinking may stem from difficulty in framing the original problem of teacher quality and suggested that if “policymakers perceive a policy problem as the need to move behavior beyond an expected minimum, they will be more likely to choose inducements. [But], if they view the purpose [of the policy] as moving behavior to a specified minimum, they will be more likely to select a mandate approach” (p. 145). The TPA currently attempts to ensure that all teachers to meet a minimum “Satisfactory” level of competence but does not provide for conditions that would support or encourage exemplary teaching. Mandates are inherently problematic because they are presumptive. Mandates presume compliance as well as consistency. They also presume that “the required action (i.e., the TPA process) is something all individuals and agencies should be expected to do, regardless of their differing capacities” and that the
required action (in this case, appraisals), “would not occur, or would not occur with the frequency or consistency specified by the policy, in the absence of explicit prescription” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 139).

Capacity-building, which McDonnell and Elmore (1987) described as “the transfer of money to individuals or agencies for the purpose of investment in future benefits—material, intellectual, or human resources” (p. 139) holds only limited provisions within the policy of Ontario’s TPA. According to the TPA FAQ (2012):

School boards are responsible for ensuring compliance with the TPA’s legislative requirements in the schools within their jurisdiction...compliance-related responsibilities include ensuring that all principals employed by the board carry out performance appraisals of the teachers within their schools in accordance with provincial and board requirements (p. 2).

This does not stipulate any specific activities but may include training sessions of how to conduct appraisals or how to complete the Summative Form, particularly for new administrators. The capacity of administrators to carry out meaningful appraisals was raised in issue during the Hansard Debate. Representing the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Ms. Sue Robertson argued that administrators “will need training and support to feel comfortable that they are not just judging their colleagues, but setting up an environment that supports teaching excellence; an environment in which everyone can improve” (LAO, 2001, p. 18). Similarly, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, represented by Ms. Baumann, argued that the TPA policy “should make specific provisions for human and material resources to support the improved practice [of teachers]” (LAO, 2001, p. 7). Without specific or significant provisions for capacity-building, however, the TPA policy relies on both the interpretation and skill of individual school districts and administrators in the implementation of the appraisal process.

System-changing has a similarly limited role in the policy documents of Ontario’s TPA. The Technical Manual (2010) called for the TPA process to be “fully integrated into the fabric of school
life” and to be reflective of a “shared vision” amongst all staff (teachers and administrators) within a school (p. 7). Neither the Technical Manual nor the Ontario regulations, however, provides anything beyond rhetoric in regards to system-changing. Labaree (2010) argued that “the key variable in shaping the success or failure of reforms is the ability of intended change to move across the levels of school hierarchy”; that is to say, to move from rhetoric (at the top of the system) to classroom teaching practice (p. 109). Labaree (2010) asserted that there were barriers to full system permeation, namely that of loose coupling. He argued that schools are “largely buffered from intrusions by [provincial] authorities and quite separate from other districts [and] individual schools have a similar degree of independence from each other” and as such, “school reform efforts are hard-pressed to penetrate vertically all the way down through [the] layers of the system” (Labaree, 2010, p. 123). To create, then, a school environment of “sharing, trust, and support” would require a significant cultural shift—one for which the TPA policy does not provide.

This issue of systemic limitations to the policy was raised within the context of the Hansard Debate. At the heart of the discussions around system-changing was that of administrator workload and priorities. Mr. Marchese (representative of Trinity-Spadina) argued at the debate that he was “very concerned about the fact that most principals will spend their lives doing performance reviews, in addition to everything else they’ve got to do” (LAO, 2001, p. 7). In dispute of a three-year cycle of appraisal (which was in the original TPA but revoked in 2007 in exchange for a five-year cycle), Ontario Public School Boards’ Association representative Liz Sandals, Ontario’s current Education Minister, argued that the proposed process was “unrealistic and unnecessary”, would place additional pressure on “already overworked school administrators”, and that her members “feared that the requirement for a three-year cycle could lead to filling out the forms to meet requirements, sacrificing quality of evaluation” (LAO, 2001, p. 8). The TPA policy in Ontario did not make provisions for how a system that was already overtaxing its participants, could reconfigure the time and responsibilities of
administrators so that their focus could move to supervision and support of teachers through appraisal. As Ms. Robertson of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations argued, on the topic of administrator workload and priorities, “it’s very difficult to be the instructional leader maintaining a culture of excellence when you’re not even in the school half of the time” (LAO, 2001, p. 19). The TPA policy uses mandates, without inducements, or for that matter capacity-building and system-changing, and the result is that implementation, due to lack of adequate training and resources such as time, becomes more about complying with the policy (to the letter and timeline) than meeting the original objective of growing teacher practice.

**Implementation.** Ontario’s TPA was originally designed with a clinical observation model to include a pre-observation meeting, classroom observation, post-observation meeting, and a summative report (see Figure 3) but also offered a list of “optional” activities such as video analysis, peer evaluation, action research and team teaching. These items are no longer listed on Ontario’s Ministry of Education website. The clinical observation model, however, has persisted. In the original policy there was also a provision for the development of an annual written parent and pupil survey (O. Reg. 99/02, Article 5). This component of the TPA was revoked on April 1, 2007 as an amendment to the regulation (O. Reg. 96/07, Section 3). The original TPA policy also allowed for four possible rating results of an appraisal: Exemplary, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory. Again, as an amendment to O. Reg. 99/02, this provision was revoked in 2007 and replaced with only two possible ratings: Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory (O. Reg. 96/07, Article 7). These amendments, including that of the stipulation of a five-year evaluation cycle instead of the original three-year evaluation cycle, represent significant shifts in thinking about teaching in Ontario. Each of the issues that resulted in amendments had been raised in the context of the Hansard Debates. The issues of revoking parent and pupil input, moving from a rating system of four outcomes to two, and from a three-year cycle to five were all framed as issues of workload, and yet they appear to have diminished the level of accountability associated with the TPA.
Less input, diminished frequency, and narrowed ratings result in a system that assesses teachers without actually holding them accountable.

**Figure 3.** Performance Appraisal of Experienced Teachers Flow Chart

It should be clarified here, however, that since the Hansard Debates, and following the amendments to the TPA in 2007, various efforts have been made from a policy perspective, separate from that of the political perspective, to enhance the user-ability of the TPA process. One particular effort, initiated by Ontario’s Ministry of Education, as part of the Ontario Leadership Strategy, offered guidance and support to administrators in effective, more engaging use of the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) within the context of the TPA. This initiative provided strategies for administrators to “embed learning-focused

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conversations” in daily interactions with teachers and to align “professional learning and resources” with the ALP (https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/pdfs/issue19.pdf). An additional effort allowed for eight ALP/TPA pilot projects from boards across the province during the 2011-2012 school year. The objective of these pilot projects were to “develop resources for boards to use to support teachers and principals in their learning about the Annual Learning Plan and Teacher Performance Appraisal process as a professional growth strategy”(http://mentoringmoments.ning.com/group/alp-tpa). Efforts have been made, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, to allow the process, and subsequently the policy, to be impacted by user feedback and through otherwise identified need. Effectively, attempts have been made to determine what the TPA policy does or does not achieve in schools and in classrooms across the province of Ontario.

The other persistent issue that emerges from the TPA policy documents in regards to implementation is that of consistency. The language within the document, while providing structure for the process in terms of steps and timelines, stops short of providing direction for administrators in tone or approach, which may result in a vast differential in implementation. For example, there is no provision within the policy documents for a prescribed length or number of classroom observations. Theoretically, then, and practically speaking as I learned from my teacher, administrator and OSSTF participants, classroom observations could span five minutes or an entire school day; could include one observation on one day or several over the course of a semester. Boards do not set a standard for the length or number of classroom visits so the variance occurs potentially between school districts, but also between schools and even administrators in the same school. Arguably, while there is no singular determined amount of observation time that could be asserted as ideal for assessing teacher performance, there is a significant distinction between what an administrator may capture in a single, five-minute visit, compared to several extended visits over several weeks or months. All of these factors influence the quality of assessment that results.
Another area of variance in implementation is that of artifacts and evidence used by administrators in the appraisal of teacher performance. There is a list entitled “Possible Sources of Evidence” offered as Appendix F to the Technical Manual (2010) which includes such options as differentiated lessons and assessments, lists of daily and weekly routines, records of student achievement, and samples of student work (p. 78). The variance in implementation, then, arises from the fact that the TPA policy does not stipulate any particular number of sources of evidence (beyond the classroom observation) nor whether any additional pieces of evidence should be considered for an appraisal. As will be evident in the findings of my interviews, it was the experience of many of my respondents, both teachers and administrators, that some administrators request an extensive list of samples and materials to be shared in the pre-observation meeting while others do not make these requests. This variance occurs between districts, schools, and administrators within the same school. This distinction is problematic in that at the ground level, in schools, the appraisal is simply not carried out in a consistent fashion through the triangulation of data afforded through multiple sources of data. The TPA documents do not make explicit any expectations of the degree of depth an administrator should delve in order to develop an accurate and meaningful assessment of teacher performance.

**Summary.** From an examination of the documents related to the TPA policy in Ontario, specifically Ontario Regulation 99/02 and its subsequent amendments, the Teacher Performance Appraisal for Experienced Teachers Technical Manual (2010), and the transcript of the Hansard Debate (2001), several key themes emerged. First, the language used to describe both the process of appraisal and the roles and responsibilities of each party (teachers, administrators, and school boards) presents a bureaucratic view of teaching (i.e., simplistic; can be regulated; there is one best way), while positioning teachers as recipients of the appraisal process rather than active participants. Second, the instruments used in the TPA policy documents could be categorized as mandates with an expectation of compliance on behalf of boards, administrators, and, of course, teachers. The TPA policy offers no
inducements either for compliance or for improvement in teacher performance. The policy itself offered no provisions for either capacity building or system changing. Lastly, the elements of the TPA process have been described and presented in such a way as to allow for significant deviation and inconsistency among and between administrators and boards in such areas as time spent in classroom observation, number of observations, as well as forms and number of different sources of evidence used in the appraisal of teachers. Through an exploration of the language, instruments, and implementation used in the appraisal of teachers in Ontario, inconsistencies were revealed. The question, then, of outcomes, both intended and unintended, becomes paramount in order to meaningfully assess the effectiveness of the TPA policy. In order to better understand the outcomes of the TPA policy, I spoke with teachers, administrators, and OSSTF representatives. The following sections present the data collected from these participants.

Teacher Voices

In order to gain an understanding of the implementation and outcomes of the TPA, to consider what it actually looks like on the ground level, I took what I had learned from the policy documents and presented them to the teachers in Ontario. Through both an online survey, called the Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal (EPTPA) survey, as well as 30-45 minute follow up interviews with seven teachers, I was able to access the teacher voice—which revealed a great deal.

As a 20-item, online survey, hosted through surveymonkey.com, the EPTPA survey featured a mix of demographic, agree or disagree, and short answer questions. The survey was sent out to all experienced contract teachers in Ontario via an email from their district or branch OSSTF presidents. While I anticipated that I may not have full participation (there are approximately 60,000 members of OSSTF with approximately 32,000 being classroom teachers) due to leaves such as parental, academic, or medical, or lack of interest, I had not anticipated that many members of OSSTF would simply not receive the emailed invitation to participate in this study. I sought and received approval from OSSTF’s
Provincial Executive. In turn, the Provincial Executive sent out a letter of support, with the survey link, to all districts in Ontario, of which there are 35. Each District President was asked to email the survey link and Letter of Information to members (directly or through Branch Presidents). This did not occur in all cases. Of the OSSTF members that received the emailed survey link and invitation to participate, however, I received a total of 1732 survey responses (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Teacher Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Response A</th>
<th>Response B</th>
<th>Response C</th>
<th>Response D</th>
<th>Response E</th>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>62.22%</td>
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<td>(1072)</td>
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<td>What is your age?</td>
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<td>36-45 yrs</td>
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<td>(654)</td>
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<td>12.92%</td>
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<td>What are your current contract holdings?</td>
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<td>&gt; .5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years have you been teaching in Ontario?</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.33%</td>
<td>28.73%</td>
<td>22.93%</td>
<td>13.12%</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(333)</td>
<td>(495)</td>
<td>(395)</td>
<td>(226)</td>
<td>(274)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From an analysis of qualitative EPTPA survey response comments, several themes emerged. Among the most persistent themes were that of (1) stress related to the TPA, and (2) impact on teaching practice as a result of the TPA process. I took these ideas to seven teachers in 30-45 minute follow up interviews. Each of the two major themes are presented within this section with specific reference to EPTPA survey responses and teacher interview transcripts. It should be noted that one of the initial determinations of themes, in my analysis, was found in identifying those questions that yielded the most answers. For example, several survey questions offered an additional comments section in which teachers could explain their selected response. Some questions yielded far more comments than others and in this section I will focus on those that appeared to compel teachers to comment with greater frequency (see Table 2).
Table 2. An Overview of Teacher Response to EPTPA Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPTPA Questions</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th># of teachers who opted to leave comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the appraisal process stressful. (Q5)</td>
<td>1098 (66.8%)</td>
<td>547 (33.3%)</td>
<td>840 (51.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the process of my appraisal, I was provided with specific, concrete feedback about my teaching practice. (Q8)</td>
<td>797 (48.5%)</td>
<td>848 (51.6%)</td>
<td>618 (37.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent more time preparing for my observation visit than I would to prepare on a typical day. (Q9)</td>
<td>1332 (80.9%)</td>
<td>313 (19.1%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would choose to participate in the appraisal process if it were not required of me. (Q10)</td>
<td>556 (33.8%)</td>
<td>1089 (66.2%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My administrator(s) appeared to value the appraisal process. (Q11)</td>
<td>803 (48.8%)</td>
<td>842 (51.2%)</td>
<td>654 (39.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stress and the TPA process. In Section III of the EPTPA survey (see Appendix A), I posed a series of statements to which I asked teachers to respond with either an “Agree” or “Disagree”. To the statement “I found the appraisal process stressful”, 66.75% (1098) of respondents selected “Agree” while 33.25% (547) responded with “Disagree” (87 respondents skipped this question). In the comments section of this question, teachers expanded on their choice in answer with reflections on their personal experiences with the appraisal process that contributed to the presence or absence of feelings of stress. For this question, 1645 teachers answered the question and of these, 51% (840) offered a comment. That was a comment rate of 11.3% higher than that of the next most commented upon question. It occurred to me that the word “stressful” in relation to the TPA may have struck a chord with participants. Respondents reported six central ideas regarding their level of stress during appraisal, including workload, subjectivity of appraisals, scheduling of classroom visits, the tone of the appraisal as set by the administrator, and the view of the appraisal as a “dog and pony” show, while others reported little to no stress and communicated various reasons for this response. I discuss each of these themes in the following sections and have included specific participant comments that I believe capture the essence of the teacher participants’ experiences.

Stress associated with workload and preparation. Many teachers reported feelings of stress associated with the additional workload in preparing for the TPA. Gathering artifacts of teaching and
learning, completing the Log of Teaching Practice, and developing a portfolio of short and long term planning, along with examples of student work, felt for many as “very time consuming”, “a ridiculous amount of work”, and “a lot of extra paperwork”. One teacher respondent commented that “the lead up to these appraisals is stressful because the pressure to produce an exemplary lesson, extra paperwork, and the sheer number of ‘look-fors’, is daunting”. As well, many teachers reported that it was stressful to find time, in addition to regular teaching responsibilities, to complete this preparation and that there is “no extra time in this job to accommodate the meetings and extra planning for a TPA”. The stress of preparation for the appraisal stems in large part from the fact that teachers are perceiving the process as “extra” work. Of all EPTPA survey respondents, 80.97% (1332) reported that they “spent more time preparing for the observation visit that [they] would to prepare on a typical day”. And yet, despite all of that extra work, many teachers echoed the sentiment that “it was all about the paper work and the process and not about really getting to know what I do in the classroom on a daily basis”. Many teachers asked: “When do I have time to do appraisal prep without taking time away from my kids?”.

One particularly onerous task, according to many respondents, lies in the areas of the 16 competencies, with many teachers being asked to provide “proof” of each competency at the pre-observation meeting with their administrator. One teacher commented that “it can feel more like a burden…than a reflection on good practice”. As another teacher described, “I was told by my principal in the year of my TPA that I must complete the Log of Teacher Practice for all 16 competencies…not all principals require their staff to complete the Log so there is a lack of consistency which is really frustrating”. A great deal of the stress and frustration that teachers feel during the TPA process is that the amount of preparation required appears to vary “and teachers feel stress depending on the administrator doing the evaluation”. As one teacher explained, there is “no consistency” between administrators, even within the same school and described how their “most recent appraiser demanded more than was expected in the past or by any other admin” at the school, while another teacher insisted
that “different administrators in the building had different standards and expectations for the process” of appraisal. This is a particularly significant area of concern as many teachers reported that they also needed to alter their teaching approach to suit the varying expectations of the administrator conducting the appraisal—as administrators have differing views of what “good teaching” looks like. This appeared to contribute to the feelings of stress associated with preparing for the TPA. One teacher described how “there was an administrator who did not believe in or understand the new teaching methodologies, and it felt like I needed to resort to the old method of ‘chalk and talk’ to get a good appraisal”. Another explained how “I once had an administrator berate me publicly for taking attendance at the beginning of class, whereas a different administrator said that this was the preferred method”. Anxiety, as many respondents communicated, “arose from not knowing what to expect from the particular administrator” or having to make significant changes, or significantly differing amounts of preparation, dependent upon which administrator had been assigned to complete an appraisal.

A sentiment among many teacher respondents suggested that they could see the value of all that additional preparation (i.e., portfolios, teaching logs, or altering pedagogical approaches etc.) if the artifacts and samples were effectively used within the appraisal, but as one teacher explained:

My administrator never even looked at the items that I had to include. The time wasted gathering all of the information for the appraisal could have been more useful in preparing lessons and assessing learning for the students I teach.

Use of evidence in the appraisal was an area of significance in the teacher data and a source of some confusion and stress. In Section III of the EPTPA survey, I asked, “What evidence of your teaching was considered in your appraisal?” Of the completed responses to this short answer question, 34 teachers reported that they simply did not understand what I was asking. I found this to be particularly insightful as I had presumed that the use of the word “evidence” would translate easily for teachers in the context of appraisal. I anticipated that I may get a variety of responses that ranged from “portfolios” to
“classroom observation” to “student input”; however, I was surprised to discover that not only did very few appraisals, as reported by teacher participants, include evidence beyond the classroom observation visit. Many were unaware that alternative forms of evidence may be incorporated into their appraisal. For example, one teacher responded, “I’m not sure if I understand your question. The administrator remained for the duration of the lesson.” While another teacher commented that the administrator considered their “three-part lesson plan, and actual teaching…I really don’t understand your question”. After 34 similar responses, and 393 respondents skipping this question, I was compelled to consider what might be at the root of such confusion. Either teachers did not understand the full spectrum of evidence that could be considered in their appraisal, and this was not communicated to them, or they viewed the classroom visit as the appraisal in and of itself. Of the 1,339 teachers who answered this question, 59.52% (797) reported that a classroom visit, as far as they knew, was the singular piece of evidence used in their appraisal. One teacher, for example, communicated that “the administrator observed my classroom teaching. I am not sure I understand the question so I’ll stop there,” while another teacher wondered, “my administrator observed a class and looked at my lesson plans. What else is there?”. Confusion about sources and manner of evidence being used in the TPA process could stem from several factors. First, it is possible that the language of the question was simply not clear to all participants. Second, teachers may lack understanding of the process (for example, not having read the Technical Manual or not having received adequate instruction). Third, many administrators may be using the classroom observation as their singular source of evidence for the appraisal. It may also suggest, however, as teacher participants reported with a significant degree of frequency, that there is a lack of consistency among administrators in the implementation of the TPA process.

Stress associated with the subjectivity of appraisals. A significant source of stress for the vast majority of EPPTA respondents, as well as teacher interview participants, arose from the perceived subjectivity of the appraisal and the fact that there is, generally, only one appraiser. This area of stress
aligned with teacher reporting of inconsistencies among and between administrators, often within the same school. Depending on which appraiser is assigned, workload and preparation could be extensive, more or less evidence could be required, number of classroom visits could vary, and the amount of feedback received could be minimal to none, or very thorough. Dependent upon which administrator is assigned to complete an appraisal also opened the dialogue of subject-matter and pedagogical familiarity or preferences. One teacher respondent described:

I had a terrible experience with a VP who insisted I teach Socratic method, rather than using differentiated instruction. I told him I was not going to change my methods of teaching but ultimately I did so I would get a “Satisfactory”.

Several teachers commented about how they altered their practices for the purpose of the classroom visit in order to secure a “Satisfactory” result in their appraisal. One teacher described how the stress of the appraisal arose from “being made to teach in ways that I don’t believe are in the best interest of my students in order to make administrators happy”. Another teacher described how the process “forced me to revamp many teaching techniques to meet the new ‘flavour of the year’ fads”.

Altering practices to please administrators was only one way that subjectivity created stress for teacher respondents. Another significant source of stress grew from the perception that if the administrator was not familiar with the subject matter of the observed lesson then they could potentially misunderstand or be unfairly critical of the observed teaching methodologies. Richard, an interview participant who has been teaching in the public system for 22 years and is currently an Art teacher, remarked how:

The Math person might give me a low [result] because he didn’t have a clue of what my objectives were and didn’t understand the complexity of what I was trying to do and what I was actually trying to teach.

Several teachers also expressed stress and frustration at being evaluated by “someone what has not been in a classroom for YEARS!” . To both of these areas of concern (out of subject area administrators, and
administrators who have not taught in many years) several teacher participants raised the possibility of more than one appraiser. Martin explained how he would:

> Really like to see subject-specific people brought into the classrooms so Math and Science people have Math and Science people in. That might be with a Department Head or another colleague…to make sure that the person doing the evaluation has a clue what they are evaluating.

Stephen, an interview participant who has taught since 1990 and has been appraised every three or five years (dependent on the process policy) argued for a more collaborative appraisal process, similar to models of professional learning that have been used in Ontario schools over the past several years in which colleagues can observe and “critique each other. And no one takes it personally”. Rose, a Geography teacher of almost 20 years, and an interview participant, argued that peer evaluation or review as a part of performance appraisal, would be preferable to the single-appraiser model of the current TPA because it would allow for “taking more than just one perspective”. Christine, who has been teaching since 2001 discussed how if she could “makeover” the TPA process she would have a “team of people follow me through the year or a team of people come into my classroom on a month over month basis. Maybe even a parent” in order to gather alternate perspective and feedback on her teaching practice and avoid the inherent subjectivity of the current process. Mary, an English teacher in Ontario since 2006, echoed the sentiments of Christine and many EPTPA respondents by describing how a collaborative model, with multiple appraisers (such as department leaders, course coordinators, or other colleagues) would be “invaluable” and wondered “wouldn’t it be amazing if it was supported or even mandated that we got to sit in on each other’s classes? Just to have that feedback like ‘this is what I saw’ or ‘this is what you could try’”. A singular appraiser was the source of a significant level of stress for many teacher respondents, partly for the potential for bias through subjectivity but also for instances of the administrator’s lack of subject-knowledge, and many called for a more collaborative approach which would engage additional voices into the appraisal process.
Stress of canceled and rescheduled visits and meetings. Another significant area of stress in the TPA process for teacher respondents was that of the rescheduling or canceling of classroom visits or meetings on the part of the administrator. Many respondents communicated that schedules were altered multiple times by administrators during the TPA process. One teacher commented that “the admin responsible did not show up to do the appraisal at the time agreed upon (after I prepared the lesson and all the resources!)”. Another teacher described how “appointments were made and cancelled/scheduled numerous times. Final appointment made the morning of…I had my lesson prepared and resources laid out, and my principal would cancel the observation; he did this three times”. The stress of the added workload associated with TPA preparations, combined with canceling of appointments resulted in a significant level of frustration for many teachers. One teacher commented that “my TPA was rescheduled by my VP twice, so by the third time, I was DONE”. Many teachers, however, communicated a general understanding that the role of administrator is a full one and that emergencies or otherwise unanticipated events may arise. As one teacher reported, “the principal was really busy and she had to cancel my observation several times”. Other teachers, however, expressed frustration that the canceling and rescheduling of appointments suggested, as presented in the following sections, that the administrator may not value the TPA process.

Stress as a result of the tone of appraisal. Another source of stress for many teacher respondents was that of the tone or approach to the TPA process as set by the administrator. One teacher described how the “administrator did not make any attempt to make the process seem supportive of my teaching and made it feel punitive in nature, i.e., you get an ‘unsuccessful’ until you prove otherwise”. Another teacher echoed these sentiments when explaining how “throughout the entire process, it seemed to be more focused on finding errors and being punitive than being considered a model for learning growth, which is what I thought it was originally designed for”. As a researcher, when I considered how an administrator might “set the tone” for an appraisal, I looked to teacher responses. Common areas for
concerns, and sources of significant stress, included, as previously described, (1) the canceling and rescheduling of meetings, or in some cases, simply not showing up at the agreed upon time; (2) requesting substantial preparation and gathering of artifacts and then not looking at them or discussing them in meetings; (3) a lack of feedback during or following the appraisal process; and, (4) behaviors, such as abruptness or brevity, that suggested that the focus was on “checking the boxes” or “going over a checklist” rather than supporting teacher growth. For Q11 of the EPTPA survey, I asked teacher participants to respond to the statement “My administrator(s) appeared to value the appraisal process”. Of the total responses to this question, 48.81% (803) selected “Agree”, while 51.19% (842) reported that they would “Disagree” with this statement. In the comments section of this question, teachers reported various reasons for their selected answer. Those who had disagreed with the statement communicated concerns related to administrator workload and administrator attitude or approach. This is a significant finding. One teacher described how the appraisal process, for the administrator, “appeared to be a task to complete. It seemed to be seen as a formality, with a positive outcome just a given”. Other teachers explained how the administrator appeared to be so busy that scheduling was a challenge, often the process was “squeezed in” or the administrator spent only a few minutes in the classroom. One teacher expressed frustration that while they had “asked for the appraisal in semester one. It happened in March and only after I waived the pre-observation meeting”. Several teachers contended that it appeared as if administrators were “just filling in boxes [but] that no serious attempt to improve education is evident”. Another teacher described how they “have had principals actually ask me to write up my own TPA!”. Many teacher respondents described scenarios in which their administrator appeared to be “going through the motions” in the process of appraisal with either a very hurried or a very casual approach that signaled to teachers that the process did not hold a great deal of substantive value.
According to many teacher respondents, the “last minute, oops-I-forgot, attitude” from administrators was very frustrating, but not all together misunderstood. Many teachers defended the less-than-invested attitudes that they had experienced with administrators as being the result of administrator workload. One teacher argued, “honestly, I think they do the best they can with the process as it stands but I do get the impression that it is quite tedious for them”. Another suggested that it “seemed like it was another added thing on their already demanding jobs”. One teacher insisted that “to be fair, administrators are increasingly being pulled out of the building for meetings at the Board office and as a result, they have precious little time in their schools to do the work that is required of them”. Many teachers expressed concerns that the role of administrator was overextended; it holds multiple objectives and priorities that are frequently in conflict with time spent in classroom, supervising teachers. Administrators wear many hats including budgeting manager, health and safety supervisor, staff manager, community relations consultant, human resources director, and district liaison. These responsibilities, however, stand in addition to that of instructional leader, and yet often take priority, in large part because they pose a certain degree of urgency that instructional leadership does not. Arguably, beyond behavioral issues and parental concerns, when an administrator is called upon to intervene, what goes on in classrooms does so both behind closed doors and in isolation. It is possible for a teacher to proceed as they may throughout the year without incident or major concern. It is equally possible that as such, a teacher may proceed throughout that year without any administrator intervention or feedback. Neither scenario, however, would facilitate growth or improvement in teacher practice.

The ‘dog and pony’ show. The term ‘dog and pony’ show arose repeatedly in both EPTPA survey responses and in my follow-up interviews with teachers. One teacher insisted that the “dog and pony show is not a real reflection of teaching”, while another reported that the TPA “was really a dog and pony show for administration and not really indicative of everyday classroom life”. Another teacher
articulated how the performance appraisal, and the classroom visit, is “such a one-off event that it in no way reflects what a teacher is doing day to day in their classrooms with their kids. It truly seems to be a ‘dog and pony’ show”. Based on how the term was used by respondents, as well as my consideration of what a dog show or pony show may entail, the term has taken on great significance in this examination of the TPA. To consider that a show implies a polished performance of best practices, one in which the performers share the best possible version of themselves in order to be assigned a rating or a score, places the TPA in an interesting light. At the heart of the dog and pony show, however, is the possibility of inauthenticity. To consider that, as discussed, administrators are overextended, frequently out of the school building, and forced to tackle urgent matters (all detracting from their time spent wandering in and out of classrooms and spending time observing teaching and learning) then it is likely that many classrooms are not visited, and many teachers are not observed until it is time for an appraisal. Martin, one of my interview participants, postured that:

We’re told about [the classroom visit] several weeks in advance, we choose which class they come to, which course, which everything, and I don’t know anyone who can’t pull it together for two classes once every five years.

Ellen, another interview participant, echoed Martin’s sentiments when she communicated that:

I think it would have to be spontaneous. They couldn’t warn you. The warning makes it artificial. I mean you could sit and show a movie every single day and then do a Cracker Jack lesson the day the VP is coming.

Like Martin, Ellen’s focus was on accuracy and authenticity. In order for a performance assessment to be meaningful and to support authentic and sustained growth and improvement, it needs to be accurate. Teachers largely reported a favorable view of more frequent classroom visits, each year. The perceived lack of authenticity that is inherent in the TPA policy, has compelled many teachers to question its substantive value.
The “dog and pony” show reference, from teacher respondents, also unearthed the notion of sustainability in the learning that may stem from the appraisal process. Many EPTPA participants described the TPA as an “event, not a process”. Ellen, an interview participant and a teacher of 24 years who has experienced four performance appraisals, explained how “it’s sort of a one-off thing and then nobody talks about it again. It’s here and then it’s gone and you don’t have to think about it again for a number of years”. One EPTPA respondent described how it was “stressful to get ready for the appraisal and the anticipation of the ‘event’”, while another said, “a one-time event that mostly stressed the students and therefore changed the dynamics of my classroom, that’s stressful”. Many teachers reported how they prepared for the “event”, and then put it aside, “did not even think about it because it has nothing to do with my actual daily teaching”, until the next appraisal cycle.

Another issue for teacher respondents, in regards to the “dog and pony” show, is not only that it lacks authenticity and sustainability, but that it, as Martin had suggested, lacks accountability. Many teachers reported their frustration that the process, despite the extensive preparation and stress associated with appraisals, more often than not leads to a “Satisfactory” result. Martin contended that “[the TPA] seems to have no fail, or anywhere close to a fail. And, an evaluation process that only ever has one outcome ever, seems like a pointless evaluation process”. One teacher suggested that “Admin realize that to give a poor review would create more work on their part. In order to keep things manageable for them the TPA result is ‘Satisfactory’ unless drastic or serious professional deficiencies exist.” Another teacher argued that:

Teachers who are not very good do not seem to improve as a result of this process - when you see teachers with 20 years of experience who don't follow current curriculum or school policy, or who have problems with basic classroom management, and yet there is no change after a TPA, you do begin to question the process.

The vast majority of teachers who reported that they found the TPA process stressful, and described it as a “dog and pony” show, questioned the value of the process and that even if “you do well, so what?”.
As one teacher explained, the TPA is stressful “because in the end it is not a productive process. My teaching practices can always improve and this process did not lead me to growth”. The “So what?” is a question that arose frequently in both teacher and OSSTF interviews, and is addressed in greater detail in a later section, however, it is worth noting that significant stress arises for teachers when it becomes clear that despite all of the extra work and anxiety, the TPA may actually be a low stakes enterprise.

\textit{No stress.} It is important to recognize that 33.25\% (547) of teachers reported through the EPTPA survey that they experienced minimal to no stress associated with the TPA process and did not agree with the statement, “I found the appraisal process stressful”. One of the most prevalent ideas in the comments of these respondents was the notion that they, frankly, did not care about the outcome of the appraisal and would not “change for anyone”. One teacher reported, “I do what I do, am I going to alter this for one day just so I can make my principal happy?”. Another teacher similarly commented that they had not felt any stress related to the TPA and that “it probably has to do with my attitude [but] I am honestly at the ‘this is how I do things, so, hope you like it’ stage. I have tough classes and, I know what I am good at so, I just do my thing”. One of the main reasons cited for an absence of stress, and not “caring” about the outcome of a TPA was because of the perception, reported by many teachers, that there are simply no really consequences or rewards for doing poorly or well on an appraisal. One teacher explained, “I’m a pretty confident and creative teacher. Knowing that there are no consequences for poor results, I don’t worry.” Another argued, “since it holds very little weight i.e. promotion or pay increase, it makes the process stress free.” One teacher summed up the sentiment of many by commenting that the TPA is a “lot of work with no reward”. So, a lack of rewards or punishments associated with the TPA, and a confidence, or indignation, in response to being evaluated, provides some teachers with the opportunity to not be stressed during an appraisal. So, apparently, does proximity to retirement.
Several comments from teacher participants suggested that as they grew closer to leaving the classroom, appraisals became far less significant. One teacher respondent was particularly succinct in reporting that “I retire in 7 months. Very little admin stuff stresses me”. Another teacher explained that “due to my age/proximity to retirement, experience, and previous evaluations, I do not worry about quality”. And still another teacher commented that “in the beginning, it was very stressful. My last one, not so much. I knew it would be my final TPA, so I didn’t really care”. While it is encouraging to hear that confidence can diminish stress associated with performance appraisal, it is disconcerting to attribute a lack of caring to proximity to retirement. The TPA policy, as it stands currently, calls for appraisals every five years. For a teacher who is five years from retirement, and completed their appraisal this year, they will likely not be appraised again before they leave the profession. It should be clarified, however, that regardless of proximity to retirement, a teacher may be engaged by their administrator in an “out of cycle” appraisal at any time.

TPA impact upon teacher practice. The second most persistent theme found in the data collected from both EPTPA survey results and teacher interviews in regards to the TPA policy in Ontario was that of impact upon teaching practice. Q14 of the EPTPA, which asked “How did your appraisal impact your teaching practice?” yielded a 77.4% response rate among teachers. Of respondents, 82.62% (1109) reported little to no impact upon their daily teaching practices as a result of the TPA process. Unlike stress and the TPA, which offered a wide range of contributing factors, responses related to impact upon teaching practice reflected two major themes (1) the absence or presence of constructive feedback resulting from the appraisal process, and (2) teacher learning. Following a discussion, however, of the factors that contributed to an appraisal having little to no impact upon teaching practice, I will present the point of view of the 9.02% (121) of teacher respondents who reported that the appraisal has had a negative impact upon their teaching practice.
Each perspective is presented here with specific reference to both EPTPA and teacher interview participant comments.

Constructive feedback. The single most persistent comment made by teachers, in both the EPTPA survey and follow up interviews, in regards to the impact of the TPA upon teaching practice, was that the process does not impact teaching practice because of a distinct absence of constructive feedback. Teachers commented that they were “disappointed”, “frustrated” and “stressed” to go through the process of appraisal only to walk away without specific and constructive feedback to help them improve. This is two-fold. On one hand, the majority of teachers reported receiving little to no constructive feedback at all, either during the appraisal process or from the summative report. Many teachers reported having received feedback on very minor practices or procedures in their classroom for example, “I was informed once that I overused the word ‘like’”, “my bulletin board looked too ‘busy’”, and the “artificial plant at the back of my room was dusty”. Many teachers echoed the sentiment that “if more descriptive feedback was given, then I would try to incorporate it into my teaching practice”. It was perceived by many respondents that receiving a “Satisfactory” result on an appraisal, without being offered meaningful feedback, greatly diminished the substantive value of the appraisal process.

On the other hand, many teachers argued that they walked away from the appraisal with no constructive feedback because ultimately the appraisal was “just a snapshot” of what they do in their classrooms each day and therefore feedback, if any, was provided only on that small piece of their daily practice—too small to affect any real change or shift in practice. As one teacher commented, “it didn’t really [have impact]. Admin saw one of my best lessons. I strive to do more lessons like them but realistically, you can only do that periodically”. This type of comment, which arose frequently among teachers, aligned significantly with the notion of the “dog and pony” show in which all the best tricks, tools and strategies are brought out for the classroom visit, but as teachers pointed out, due to time constraints, it would be virtually impossible to make every lesson of the same caliber. As such, many
teachers commented that the TPA had no real impact on their practice except for the actual day of observation in which they “formalized lesson plans”, “did more paperwork”, “set up the classroom so that it was more ‘collaborative’” and essentially brought out the “bells and whistles” for the appraisal and then “continued to teach, evaluate, and run my classroom in the same manner that I always had”. Any feedback provided, then, was only on what the administrator had observed in that moment. The persistent idea for teachers was that “what happens over a whole semester is much more important than what happens in a single lesson”.

The third element of constructive feedback, for most teacher respondents, was actually the source of the feedback. This heralds the earlier discussion of subjectivity and the limitation of having only one appraiser—who may or may not share subject-matter expertise. Many teachers contended that they would much rather have feedback from colleagues in the field (either a department leader or other members of their department) because “at least that feedback would be on point. How can you give me feedback when you have no understanding of what I am trying to do?”. The other benefit to having colleagues’ input into appraisal, according to many teachers, was that “I don’t need the approval of an administrator who hasn’t been in a classroom for a few years” and who may have been teaching “under an entirely different curriculum when they were in the classroom and that curriculum has changed”. As one teacher expressed, administrators are “so removed from the realities and challenges of teaching that their opinion has little value”. As teachers communicated, to receive feedback in the process of appraisal is critical to determining whether the appraisal could or would have a lasting impact upon their daily practice. Having access to constructive feedback, having that feedback be not just on that which was observed during the classroom visit but a more holistic representation of all that a teacher does, and that the feedback be meaningfully connected to the subject area, context, and experience of that teacher were all factors affecting impact of the appraisal.
Teacher learning. One of the most significant findings of this study is that in order for appraisals to have a lasting impact upon teacher practice, and to meaningfully lead to teacher growth, the process needs to more effectively align with the basic concepts of teacher-preferred learning—“authentic”, “collaborative”, and “ongoing”. Many teachers reported that the appraisal is “inauthentic” and that because it is perceived as an “event” rather than a process, it is effectively disconnected from the work that they do every day. Teacher preparation for a classroom observation, in the context of an appraisal, can be fundamentally different to that of their preparation for a regular day. Teachers are not learning from the appraisal because it stands in isolation from their everyday practice—in time, context, and in relation to their colleagues. The teacher sentiment of having “others in the room” during an appraisal was perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this study. Each of the seven teacher interview participants communicated some variation of a desire to have the appraisal process be collaborative and to engage their colleagues, most notably the department leader, in order to glean specific, meaningful feedback on teaching practice. Christine explained that “we should have a teacher representative and an administrator” to conduct teacher performance appraisal. A similar view was shared by Rose who contended, “I know that there are a number of perspectives we could take” into consideration in an appraisal. Richard’s comments harkened back to a time when the Department Leader could serve as informal mentor, when a teacher “could ask questions” and be given concrete and timely feedback from someone who was teaching the same subject, often having taught many of the same students. Ellen presented a model with similar elements that she believed would expand her learning:

I would appreciate my own peers, rather than an [administrator] because we’re in the classroom, and the [administrators] have been out of the classroom for a few years and they are doing a different sort of job. It might be uncomfortable at first, but I think we could get used to it if someone’s just going to come by for 15 minutes and fill in a rubric or some kind of online checklist…giving one word of one praise and one next step…you might have six people come in and you don’t know who has said what. I can see how something like that being actually beneficial. And, to tell you
the truth, I would have greater respect for the things my colleagues had said, because we have the same students...they really know. That would really help to get that feedback. And, then it’s not coming from above.

Ellen expanded upon her thinking to contend that for her, ultimately, “the most useful is when you get together with a group of teachers and say ‘how did you do this?’ and ‘this is what I did’”. This concept was echoed in Mary’s ideas that “we [get] to sit in on each other’s classes. Just to have that feedback…I think it would be invaluable”. The conversation I had with Martin dove into this concept more extensively and we spoke at length about the possibility of or concerns around one colleague offering constructive feedback to another and that appearing to be evaluative—something that is not only frowned upon in a unionized setting but ultimately cautioned against. Martin contended that:

Amongst ourselves, I don’t really find that to be a big issue. In our department, the office I regularly hang out in, we regularly talk about what we’re doing and ‘have you tried this?’, we don’t always point out like ‘I don’t think you should be doing it this way’, but I would say, ‘can you explain to me why you do it that way?’…for the most part, I think we’re pretty open to that.

Stephen spoke at length about the openness mentioned by Martin. As Stephen explained, the model that has been most effective for moving his practice along has been that of the Student Success School Support Initiative (SSSSI) which offers an opportunity for colleagues to come together to “tackle” a specific student learning need (e.g., problem solving or critical thinking), develop an action plan using current research-based strategies; to implement those strategies and to then reflect on their effectiveness. The SSSSI model includes lengthy collegial discussions as well as frequent visits and observations in each other’s classrooms. As Stephen argued, the ideal model for appraisal would be:

Similar to the [SSSSI] model and it would be ongoing and you would have an actual community [of colleagues]. You would identify yourself and you would know what your areas for improvement were and if you didn’t know, your community would help you to see and improve on those areas.

Each teacher interview participant called for a more collaborative approach to the appraisal process. Each in turn asked for colleague feedback and both formal and informal interactions with other
teachers, particularly those in a shared subject area. This concept was also particularly pronounced in the EPTPA participant responses.

EPTPA participants widely reported that the most significant learning they do is from their colleagues. One teacher communicated how “I get so much more from talking with my colleagues than I ever have from an appraisal”. Another explained: “my professional, informal chats with colleagues influences my classroom teaching practice far more than an appraisal ever has”. Teachers communicated that it was largely the informal interactions with colleagues that allowed them to explore new strategies, consider new ideas, and examine their own practices. As one teacher reported, “I pick up improvement techniques from colleagues and their lesson plans and practices”, while another contended that it is “visiting colleagues in their classrooms” that really ignites a curiosity about alternative strategies or approaches, not just for content but for classroom procedures and practices of engaging students. Another EPTPA respondent communicated a commonly held sentiment that “I enjoy collaborating with staff and students to make changes to my teaching practice. The TPA is just a one-off every 5 years with no impact. Just something on my to-do list”. For the vast majority of teachers, what is essentially absent from the current model of TPA in Ontario, is the opportunity to grow and learn through professional discourse, constructive, specific and timely feedback, within the context of collaboration.

Negative impact. While the vast majority of teacher respondents (to both EPTPA and teacher follow up interviews) reported that the TPA process had little to no impact upon their teaching practice, a small, yet significant, cohort of 9.02% (121 teachers) reported a negative impact. Many comments focused around issues that have been raised earlier such as stress or an absence of constructive feedback, while others presented additional insights. One teacher, for example, communicated, quite succinctly, that the process of the TPA had been “demoralizing” while another described it as “disheartening” and yet another as “demotivating”. Following an appraisal that included significant
criticisms without follow up, one teacher reported: “I felt humiliated, like a complete failure. I questioned my abilities despite support from colleagues, students and parents”. Another teacher commented that due to not receiving any form of feedback, neither positive nor negative, that they had grown very “self-conscious” and began to “question everything I do”. One teacher reported that the lack of follow up support was “defeating” because “I felt like I needed to change things to make them better, but I never received the support or the time to do so”. As a result of the TPA, many teachers felt that their confidence had been shaken—even though they reported having received positive feedback in the past (from both colleagues and administrators). As one teacher described, “[the TPA] made me question practically everything I did. It made me awkward, self-conscious…it made me lose confidence in myself”.

A persistent sentiment, reported by several teachers, was that they had received feedback that they believed to be negative and without merit—feedback that found its way into the summative report. Christine described her experienced in great detail. During her appraisal, Christine was quoted by her appraiser as having said “I treat students like adults” and was told that she needed to “go back and read the Education Act”. In Christine’s own words:

I would never have said that, and I didn’t say that. And, I said to [the administrator], “I’m sure I didn’t say that” and she said “well, that’s what I heard” and that was the end of the discussion. I said to [the administrator], “and what you said in there, that I need to go back and read the Education Act, that’s pretty over the top”. I was pretty upset…I felt her comments were just really unfair. I said to her “I have serious concerns about this. I would like to reply”, and she said, “well, you can reply but it will not get attached to the summative”.

Ultimately, Christine received a “Satisfactory” on that appraisal but she said the situation left her feeling “afraid” and reported that she had “become very fearful” and does not “trust admin anymore”. Her sentiments were echoed by several EPTPA respondents. One teacher reported: “I gave up in some ways [after the appraisal] because it was so disheartening. The criticisms, which felt so unjustified,
made me feel so alone and helpless”. Feelings regarding unfair or unfounded comments and criticisms, throughout the appraisal process, without follow up support or interventions, compelled several teachers to report that they wanted to “find a new career”. For many teachers, the TPA, in its current model, lacks the mechanisms to not only prevent unfair treatment of teachers but to support genuine self-reflection, growth and development.

Summary. The most significant insights to emerge from the experiences of teachers (through both the EPTPA survey and teacher follow up interviews) were (1) that the TPA process is stressful due to an increased workload, a perceived subjectivity of appraisals, the frequent canceling and rescheduling of classroom visits on the part of an administrator, a negative or unsupportive tone of the appraisal as set by the administrator, and the view of the appraisal as a “dog and pony” show; and (2) that the TPA brings about little to no meaningful and sustainable growth in daily teaching practice. The latter is a particularly critical finding as “teacher professional growth” stands as a central objective of the TPA in Ontario.

Administrator Voices

As another major player in the TPA process, it was critical to engage the administrator voice in this study. I believed that as part of the implementation team that facilitates the appraisal through to its completion, administrators have a unique perspective in regards to the limitations and possibilities found within the current TPA policy. I had the opportunity to interview three administrators, Paul, Raymond, and Michelle (each currently serving as a principal in a public secondary school in Ontario). With each, I conducted telephone interviews of 30-45 minutes in duration. Each of these interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed. With each administrator, I had the opportunity for member checking (each received the complete transcript of their respective interview) as well as the chance to exchange emails related to follow up questions that grew from my analysis. In each interview, we discussed administrator training for the TPA process, evidence used to assess teacher performance,
teacher stress, and administrator workload. While the interviews were semi-structured, I had several questions that I asked of each participant, I quickly discovered that each had their own particular areas of focus or concern and, as such, our telephone conversations developed in both interesting and insightful ways. In the following sections, I explore the central findings of my interviews with Raymond, Michelle and Paul which include (1) that the TPA process has not reached its potential as a vehicle for growth, and (2) that the role and duties of the administrator need to be reexamined. Each of these findings is presented here with specific reference to the transcripts of participant interviews.

**On teacher growth through the TPA.** According to each of the three administrator interview participants, the TPA process has not reached its potential as a vehicle for teacher growth and development. Paul summed up his concern, and that of both teachers and administrators, that if he could redesign the TPA, “it wouldn’t be just a one shot. I would be in classrooms more”. To this, Paul referred to the concept so persistently reported by teacher participants that teachers could be “doing the ‘dog and pony show’ and they look fantastic and in reality, they are not”. Teachers bring out their best practices for a scheduled observation visit. Teacher participants argued that this was a source of significant stress but also that it felt inauthentic. Paul’s comments reflect the other side of the coin—the lack of authenticity from the vantage point of the administrator. What is captured during that sometimes brief observation is merely a snapshot, which does not even begin to scratch the surface of what that teacher does in their daily practice, or how they teach when not being observed by another professional. This is problematic not only because it lacks authenticity but also because it lacks girth. As Paul explained, the most significant limitation of the TPA, in regards to moving practice, is that it only happens every five years. As Paul asserted, “every five years? No, I think you need to, if you are doing your job [as a principal], you need to be talking to people all the time. ‘You need to change this’…’you need to consider this’…’you need to move this or that’” so that feedback is ongoing, and in the moment. The difficulty, then, is for administrators to find time to be in the classroom.
For Michelle, concerns around teacher growth as a result of the TPA was that she herself did not feel adequately qualified and supported to provide the differentiated approach to teacher learning that is required. As she described:

> Every teacher is so different. I don’t find that the training [for administrators] ever really helps because there are just too many variables like context, teaching experience, even gender. Every teacher requires some different approach. I wasn’t trained in that and I continue to struggle with it.

Not unlike our students, teachers are learners who have varying degrees of motivation, experience, and learning preferences. One size certainly does not fit all—not when we discuss our students nor when we discuss our teachers. There are some teachers who, based on their responses to the EPTPA survey, describe themselves as “highly motivated”, “eager to grow”, and “constantly looking for ways to improve my practice”, while other teachers communicated the sentiment that “this is how I teach and I’m not going to alter my methods for anybody”. Between this polarity of viewpoints exists a vast spectrum of willingness to both receive and act upon constructive feedback. Each teacher requires something different from their administrator as a coach and supporter of continuous improvement. As Michelle asserted, she felt “ill-prepared” and “inadequately supported” in her efforts to meet the needs of every teacher.

For Raymond, the central issue was the lack of provisions within the TPA to follow up; to go back and support teachers after an appraisal. He communicated his struggle with time and turnover of administrators and argued that the TPA policy did not provide for follow up—for teachers who were assessed as either “Unsatisfactory” or “Satisfactory”. As Raymond explained, he completes the Summative Report and:

> then it goes into a file. I’m leaving it with the teacher. I’m hoping you are going to work on these aspects but I’m knowing that the next [TPA] is not until five years from now. The reality of the changeover between
administrators of a school, most likely, I’m not going to be here next time to do the follow up TPA with you.

Raymond’s sentiments were echoed by Michelle who described her “frustration” with the TPA process. As she explained:

[The TPA] is not a vehicle for growth. I’m not sure how it could be in its current state. I have no time to visit with teachers. No time for real discussion. No time for follow up. We come up with an action plan but I may or not be there to see how the plan has been implemented. I may or may not be there to support growth. In the meantime, I have all of the other teachers in the school that are scheduled for appraisal, including my NTIP (New Teacher Induction Program) teachers. If it’s not your appraisal year, I really don’t have time to monitor your progress.

Perceptions of the TPA as a one-off, once every five years, the lack of provisions for follow up, and inadequate training for administrators to meet the differentiated needs of teachers as learners, were all raised by Paul, Raymond, and Michelle as issues that were integral to the TPA’s restrictions in serving as a vehicle for growth—however, they raised additional issues.

A persistent issue for Michelle was the lack of opportunity within the TPA policy to engage alternate voices in an appraisal. She explained that:

I love the idea of incorporating multiple perspectives into the TPA. I want to hear from students, parents, colleagues, department chairs, anyone I can. But, I don’t have time for that. I look at the classroom observation, I look at the lesson plans, mark books, long term plans and student work. That’s the best I can do.

There are significant weaknesses, or vulnerabilities, in the current model of the TPA in regards to subjectivity and the use of a singular appraiser. Having one appraiser creates opportunities for bias, vindictiveness, or on the benign side, an administrator who may not have subject-matter expertise, or lacking in appraisal experience and knowledge. As Paul argued, “the more eyes the better”. However, subjectivity is only one pitfall of the singular appraiser model. The other is that of voice and accountability. Students who are in the classroom each day with a teacher, parents who have significant interactions with a teacher over time, and, of course, department members and other colleagues who
may be in and out of a teacher’s classroom with a certain degree of frequency have additional perspectives to add to an appraisal of a teacher’s practice. Schools have a responsibility to the families that it serves, and yet there is no provision within the current model of TPA that engages their voices. Each administrator reported that they do, in fact, either seek or are attentive to input from other stakeholders, but that the TPA does not provide for the inclusion of these perspectives in a formal appraisal. Raymond discussed how, when conducting classroom observation visits, “I will talk to some kids and ask some standardized questions: What is it you are learning? How do you know you are understanding it?” but that, generally, he will not formally include insights from colleagues or parents because his “board has not gone that route at all”. Michelle described how she actively seeks out alternate perspectives, from department members, parents and students because “I’m not in the classroom enough to make an accurate assessment on my own.” She added, “I hear things”, but that she has no formalized process for inclusion of that feedback.

Another significant issue raised by administrator participants in regards to the limitations of the TPA as a vehicle for growth is that of the workload associated with the appraisal. Raymond raised the issue twice during his interview and expressed that:

I think the challenges of the process though, and let me just say this, the TPA summative is too damn long. It is way too many pages. There are well over a hundred look-fors. Too much. And, there are some look fors between competencies that I have trouble understanding the differences between them. So, often, I’m thinking, am I just repeating myself?

As Raymond insisted, “it’s overwhelming for the teacher and it’s overwhelming for me as well”.

Michelle also took issue with the amount of paperwork associated with the TPA. She explained that:

The process is onerous. The paper work is ridiculous. I would just prefer to sit and talk with each teacher, but I don’t get to do that. I have to comply with the policy. I have to check the boxes. If I had my way, the summative form would be one page. Input from parents, students, colleagues, and myself would be included. An action plan would be included. Teacher
response would be included, and there would be actual time and resources for follow up.

Each administrator participant expressed their perception that there simply is just not time within the school year to appraise each teacher in the current cycle and follow up with teachers from previous cycles. Raymond explained that:

Next year, at my current school, I believe there are at least 20 teachers who will be scheduled to do a TPA. Well, you divide that amongst your admin team and you are doing a TPA every two weeks. Well, if I’m involved in that so heavily, it’s highly unlikely that I’m going to have a chance to follow up with the teachers I appraised last year because I’m going to be inundated with the process for teachers in the current year.

As Paul explained, at some point in the process, because of time constraints, the onus goes back to the teacher to make the improvements that may have been referenced in an appraisal. He asserted that if:

somebody needs support with assessment, I’m going to give them assessment tools, and go to the Growing Success document…I’m going to hook them up with the tools or an IRT or whatever is necessary and then it’s up to them to get informed.

The difficulty, here, is that while many teachers will have both the discipline and initiative to “keep their learning going” long after the appraisal process has concluded, many will not. The very notion that the TPA process “concludes” is problematic. As all administrator participants argued, it “needs to be ongoing” and “sustained”.

**On the role of the administrator.** The role of the administrator is both complex and multifaceted. Administrators wear many hats and have many, sometimes conflicting, objectives. Principals of a school are charged with the daily supervision of all that occurs within a school building while at the same time mandated with objectives that come from either the district or Ministry, often related to student achievement levels or school environment. Administrators are called upon to be managers and coaches, and yet these two roles can be counterintuitive or conflicting. Management requires a determined expectation of outcomes, with a developed sense of “ideal” inputs that result in those
outcomes; an objective of efficiency and broad compliance. Coaching, in contrast, aims to bring out the best in each individual; tapping into unique skill sets and strengths of individuals in order to support the whole system. Management requires compliance; coaching requires a culture of trust and support.

Instructional leadership is one of the central objectives of the administrator and yet principals have very little actual time in their day to serve in this capacity. Raymond explained that:

The Ministry wants us to be instructional leaders, which is my core purpose, but the reality is the management aspects of the job can become overwhelming when I’m dealing with health and safety, asbestos in a wall, etc. It all takes away from the time that I have to do instructional leadership.

Raymond further asserted that, when he considered his entire portfolio of responsibilities, and reflected upon his use of time, that:

One of my favorite things to do is just to wander around the school. I might stand in doorways for a few minutes so as not to interrupt the lesson but sometimes I’ll go in and sit at a desk while the teacher is teaching and I’ll just listen…but I don’t get to do that nearly as often as I would like to because so many other demands, including meetings either in the school or meetings when I’m pulled out of the school for priorities at the system level.

When each was asked how they would reconfigure their role as administrator, Paul reported, “I would get rid of most of the management stuff”. Michelle, in turn, reported that:

I would change how I spend my time. I’m spending way too much time doing the stuff of a CFO or a health and safety inspector! I want to be in classrooms, working with teachers—giving them opportunities for their own learning—meaningful stuff. I’m forced to be out of the school so often, pulled in so many different directions, putting out fires, I feel like there are some teachers that I could go a full year without having the chance to step into their classroom. Often, more than not, the appraisal is my one real chance to visit a classroom.

Raymond reminisced about a period of time during the previous year during a work-to-rule when administrators in his board were called upon to retrieve paper copies of attendance from each teacher, during each period, of each day. As a result of this unanticipated task, Raymond’s school board canceled all district level meetings and activities for that time. Raymond insisted:
I learned more about what was going on in the school in that one month...than I did the rest of the year. It was only facilitated, though, because so much else was taken off our plates that we were afforded the time and opportunity.

Ultimately, as Raymond contended, to design an appraisal for the purpose of professional growth, “the reality is that you would have to fundamentally change the expectations of the role of an administrator”.

We know that change in teacher practice is a long-term, varying, and not altogether linear, process. We know that teachers fundamentally resist that which is imposed upon them or is perceived as a “top-down”, “we must drink the kool-aid” approach from either the principal, district or Ministry. And yet, administrators are charged with ensuring compliance in broad, province-wide or district level initiatives and procedures. The relationship, then, between teacher and administrator becomes highly complex as the individual evaluating teachers is also intended to be a source of support and encouragement; with time and responsibilities impeding the latter.

**Summary.** Interviews with Raymond, Paul, and Michelle unearthed critical insights into their experiences and perspectives as administrators in regards to the current model of TPA in Ontario. Areas of discussion included issues of types of evidence used in appraisal, focus of observations during classroom visits, paperwork associated with the appraisal process, teacher stress, and administrator workload. Critical deficiencies within the TPA policy and implementation, as reported by these administrators, arose in such areas as a lack of time for meaningful follow up with teachers who were both successful and unsuccessful in the appraisal process, no formal inclusion of alternative perspectives in the appraisal (including colleagues, parents and students), and inadequate training and support of administrators in addressing the varied needs and learning styles of teachers. As such, the primary findings of the data derived from these interviews were that (1) the TPA has not reached its full potential as a vehicle for teacher professional growth, and (2) that the competing and numerous roles and responsibilities of administrators requires a reexamination.
OSSTF Voices

It was my determination that an exploration of the current model of teacher evaluation for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario would not be complete without engaging the voices of the men and women who serve as teacher labour union representatives—the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF). The OSSTF also has a unique perspective in this conversation as they represent individual teachers as they move, either successfully or unsuccessfully, through the process of appraisal. For this study, I had the opportunity to interview four OSSTF representatives, David, James, Laura and Maggie. Each of these individuals responded to my invitation to participate which they had received from the Provincial Executive of the OSSTF. My interviews with David, James, and Maggie were conducted by phone and lasted between 30-45 minutes. Each of these interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed. My interview with Laura, due to constraints in her schedule, was conducted via email with follow up emails for clarification and expansion. While these interviews were semi-structured, I found, as I had with both the teacher follow up interviews and the administrator interviews, that if given the opportunity to do so, the discussions would follow their own unique pathways. With each of David, James, Laura and Maggie, I inquired about their work with teachers and administrators, their relationships with administrators, the experience of supporting a teacher through an Unsatisfactory appraisal result, alternative perspectives involved in the appraisal, the TPA process itself, and teacher learning. From these discussions, three central themes emerged: (1) teachers evaluating teachers, (2) the limitations of the TPA process, and (3) teacher learning.

Teachers evaluating teachers. One of the most interesting, and surprising, findings of the data from my interviews with four OSSTF representatives, David, Laura, James, and Maggie, arose from their expressed concerns regarding teachers evaluating teachers. This was a concept raised by a significant number of EPTPA respondents. Teachers widely reported a preference in having their Department Chair or other department member participate in their appraisal process citing familiarity
with students, strategies, and curriculum directions. When I presented this idea to David, Laura, James, and Maggie, each communicated significant concerns and a determination that they would resist any form of shift in practice that would allow teachers to participate in the evaluation of other teachers.

David contended that he would be “very much against seeing that change”. Maggie reported: “I really struggle with that one”. Laura communicated that “it is the job of the administrator to evaluate”, and James, for his part, asserted, “absolutely not. That would just create problems with personality. You would see a vindictiveness”. David was particularly concerned with the use of Department Chairs in the process of appraisal because he does not believe them to be qualified as appraisers. As he explained, “many of our Heads have very little time in the classroom and many of them are ‘superheads’ and don’t really have any competency” in specific subject areas other than their own. David conceded that:

If we go back to older days…having a ‘Heads period’ so that Heads had time to help out and support, would be fine. I still have a problem with putting Department Heads in the role of evaluator…in schools if you had Department Heads that had been teaching a long time and had competence, that would be fine but the problem I’m seeing is that you don’t have Department Heads who have the expertise.

Maggie echoed the statements of David when she reminisced that:

When I started, I certainly remember my department leaders coming to me with feedback and it’s feedback that I remember to this day…but we don’t really have department heads anymore…you might have leads who are the leads of co-op, art and technology. And it happens to be a Family Studies teacher who may be fantastic at whatever he or she does but really has no understanding of the arts or technology—how could that person be an instructional leader for me? The collegial master teacher feeling is gone.

For Maggie, the main concern, however, was not even subject-matter expertise but that of personalities and dynamics (a point also raised by James). As she explained:

I see too many issues with personalities. Maybe it’s because I’m from an Art background and artists can get really pissy with each other. I think there needs to be a clear delineation between feedback between two colleagues that is professional and feedback that is reporting on someone.
James communicated, with particular emphasis and clarity, the cultural, if not written, understanding among and between teachers, that:

You simply do not talk about each other’s practice. You don’t judge another teacher, even if you know that they are ineffective. Even if you know that what they are doing is detrimental to student learning. You just don’t talk about it.

David, too, in expressing his concern about teachers evaluating teachers, likened it to “ratting out” a colleague who is “not doing well”. These statements speak to a larger issue surrounding the professional, but also unionized, culture of teachers and the rules, albeit often unwritten, that govern interactions between teachers. According to David, Laura, James and Maggie, OSSTF members do not report on each other.

Interestingly, the issues raised by David, Laura, James, and Maggie regarding the use of Department Leaders as participants in the appraisal process—that they often have spent too little time in the classroom, or have been out of the classroom too long, and may be evaluating out of their subject area to provide a meaningful assessment—were the same issues that teachers raised about administrators. The same issues that EPTPA respondents communicated in their concerns about administrators in the current model of TPA of (i.e., reliance on one appraiser instead of multiple inputs, a personality conflict or lack of trust, and a lack of meaningful feedback), were raised by OSSTF representatives in response to the notion of teachers evaluating teachers. At the heart of this finding, however, is that it reflects a significant departure from what teachers reported. Again, teachers reported a preference for having a Department Chair or other department colleague be a part of their appraisal process while each of David, James, Laura and Maggie communicated vehement opposition to the notion. To enhance my understanding of this finding, I contacted members of the OSSTF Provincial Executive to request a statement on the Federation’s official standing on teachers evaluating teachers, but received no response.
**Limitations of the TPA.** Another significant theme that emerged from my discussions with David, James, Laura and Maggie was that of their shared perception that the current model of the TPA holds several distinct limitations. First, as EPTPA respondents had similarly expressed, David, James, Laura, and Maggie each commented on the workload associated with preparation for the TPA. Laura contended “the number of meetings required by the process takes too much teacher time [and the] questions teachers are required to answer before the actual assessment do not add to student engagement or understanding and are therefore unnecessary”. She added “it really is just a time consumer, taking the needed attention from lesson planning and preparation for students”. David explained:

> I know it’s called a ‘process’ but I think it is overly prescribed and daunting. Especially how it is at times applied by administrators…things like the Log of Teaching practice, which should be optional. I’ve had administrators come in and almost demanding that it be done. I say “no, it’s an optional part”.

For Maggie, the TPA process is “a check-box exercise”. For James, the process is “burdensome. A huge amount of work and stress, and for what?”

Second, OSSTF representatives communicated a concern that the process lacks authenticity. As Laura argued, “the current TPA is a show because the teacher is required to provide documentation and lesson plans that are extraordinary rather than a realistic window into the classroom on a day-to-day basis”. Maggie contended that the TPA process is “not an opportunity for a teacher and an administrator to sit down and talk pedagogy”. She explained that, as a teacher, “dialogue is way more important to me than coming into my classroom and checking of boxes on a list”. These comments bore similarities to David’s concern that the TPA in its current form is an event, not a process. As he explained:

> [Teachers] see administrators come in, they are trying to do this in a real quick fashion, ‘we’ve got to get this done because we’re behind’. This is where I get brought in because [the administrator] ends up not following the process and people don’t get supported and it becomes artificial.
As David further explained, the TPA is a “snap shot” and an inauthentic one, at that. He described how:

Teachers feel that this [process] is not really reflective of what [they are] doing because we all come up with the ‘master lesson’ just to impress the principal that’s coming in. So you’ve got all the bells and whistles that come out just for that one lesson…it’s just not really indicative [of daily practice].

A lack of authenticity within the TPA process was also a persistent notion reported by EPTPA respondents. Too quick, too much paperwork, and too little feedback, as James explained, “makes the TPA nothing more than a show. No real learning results from all that stress and preparation”.

The third area of concern raised by OSSTF participants in regards to limitations found within the current model of TPA was that of the qualifications of the administrator to conduct appraisals. This was an issue also raised by teachers who responded to the EPTPA survey and during the teacher follow up interviews. There were essentially points of contention: (1) administrators may not have spent very long in the classroom as a teacher, or (2) that they may have been out of the classroom for a significant length of time (i.e., since prior to a curriculum update) and (3) that the administrator is evaluating a teacher in a subject area for which they are unfamiliar. All three of these scenarios have been reported as creating stress and misunderstanding, while also raising questions of perceived credibility, throughout the appraisal process. Laura mentioned that, in her experience, these scenarios lead to a teacher’s approach being misunderstood, and looked upon unfavorably, or a lack of “specific suggestions to help the teacher make changes or improvements in his or her teaching process”. David proposed that principals and vice-principals should have to “spend more time, there would have to be a longer period of time that they would have to spend in the classroom to have that competence” in order to more accurately and meaningfully make an assessment of teacher performance. David also raised the issue of subject-matter expertise when he suggested that “if [as a principal] I’m having to go into a classroom to evaluate a French teacher, maybe bring someone else in to do it that has that background”. James spoke at length about scenarios that he has encountered as a Grievance Officer in which a teacher
was being criticized for their approach or use of particular strategies by a principal, and have received an “Unsatisfactory” result on their TPA, because the principal “just didn’t get it. Just didn’t see what they were trying to do, and didn’t, incidentally, engage in conversation to really find out”. David described a situation in which he was called in to support a teacher who was, as it appeared, likely to receive an “Unsatisfactory” result on his TPA:

This administrator has some concerns about classroom management, lesson planning, and the like. The member doesn’t see these issues as being issues. And, based on a lot of evidence I have, he has some different ways of doing things. It’s a little complicated in the sense that he is a man who is First Nations. And he has a different perspective from the point of view of how the system should be run. I have to agree with him on some of those issues from the degree of health, how students are supported or not supported. He also has a lot of background in counseling, namely with students who are going through very serious problems like substance abuse and he’s done a lot of that. So, he’s got a lot of that background and he’s got a guidance background. I think at times that becomes central to him even though he’s not in that role. So in the classroom, he’s been accused of “diagnosing” kids and giving them advice. That has put him at loggerheads with the administration. They are saying, “that’s not really your job. You need to pass them on to social workers, and guidance people, and what not”. And so he thinks, as he sees it, that he doesn’t have issues. He believes he is a good teacher. And, I think he is a good teacher.

The situation that David described appears to not be entirely unusual. The complexities and contextual nuances of teaching prevent it from “looking” any one particular way. Administrators, who may or may not have spent much time in their own classroom, or who have been out of the classroom for a significant length of time, or, as often reported, are evaluating out of their subject area, may simply not understand what it is they are seeing during a classroom observation visit. Maggie proposed that “there still needs to be much better training of administrators and I think that there needs to be more than one administrator a part of [appraisals]”. Laura recalled a scenario in which “a Science teacher was doing their appraisal and the administrator was not trained in Science. This particular administrator thought the Science teacher was doing things incorrectly. Fail. Anyone can get an ‘Unsatisfactory’ appraisal. It is too subjective”. She argued that:
A true evaluation would involve an administrator who is qualified in the particular subject area that not only knows the curriculum, but can relate to the current state of the education process as far as student hurdles are concerned. This is truly lacking in the [current] evaluation process.

These were concepts that were also raised by both EPTPA respondents and teachers in follow up interviews. As David insisted:

I have seen problems with the TPA in the past, where teachers have felt that the administrator didn’t have the competence, and these have usually resulted in an “Unsatisfactory” for the TPA. They feel they haven’t been given their proper due process. I don’t know if there is a perfect process but maybe having two people [instead of just one].

As James asserted, “more eyes means more perspectives which should lead to a more fair assessment”.

Ultimately, issues raised around both the competency and preparedness of administrators to conduct appraisals became a matter of outcomes. Maggie, David, James, and Laura all reported that the TPA process is lacking in its capacity to serve as a vehicle for teacher learning.

**Teacher learning.** As a central objective of the TPA, teacher growth and development was raised as a particular concern to EPTPA respondents, teacher interview participants, and OSSTF representatives David, Laura, James, and Maggie. Trust and time were both raised as critical factors in creating and fostering conditions for teacher learning. David explained as follows: “the effectiveness for any professional is to feel like they have that unstructured time to have those conversations, to have PD that is directed entirely by them. Great teachers can be cultivated and great teaching can be cultivated”.

David further explained that the TPA process fails to recognize that teachers need substantial time not only to examine their current teaching practice but to also explore alternatives. As he described:

The problem I see is that we’re not being given the time we need to do the job properly and people are breaking down because the plate is too piled up and I think that’s where we’re burning out…much of that could be solved by providing more support and compassion with proper resources.

The TPA process provides for specific timelines for each step (e.g., an Improvement Plan, following an Unsatisfactory result, must be developed and implemented within 15 school days and a 2nd appraisal
must be scheduled within 60 days of the last Summative Report) which may or may not suit the learning needs of the specific teacher. Also, within the TPA, pre- and post-observation meetings are required but time and context are not stipulated, which creates a variance in length and tone for each teacher (i.e., some will have extensive discussions with their administrator that are unstructured while others will have either limited to no discussion; just a “check in”). The TPA is limiting in regards to time for real investigation and reflection; both critical for sustainable teacher learning. As David remarked, “my best practices in teaching have been gleaned from Heads who had time to sit down with me and work through and be a good mentor…[but] we are not given the time”. Maggie argued that the real learning she has witnessed in her board has been through, not the TPA but, collaborative learning communities of teachers but thought, ultimately, that even “they weren’t effective because it ended up being not enough time to really sit down and work through ideas”.

One persistent argument made by OSSTF participants was that teacher learning needs to be collaborative. The TPA process often occurs in isolation from one’s colleagues. Laura argued: “I feel that teachers should be supported and instructed by their peers in order to improve”. As James contended:

It is the informal discussions, or even the formalized activities, between colleagues, where you’ll find the real learning. You’ve developed relationships with your colleagues. They know the work that you do. They know your personality. They spend far more time with you than any administrator ever does.

As James explained, trust is crucial in a scenario for learning. Administrators, due to time constraints and other responsibilities, may stand at arm’s length from daily teacher practice and interactions. They often do not have the opportunity to cultivate the depth of relationship trust that would support teachers in identifying and developing in their weaknesses. The other side to this discussion, of course, is that administrators are not considered “Lead Teachers” but rather, as both James and Maggie asserted, “Managers”. The professional distance between administrators and teachers, coupled with the
implication that administrators hold authority over teacher employment decisions (i.e., promotion or termination), prevents teachers from acknowledging their own weaknesses and seeking support or resources; hence, the “dog and pony” show. Colleagues, on the other hand, can be an invaluable source of support in growth and development because of both proximity and the absence of a perceived threat.

**Summary.** OSSTF representatives David, James, Laura and Maggie, offered critical insights into their experiences and perceptions of the current model of the TPA in Ontario. Through interviews with them, three central themes emerged: (1) teachers evaluating teachers, (2) qualifications and preparedness of administrators, and (3) teacher learning. The limitations of the TPA were discussed at length with factors including teacher workload and preparation, administrator qualifications in the performance appraisal, as well as issues of trust and time in supporting sustainable, authentic growth and development in teacher practice. The most surprising finding from their data was the issue of teachers evaluating teachers. This was a persistently communicated teacher preference, to have their Department Leader or other colleagues as part of the appraisal, and yet was staunchly opposed by OSSTF participants. Otherwise, findings revealed that there are critical similarities expressed through the vantage point of OSSTF representatives and that of teacher and administrator participants—most notably that the TPA has not yet reached its potential as a vehicle for teacher growth and development.
Chapter VI: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter provides an analysis and thematic discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. From an examination of the current model of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario, through the lived experiences of teachers, administrators, and OSSTF representatives, as well as an exploration of the policy itself, several limitations emerged. The most significant limitations of the current model of TPA in Ontario, as indicated by the findings of this study, are that it: (1) presupposes a narrow view of teaching; (2) is inconsistent in implementation; (3) has conflicting objectives; and (4) does not serve as a vehicle for teacher growth. Each of these limitations holds significant possibility for a reconsideration of current supervisory assessment practices for experienced teachers in Ontario schools and each is presented here with specific reference, where appropriate, to both current and seminal literature.

A Narrow View of Teaching

As the data from this study revealed, the current model of the TPA in Ontario imposes a rationalized and distinctly narrow view of teaching. Largely, the TPA presupposes, what was previously presented as, a Rational-Behaviorist approach to teaching and teacher learning. It is appropriate to return here to Ornstein and Hunkins (2013) in their determination that an “external force” (i.e., the TPA policy) could bring about change (i.e., bring about teacher growth through the evaluation process) in teachers as learners (p. 93). Teaching, as a construct within the process and in the instruments used to assess teachers through the TPA, is essentialized in a list of 16 competencies in five domains with over 100 “look-fors”. The complexities of teaching, in changing contexts, in different subject assignments, and of course, with consideration of the variance in regional contexts, are not acknowledged in the TPA. The prevailing belief within the policy, in its current form, is that “we’ll know good teaching when we see it”. This is fundamentally problematic as “good teaching” is not monolithic, and, frankly, “the experienced professional teacher [is] a complex individual doing very complicated work in a
sometimes stressful, sometimes rewarding, always uncertain and dynamic variety of settings” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p. 75). In regards to teaching and learning, the current model of the TPA presupposes that: (a) all teaching is alike and will be identifiable to all appraisers; (b) identifying shortcomings in teaching will necessarily lead to change in teacher practice; and (c) that teaching can be accurately assessed apart from school culture and context. Each of these presuppositions is presented in the following section.

The current model of the TPA is predicated on a belief that all teaching is alike. Through the Ontario College of Teachers’ (OCT) Standards for Professional Practice, teaching in Ontario has been defined through competencies. There is significant criticism surrounding this approach. Broad and Evans (2006) presented a variety of viewpoints critical of using standards as an assessment benchmark for teacher performance including that it is “technicist”, that there are “far too many items” within the competencies (i.e., the “look fors”), and that generally the practice “over[emphasizes] teaching and under[emphasizes] student learning” (p. 18). One dilemma in standards-based assessment of teaching lies in the ambiguity, and subjectivity, of those standards. Since 2001, Ontario, through its Educational Quality and Accountability (EQAO) branch, has used broad-based standardized testing of literacy and numeracy for students in grades 3, 6, 9 and 10, with the grade ten literacy test serving as a graduation requirement for secondary students. Intensive efforts on behalf of the Ministry of Education in Ontario through the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat have resulted in wide-scale initiatives, employing “research-based” strategies to enhance student achievement scores in EQAO testing. School districts have channeled Ministry funds for the purpose of improving teacher practice around those research-based strategies. The result, in regards to the TPA, is that administrators, and districts, may view “good” teaching with substantial variance. While teachers are not required, through their collective agreements, to implement any or all of these strategies, Board and School Improvement Plans, along with teacher Annual Learning Plans (as linked to the TPA) have a pronounced “thou shalt” tone. The implication is:
good teachers use these strategies. According to Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983), this reflects a “labor” view of teaching work in which “teaching activities are rationally planned, programmatically organized, and routinized in the form of standard operating procedure” (p. 290). From this vantage point, of considering teaching to be a form of labor rather than a profession, administrators are called upon to “inspect” teachers work by monitoring lesson plans, classroom performance and performance results (Darling-Hammond, Wise & Pease, 1983). In this view of teaching, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), teachers are “people to be trained and developed. They are not viewed as people who can and should develop themselves” (p. 3). In a more holistic view of teaching, however, as argued by Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999), “teachers are professionals precisely because they operate under conditions of inherent uncertainty, and chance” (p. xiii). Experienced teachers who resist or deny the use of ministry or district prescribed research-based strategies, and instead rely on the practices and processes they themselves have developed over time and through experimentation, may be perceived, and consequently rated, as being ineffective. This undercurrent runs in conflict with teacher professional autonomy.

Teaching is an entirely complex professional practice. Guskey and Huberman (1995) proffered that professional development and, indeed, teacher evaluation, needs to be “reconceptualized” so that “it becomes fundamentally integrated into the essence of teaching and being a teacher” (p. 253). Traditionally, as argued by Guskey and Huberman (1995), teaching was “comparatively stable and less complex than it is today” and was significantly more about “the transmission of knowledge, skills, habits and culture” (p. 254). Today, what is demanded of teachers is a far more dynamic, integrated, nuanced approach to teaching which address the needs of the whole student, both psychological and cognitive, and the intricacies of the student as an active participant of knowledge construction, rather than a passive recipient of knowledge transmission. As Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) argued:
As we learn more about how students learn and insist that students master more complex knowledge and develop greater capabilities for problem solving, teaching by telling is replaced (or should be replaced) by ‘teaching for understanding’...the latter is much more difficult for teachers but much more effective for students (p. 132)

The capacity, and freedom, then, for teachers to make decisions regarding the needs of their students is tantamount to professionalism, and yet these decisions can fall in conflict with ministry initiatives and administrator preference. Autonomy in making professional choices and exercising professional judgement are critical yet are not adequately provided for within the current TPA model.

A substantial body of research has warned us against clumping all teaching and teachers into the same bundle (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; and Hammerness et al., 2005 as cited in Broad & Evans, 2006). Teaching exists upon a continuum of careers and pathways while also existing within the vast variance of context. The current model of the TPA, however, does not provide for such differentiation among teachers. Teachers are not all alike. They differ in critical ways such as how they learn, how they process change, how they receive constructive feedback, and how they interact with new ideas. It is a central finding of this study that the process of the TPA provides neither the time nor the resources to support a distinction in teacher learning style, needs or preferences. Similarly, not every research-based teaching strategy is appropriate for every student or every learning scenario, nor, of course, for every teacher. Teachers bring myriad skills and dispositions to their work that may bode well for particular teaching contexts while not being appropriate to others (i.e., what works in a grade 9 Locally Developed class is not necessarily translatable to a grade 12 University-level course, or an adult learning centre). There is simply no “one best way” of teaching. Wise and Darling-Hammond (1984), who explored two major conceptions of teaching, both bureaucratic and professional, argued that “bureaucratic evaluation” such as the TPA, “relies on administrators to assess teachers in a standard manner using general criteria [and] these attributes, intended to ensure reliability, limit the relevance and utility of evaluation for most teachers and many purposes” (p. 30). They argued that this type of
evaluation, for “minimal competence” which “reduces [teaching] to a list of teacher behaviors that nearly all teachers except the incompetent will exhibit,” does not attend to “elements of creativity or innovation in teaching; to aspects of student motivation beyond the ability to induce compliance with work requirements; or to the multiple, long-term consequences for students of the overall classroom experience” (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1984, p. 30). The TPA, in its current form, however, does not allow for such variance, neither in teaching nor teachers, nor does it provide for administrators to be adequately prepared to recognize, understand, and support, variances in teaching, and teacher learning, approaches.

The TPA further presupposes that identifying shortcomings in teacher practice will necessarily result in change; that compliance with the TPA will bring about growth. Teaching, and consequently teacher development, however, are far more complex than acknowledged within the TPA. The TPA, as is viewed by teachers, administrators, and OSSTF representatives, is effectively an “event” rather than a process. Lack of time, during appraisal, and certainly a lack of opportunity for meaningful follow up, places the TPA in isolation from daily teaching practice and the learning culture within schools. It is separate from the daily work of teachers and, as is the experience of the vast majority of teachers in this study, it is a one-off event from which they gain precious little insight into their teaching practice. As many study participants reported, preparation for the appraisal observation visit is unique to preparation for a regular day. The “dog and pony” show elements of the implementation of the TPA demonstrate that teachers are not viewing the appraisal process as an integrated part of their daily work life, and as a result, it holds little meaning to their current teaching practice or future quest for improvement. One of the most significant factors reported by teacher participants for this lack of connection is that there simply does not appear to be, in the vast majority of teacher experience, any consequences or effects of either a “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” appraisal. It is an event that occurs and is not adequately addressed again until the next cycle. This lack of accountability raises questions regarding the role
performance appraisal might play as one process that impacts teacher motivation for growth and
development.

The results of this study indicated that the TPA does not necessarily bring about growth and
development in teacher performance because it fails to provide the conditions for teacher learning.
Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) addressed the four possible outcomes of professional development
including: (1) greater awareness; (2) attitude change; (3) skill development; and (4) consistent and
appropriate use of newly acquired knowledge. They argued that “only the last outcome, using new
knowledge, is linked to student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999, p. 136). The TPA
provides for a post-observation meeting during which administrators should be sharing concrete and
specific feedback on teacher practice. Together, teachers and administrators are to then set goals for
development related to identified areas for growth. The administrator, then, is intended to provide the
time, resources, and supervision to support each teacher in meeting their individualized goals. These
were the intentions for the implementation of the TPA process. The realities, however, are in stark
contrast to the intent. In order to move through awareness into attitude change, and so forth, requires a
degree of support and trust that is simply not being extended to all teachers in Ontario. Without follow
up and ongoing supervision, and certainly in the absence of concrete, relevant and timely feedback,
connected to daily practice, many teachers are not experiencing the supervisory conditions necessary
for growth.

The isolating conditions of the TPA lies not simply within its separation from daily practice but
also in separation from other teachers. The rhetoric of the TPA which purports the establishment of
“learning communities [in schools] characterized by shared values and a shared sense of purpose” and
with all staff engaging in “disciplined inquiry and continuous improvement” in “a culture of sharing,
trust, and support” stands in stark conflict with the prescriptive nature of a TPA process grounded in a
clinical observation model with a single appraiser (Technical Manual, 2010, p. 7). The TPA policy is,
as expected, a singular policy that exists in an arena with a vast array of other policies regulating the school system in Ontario. It stands often in competition and conflict with policies that regulate how teachers spend their time in schools and priorities of accountability to education stakeholders (e.g., use of province-wide standardized testing for students). While the policy of the TPA cannot be considered entirely separate from those other policies, as an entity of its own it fails to integrate teaching, and teacher learning, into the broader teaching cultures of schools.

The current model of the TPA presupposes that teacher performance can be judged apart from school culture and context. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) argued that “if we want to understand what the teacher does and why, we must therefore also understand the teaching community [and] the work culture of which that teacher is a part” (p. 217). Fessler (1995) proposed two types of influences impacting teacher performance, personal environment and organizational environment. Within the organizational environment, critical forces are at play that shape and effect the ways in which teachers carry out their work. As McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) determined, organizational environments differ across three kinds of department and school professional communities: “weak communities”, “strong traditional communities of practice” and “teacher learning communities” (p. 69). They further asserted that “teacher learning communities break the rule of professional privacy that commonly keeps high school communities weak” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 91). The environment in which teachers work can place enormous value upon experimentation, improvement, and collaboration. The converse, a “weak” community, is an environment that is isolating, proprietary, and static. To evaluate teachers, then, is to also evaluate the environment in which they work. As Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) contended, “too often [teachers] asked to learn new things they cannot act on because there is no organization commitment” (p. 144). The current model of the TPA, does not acknowledge the distinction in environments in which Ontario teachers work (whether they belong to a “weak” community, “strong traditional” community of practice or a “teacher learning” community), nor does it
provide for the development and support of the type of community that would effectively, and sustainably, grow teacher practice. This determination aligns with McDonnell and Elmore’s (1987) proposed four categories of policy instruments. The TPA policy created mandates for compliance in implementation but failed to support either capacity building (in administrators and teachers) or system-changing, to create environments that are designed and equipped to more readily support teacher growth and development.

**Inconsistency in TPA Implementation**

As the results of this study indicate, the TPA is not being implemented with consistency across Ontario. Rigor, frequency and duration of classroom observation visits, presence or absence of constructive feedback during appraisal, scope and types of evidence used in forming an assessment of teacher performance, tone and depth of pre and post meetings, all exist along a broad spectrum—often within the very same school. The impact of inconsistencies within the TPA is that: (1) the process lacks accountability to education stakeholders; (2) the process cannot be deemed fair and equitable for all teachers; and (3) the effectiveness of the appraisal cannot be accurately measured.

**Lack of accountability.** One of the primary objectives of the TPA is that it “provides a measure of accountability to the public” (Technical Manual, 2010, p. 5). Indeed, the public is deserving of assurances that its education system is effectively serving the province’s young people. Problematic, however, is that without consistency, some teachers in Ontario are being held to a higher standard than others, and others still are performing at inadequate levels and yet continue to teach in Ontario classrooms. Accountability rests in two spheres: (1) raising and maintaining high standards of performance; and, (2) the removal of incompetent or ineffective teachers. Consistency is vastly diminished at the school level by a variety of factors related to the TPA, including the subjectivity or lack of preparedness on the part of the administrator, limitations in time and resources to support
teacher learning (including administrator workload), a lack of oversight, and a hesitation on the part of the administrator and the district to go down the path of termination. Each of these factors places a significant burden on the process of appraisal and creates conditions under which doubt may be cast upon its integrity.

In a discussion of Ontario’s TPA, public perception cannot be ignored. The process has the appearance of a low stakes enterprise. Not only does the TPA policy not contain provisions to either reward or promote exceptional teachers, but it frequently fails in its efforts to identify weaknesses and or to remove the teachers who are consistently ineffective. Inconsistencies in implementation only serve to exacerbate these conditions. A primary issue in this is the lack of preparedness, as well as the subjectivity, on behalf of the administrator as the sole appraiser in a TPA. Bowers and White (2014) examined school growth trajectories in Illinois by considering the impact of such factors as principal qualifications and experience. Based on their findings, Bower and White (2014) determined that “principal training, principal experience as a principal and an assistant principal, and experience of the principal as a teacher…are significantly related to school proficiency growth over time” (p. 705). Such findings reinforce the limitations of an appraisal process that fails to provide for distinctions in the quality and credibility of the appraiser. As the instructional leader in the school, and the individuals tasked with teacher evaluation, administrators must in turn be supported, trained, and sufficiently equipped to develop teachers through appraisal—however, not all administrators are created equal. For the TPA process to serve in its “accountability function”, administrators must be fit to serve in the capacity of appraiser. As noted by Range, Duncan, Day Scherz and Haines (2012), “the primary method by which principals influence student achievement is by helping teachers improve their practice” (p. 303). Deficiencies in administrator performance, and capacity in instructional leadership, must be attended to, if the TPA process is to escape reproach.
The other branch in the discussion of a lack of accountability within the TPA process is the effectiveness with which the policy provides for the removal of ineffective teachers. As determined by Range, Duncan, Day Scherz, and Haines (2012), “incompetent teachers present a host of problems for school and district leaders, such as producing poor student achievement results, distracting other faculty members, and consuming large amounts of administrative time” (p. 304). Range et al. (2012) further contended that while effective teaching remains an “elusive” concept, ineffective teaching is substantially more objective. They presented a series of “common traits” of incompetence in teachers such as:

1. Continue to accumulate small mistakes (i.e., a disregard for school norms)
2. Exhibit low commitment
3. Develop poor student relationships
4. Low student achievement
5. Excessive parent, student, and colleague complaints
6. Weak classroom management skills
7. Poor lesson implementation
8. Lack of student progress (Range et al., 2012, p. 305)

Range et al. (2012) argued that accountability through appraisal is significantly diminished because the process of establishing incompetency has a “tremendous amount of bureaucratic hurdles that must be cleared” and involves “frequent observations, detailed documentation, and a burden of proof on administrators to show a reasonable effort was made to remedy deficiencies” (p. 307). As previously discussed, through the TPA policy within the context of schools and unions, with administrators whose roles are already overly taxed, it is entirely possible that incompetent teaching is left unaddressed.

**Equity and fairness within the TPA.** A significant outcome of the inconsistencies found within the implementation of the TPA resides in areas of equity and fairness for teachers. Two primary objectives of the TPA, in addition to accountability, is to “promote teacher development” and to “provide meaningful appraisals of teachers’ performance that encourage professional learning and growth” (Technical Manual, 2010, p. 5). Each of these objectives is substantively threatened by a lack of fairness and equity found with inconsistencies in how teachers are appraised, across the province,
within school districts, and amongst colleagues within the same school. A central finding of this study is that many teachers in Ontario are experiencing significant stress and a large faction of teacher participants reported that they had either (a) observed colleagues being called upon to making either more or less preparation for their appraisal process, and (b) considered that the amount of preparation required of them during an appraisal was contingent upon which appraiser had been assigned to them. These findings aligned with those of Larsen (2009) who, in her investigation of the TPA policy in Ontario, determined that:

Of the 25 teachers interviewed, 10 had their post-observation meeting within one week, 7 within two weeks and the rest had to wait more than 3 weeks. In some cases, the post-observation meetings were not held and/or there was virtually no follow up or support once the process was over. A number of comments indicated teachers’ irritation with not having received their reports back many months after their classroom observation.

Larsen (2009) concluded that for teachers in Ontario, the appraisal process lacked consistency. She reported that:

The various ways that performance appraisals are being carried out in terms of paperwork expectations, post-observation procedures, and use of the rating system suggests that it does not provide for a fair [and consistent] teacher evaluation as stated in the [TPA] policy objectives (Larsen, 2009, p. 25)

Larsen’s (2009) findings were significant to this present study because they were based on data collected in 2006-2007, which suggests that consistency has not been a notable area of improvement in the implementation of the TPA over the past eight years. Larsen (2009) further contended at that time, and yet entirely relevant today, that:

There is a sense of frustration concerning the inconsistency in how the appraisal process is being conducted and with the fact that some evaluators are taking the ALP, student and parent surveys into account in assessing their teachers while others are not. Further, in a handful of cases there are some unethical practices taking place ranging from teachers being required to complete their own checklists and even write their own summative reports, to teachers being told by their vice/principals to involve themselves in extra-curricular activities because it is their evaluation year (p. 25)
Consistency in the implementation of the TPA lends credibility to the process. Larsen (2009) in her study of the TPA policy in Ontario, asserted:

The importance of teachers seeing their colleagues evaluated according to a consistent and fair set of standards and criteria. The more teachers perceived the evaluation system to be consistent, the more likely they will view it as being just, equitable and fair [which lends the process legitimacy] (p. 25).

Teachers who experience stress during the appraisal process, due to increased workload and demands placed on them by their administrator, that appear to be unique to the comparative experience of their colleagues, or those who experience a “laid back”, “checking boxes” attitude from their administrator during an appraisal, are significantly less likely to reveal their weaknesses and to seek support. A deterioration in trust, experienced by many teachers in this study, in regards to their relationship with their administrator, because they believe they have been unfairly appraised, diminishes the TPA’s role in promoting teacher growth. Fairness and consistency are critical to effective assessment practices and the equitable, and ultimately meaningful, implementation of the TPA, and are, at this time, severely lacking.

**Measuring the effectiveness of the TPA.** As a result of inconsistencies in the implementation of the TPA, not simply on the part of the administrator, but also in the resources and time devoted to making the process a priority in school districts, reduces the effectiveness of the process in meetings its objectives for teacher growth and development in that they cannot be accurately measured. Without stringent standards and objective oversight of implementation, it is unlikely that any value-added associated with the TPA policy on teacher performance, and indeed, student achievement in Ontario schools could be determined. It is the experience of a strong majority of teacher participants in this study, and similarly reported by administrators, that the TPA process is being implemented without consistency, and in many cases, without rigor or depth. Teachers describe the process as a “one-off” that holds little influence and has little impact upon their daily practice. Occurring once every five
years, and without meaningful follow up in the interim, it would be difficult to assert that the TPA is growing teacher practice in Ontario. It is entirely possible, however, that the actual effects of the TPA upon teacher practice have been, albeit unintended, quite negative.

The TPA in Ontario, as it is experienced by teachers in this study, creates stress, increased workload, and a lack of confidence (in both self and in administrator). While not intended outcomes of the TPA, those negative experiences cannot be disregarded. The lack of consistency in implementation of the TPA creates animosity, diminished autonomy, and a belief that the intentions of the policy are punitive rather than growth-oriented. Those unintended outcomes of the TPA policy prevent teachers from fully experiencing conditions that are critical to professional learning. As such, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which, if any, positive outcomes of the TPA process make their way into Ontario’s classrooms and positively impact student learning experiences.

The Dueling Objectives of the TPA

Accountability and growth are conflicting goals within the TPA policy. While these two objectives are not necessarily counterintuitive, the findings of this study revealed that in its current form the TPA is creating binary responses. Teachers are bringing out their best practices for their appraisal. The tone of the evaluation, and frequently limited interactions with administrators, make many teachers unwilling to share their weaknesses or areas of concern. Principals are “checking the boxes” but have, generally, neither the expertise nor the time and resources to support follow up which results in a lack of substantive teacher growth. While there are many factors impacting the implementation of performance appraisal in Ontario, one critical area of concern is that through the TPA, the Ministry of Education has engaged dueling objectives.

In his study of teacher development and appraisal, Gleave (1997) warned that the conflicting objectives of both accountability and teacher growth within the context of appraisal, “has led to great confusion and frustration for teachers and administrators” (p. 269). As Gleave (1997) contended, the
role of the administrator in appraisal is ambiguous, and that while “supervision as development leadership supports teachers in studying and learning from their own experience”, supervision as management appraisal “seeks to ensure that organization goals and expectations are attained, [and] performance standards are measured” (p. 270). Related to this point, the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) as a required component of the TPA in Ontario is a precise example. Teachers must complete an ALP during the first term of each new school year. The ALP is designed for teachers to reflect upon and communicate their goals for the current year (with a timeline, action plan, and defined success criteria). As an accountability function of the TPA, the ALP must be submitted to an administrator within the determined timeframe. This piece of the TPA process communicates system goal setting. As a learning tool, however, the ALP in its implementation fails to acknowledge differences among teachers and holds an expectation that teacher learning goals are effectively connected to either Board Improvement Plans (BIPSA) or School Improvement Plans (SIPSA). Effectively, the ALP does not make individual teacher learning a priority but rather emphasizes teacher compliance with school and board priorities. As a teacher learning tool, then, the ALP is inadequate because it holds conflicting objectives. The findings of this study also reinforce this notion. Teacher growth through appraisal is stalled in the absence of a clear purpose for the TPA. The primary concerns, of dueling objectives within the TPA in Ontario, are that: (1) the relationship between teacher-administrator is obscured; and (2) boards are compelled to make difficult decisions regarding budget allocations to serve both accountability and development functions.

**Administrators as both managers and instructional leaders.** In their exploration of the relationship between appraisal and teacher growth, Santiago and Benavides (2009) determined that there are effectively two main functions of performance appraisal: the “improvement function” and the “accountability function” (p. 7). As such, according to these authors:
When the evaluation is oriented towards the improvement of practice within schools, teachers are typically open to reveal their weaknesses, in the expectation that conveying that information will lead to more effective decisions on developmental needs and training. However, when teachers are confronted with potential consequences of evaluation on their career and salary, the inclination to reveal weak aspects is reduced [and the] improvement function is jeopardized. (Santiago & Benavides, 2009, p. 8)

Identifying weaknesses in practice is critical to the process of teacher development but this requires conditions of trust and support, as well as clarity in how information may be used. Teacher learning also requires a growth-minded culture; all teachers can and should be learning, mistakes are not only inevitable but valuable, and there is, indeed, strength in collaboration. When an appraisal process, such as the TPA, holds accountability as one of its primary objectives, the relationship between teacher and administrator becomes that of manager and employee; teachers are less likely to look to their administrator as an instructional leader. An emphasis on meeting standards, compliance, and the execution of predictable, observable skills, undermines the innovation and creativity that characterizes teaching as a profession, and places significant strain on the relationship between a teacher and administrator. In this regard, the expectation that administrators be both managers and instructional leaders is both regrettable and ultimately flawed.

An administrator, when tasked with evaluation of teachers and with monitoring compliance within the school building, cannot simultaneously foster the affective relationships, for which Price (2012) was most emphatic. In her study of effective schools and the impact of principal-teacher relationships upon school climate, Price (2012) determined that “trust is the bedrock to building and sustaining” positive school climates and that school climates “influence teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions, which in turn influence their teaching abilities” (p. 69). A significant part of building that trust, between teachers and their administrators, is frequent, consistent, and positive interactions. As communicated by the participants in this study, there are very limited opportunities for teachers to interact with their administrators and to discuss pedagogical approaches. As is the reality of the TPA
implementation, a scheduled observation for the purposes of appraisal is frequently the lone occasion for administrators to visit and spend time in classrooms. Deeper discussions of pedagogy and classroom practices are effectively reserved for pre and post observation meetings during an appraisal year. With significant teacher anxiety regarding appraisals, and the undercurrent of threatened ramifications for a poor appraisal result, teachers are less likely to perceive their administrators as a source of support and resources. Fullan (1995) described the significance of the culture of a school, and the role of leadership, in the development of teacher practice. He contended that “continuous learning must be organically part and parcel of the culture of the school” and that learning should be regarded as “increasing one’s ability” rather than merely a means to spotlight inadequacies (p. 258). Conditions of learning are a critical element to the TPA being effective as a vehicle for growth. The burden placed on administrators to be both manager and instructional leader, blur the lines in the relationships between teachers and their administrators. This aspect of the dueling objectives, of both accountability and teacher growth through supervision, as they exist within the current policy of TPA, are highly problematic.

**Human and capital resources.** One of the most critical areas of concerns in regards to the conflicting objectives within the TPA in its current form, is the limitations of time and other critical resources. As has been discussed in previous sections, administrators hold complex, multi-objective roles that require a certain element of triage in order to carry out tasks. To assess the challenges of administrator workload, and the degree and prioritization of their daily tasks, it is helpful to consider that there are effectively three areas of principal responsibility: (1) Urgent, (2) Predictable and Required, and (3) Non-Urgent. **Urgent** responsibilities would include matters of health and safety (i.e., violent incidences or other criminal acts, fire, flooding, as well as physical or mental health emergencies). **Urgent** responsibilities cannot be put on hold and must be addressed immediately. All other matters are put aside to deal, in the moment, with urgent responsibilities. **Predictable and Required** responsibilities would include matters of requirement at the Ministry and local district levels
(i.e., training, development, new initiatives, budgeting, school and parent councils, union interactions, and staffing). Non-Urgent responsibilities would include matters within the school building that are potentially or inevitably problematic but lack urgency and do not relate to matters of health and safety (i.e., student academic, behavioral, and attendance issues; teacher effectiveness; teacher development, and school climate). All matters, requests, inquiries, and decisions for administrators are assessed based on their level of urgency and significance. Non-Urgent responsibilities, by virtue of lacking any degree of urgency and by not being related to immediate health and safety concerns, likely stand at the very bottom of administrator priority.

Administrator participants reported a substantial desire to devote more time during their day to classroom learning, indeed a problematic responsibility, but they are simply unable. This finding reinforces Donaldson’s (2013) determination in his study of principal approaches to teacher evaluation and development, that a significant limitation to appraisal in its development function was a “lack of opportunity [for administrators] to observe what they considered to be representative teaching” (p. 857). Donaldson (2013) concluded that “the sheer number of teachers who needed to be observed limited [administrator] ability to provide in-depth feedback or observe classrooms for more than the minimum amount of time required” and that “if you really want to help someone, you have to be in there a lot” (p. 857). The TPA, then, may be considered in terms of how and to what degree it represents this triage of responsibility assessment and determination. The completion of appraisal for each teacher in the school works on a five-year cycle, contingent upon teacher start date and movement out of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). The completion of the appraisal is required through the TPA policy. Timelines are prescribed within the TPA policy, for pre and post observation meetings, completion of the Summative Report, and, if performance is deemed “Unsatisfactory”, for a development action plan. Compliance with the TPA policy is a Predictable and Required responsibility of all administrators. Girth and depth of appraisal, however, could be considered a Non-Urgent responsibility. The volume of
teachers required for appraisal in any given school year creates a significant barrier for administrators—they do not have the time to both comply with the policy and to complete it with the level of commitment, time, resources and rigor that are necessary for authentic, meaningful, and sustainable teacher growth and development.

While administrators face significant barriers to carrying out the TPA process, they do so at the behest of their local school districts and the Ministry of Education. Boards determine priorities, and indeed funding allocations, in response to both Ministry and District level initiatives. Such initiatives are essential to satisfying both societal and political expectations (i.e., school climate, mental health or equity campaigns, as well as teacher training and development in research-based strategies to address student learning needs in literacy and numeracy as a response to student achievement outcomes on province-wide standardized testing). Boards are required, particularly for measures of austerity, to make budget decisions that attempt to balance priorities of accountability (to stakeholders) and development (which also benefits stakeholders but are not necessarily quantifiable and not nearly as tidy). These decisions, however, are difficult and are not without distinct compromises. For example, in the interest of accountability to the Ministry of Education, local districts must direct funds to support teacher training and learning in areas of literacy and numeracy. A recent initiative was the Middle Years Collaborative Inquiry (MYCI), intended to bring together teachers from both elementary and secondary panels (grades 7-10) to pursue an inquiry into a student learning need in numeracy. Each school district was offered the funding for a particular number of MYCI projects based on their district’s student achievement outcomes on EQAO testing. My district, for example, in 2013-2014, received funding for seven projects. Each project was permitted to engage a certain number of teachers, with a prescribed number of release days for each project participant (effectively 5-6 teachers per project with a total of 2.5 release days per teacher). These projects only scratched the surface of teacher discovery and learning. They ultimately did not bring about what Katz and Dack (2013) argued was “real learning”
which is “a permanent change in thinking and behavior”—they neglected to provide for meaningful follow up, sustained support, or time (p. 3). These projects also grew from the supposition that learning is tidy and could be “wrapped up” in one arbitrarily determined time frame. The MYCI projects also, by virtue of being designed for middle year teachers, tapped teachers who may or may not have elected to participate. The MYCI projects are just one way that boards may appear to be accountable to the Ministry of Education, certainly final reports were submitted and budgets filed, but the projects themselves have limited actual impact upon teaching practice.

The TPA process in Ontario may be likened to projects like MYCI. The process is carried out, the paperwork is submitted, but ultimately, it only provides the rudiments of teacher learning. Several factors contribute to this lack of impact including: lack of time, resources, follow up, sustained support, and, perhaps the most significant, a failure to consider the teacher as a learner.

TPA as a Vehicle for Teacher Growth

The most significant limitation of the TPA process in Ontario, as reflected in the data from this study, is that it provides for neither the resources nor conditions to grow teacher practice. Despite the fact that teacher growth and development is one of the central objectives of the TPA, consideration for teachers as learners is provided for neither in the policy nor in its implementation. The TPA process, for example, stands in opposition to current philosophies regarding student learning. Significant efforts have been made to develop learning conditions for students that are differentiated and student-driven with a focus on formative, timely and relevant assessment. Ontario has moved away from the one-size-fits-all approach to assessment for students, and yet not for our teachers. The central barriers to teacher learning, then, within the context of the TPA are: (1) a lack of time for teacher discovery—time to unpack and challenge preconceived assumptions about teaching and learning, (2) the process is not collaborative, and, (3) the process is not teacher-constructed. Each of these barriers is discussed here.
Does not provide time and means to unpack. Teacher learning requires opportunity for discovery and experimentation. As participants reported, teachers come to the table with a vast host of philosophies and beliefs, not only about their own practices but about how students learn. Arguably, most teachers believe they are doing a good job, and that the approaches and strategies they use to facilitate learning in their classrooms are the most effective. Feedback, if any, received during an appraisal, requires time, reflection, and subsequent experimentation, in order to land with the teacher, to permeate and to influence an adjustment in thinking and action. Time and means for discovery is currently not an outcome of the TPA. Many teachers, for example, reported a refusal to accept feedback from administrators in the context of the TPA because the credibility of the source of feedback was called into question (either because the administrator was evaluating out of their subject-matter expertise, or was perceived as having spent too little time in the classroom in their own teaching practice). Fessler and Burke (1987) proffered that there is often a significant gap between a teacher’s perception of their performance in the classroom and a supervisor’s perception of that performance. They contended that in order for authentic growth to occur, the two perceptions need to be reconciled—which they described as growth-needs identification (Fessler & Burke, 1987, p. 382). Growth-needs identification, however, does not occur in isolation because, as Fessler and Burke (1987) determined, some teachers do not have this “built-in monitoring system” of “introspective openness” or the ability to “look within” and many “need help” (p. 384). As Katz and Dack (2013) theorized, we can generally assume that the vast majority of teachers are already doing their best work in their classrooms. We can also assume that teachers are doing their best to meet the needs of their students. We can further assume, however, that knowing why students are struggling does not necessarily mean that one will know how to address the difficulties (Katz & Dack, 2013, p. 4). As Natriello (1990) argued:

It might be assumed that simply pointing out problems in teaching to a teacher would lead that teacher to improve…this seems to be an assumption of evaluation systems that provide feedback on performance without much attention to organized follow-up activities to facilitate improvement (p. 38).
Without facilitation, without meaningful follow-up, in both time and resources, teachers cannot experiment with the feedback they have been given, if any, during the context of appraisal. As teachers toil away in their classrooms, virtually in isolation from other adults, it is particularly easy to stay the course of what is known and what is safe. Feedback from an administrator, or even a colleague, will fall flat without the opportunity to explore the perspectives, consider the possibilities, and to challenge pervading beliefs. Teachers need to time to unpack their preconceived philosophies regarding teaching and learning. The TPA does not provide the conditions necessary for this exercise including time and facilitation. More likely than not, teachers file away their Summative Reports and return to a modus operandi in the classroom either because they have discredited the source of the feedback altogether or because the feedback stands in such direct conflict with what they believe to be sound teaching practices, that they simply disregard it. Either way, any possible gains from a process of appraisal have been lost in the interest of time and a lack of resources. The current model of the TPA does not provide for meaningful follow up for Ontario teachers.

**Is not collaborative.** Learning in isolation creates a ceiling effect. There are barriers to learning that significantly impact the degree to which teachers are able to interact with new ideas. Traditional training models do not work because, as Katz and Dack (2013) contended, as adult learners, teachers do not think through all the possibilities, they focus on “confirming [their] hypotheses” rather than “challenging them”, they “pay too much attention to things that are vivid” and “we consider ourselves to be exceptions” (pp. 53-61). All of these conditions prevent the adult learner from immediately accepting any “new” strategy or approach to teaching and learning. Teachers rarely get the opportunity to spend time in each other’s classrooms—to see alternative strategies in action, to ask questions, and to experiment with these “new” strategies in their own classrooms. The advent of the Professional Learning Cycle (PLC) in many schools across the province, has opened doors for teachers to come together, to explore (and be challenged on) current practices, to consider current studies and strategies
for teaching and learning, and to experiment. The challenges with the PLC model are that it is (a) offered by boards and administrators with predetermined, and often arbitrary, time frames (i.e., 2.5 release days per participant), (b) generally “wraps” up by semester or year-end, and (b) is entirely disconnected from the process of appraisal.

The TPA process, in its current form, is carried out by a single appraiser (an administrator) and an individual teacher. The process fails to engage multiple perspectives but it also fails to engage the teacher as an active participant. In the process of appraisal in Ontario, the teacher is appraised. The process of appraisal places ownership effectively in the hands of the appraiser—administrators complete the forms, they collect evidence, they arrive at conclusions for assessment. Effectively a teacher may contribute to dialogue regarding dates for meetings and classroom observation visits, and offering collected evidence or artifacts for consideration, but ultimately collaboration ends there. Teachers do not have a voice in current implementation practices of appraisal. Without a voice, without the opportunity for meaningful input, teachers do not feel invested in the process. Without investment on the part of teachers, any learning opportunity within the context of appraisal fails to have a lasting impact upon teaching practice.

Is not teacher-constructed. One of the most significant barriers to teacher learning within the TPA process is that the activities, direction and focus are not teacher-constructed. Clark (1992) argued:

> When adults feel they are in control of a process of change that they have voluntarily chosen, they are much more likely to realize full value from it than when coerced into training situations in which they have little say about the timing, the process or the goals (p. 77).

When activities are imposed upon adult learners, the presupposition is that mature adults will comply. But an expectation of compliance misses the point entirely. Teachers may comply with the TPA process, move through each step, gather all required artifacts, and submit all paperwork, but for real learning to occur, they must somehow believe that they are active participants in the process, even active participants in the development of the process. Study participants widely reported that the process
of TPA is that for which they feel no ownership or investment. Teachers have neither developed the criteria for assessment, nor planned and facilitated the activities by which they would be assessed. The TPA is an imposition; it is an add-on to an otherwise hectic schedule. It holds little meaning beyond the burden of extra preparation and paperwork, but does not connect to the authentic problems of practice that they encounter each day in their classrooms, nor does it connect to the broader efforts they have made to grow their practice alongside their colleagues. As contended by Hargreaves and Fullan (1992):

Training teachers to train other teachers, or asking teachers to support or coach their colleagues in the implementation of new skills, can mitigate or even override many of [the] effects of top down, ‘outside-in’ reform...but even here, the origin of the reforms is ultimately extraneous (p. 3).

Teachers constructing their own learning, or in this case, co-constructing their own evaluation, requires time for reflection, tweaking and experimenting, feeling invested, and holding a belief that the activities are relevant to daily classroom practice. Connectedness to professional learning activities and co-construction are critical to professional autonomy for teachers. In turn, professional autonomy is a cornerstone of teacher learning. Firestone (2014) examined motivation theories in their application to teacher growth in the context of evaluation. In a discussion of intrinsic incentives, Firestone (2014) determined that autonomy is “crucial not only as a psychological state but also as a working condition” (p. 103). Professional autonomy is particularly essential for classroom teachers due to the diversity in classroom dynamics, student learning needs, learning contexts, as well as diversity in teachers themselves as learners with unique learning styles, preferences, goals, ability and willingness to identify growth areas. The proposition of teacher-constructed evaluation activities certainly does not suggest an unstructured carte blanche, but it does suggest a consideration of models that engage teachers in the design or co-design of their own evaluation and assessment processes in collaboration with their administrators. This particularly significant element is absent from the current form of the TPA policy.
Is not embedded in teacher practice. Relevance is a critical component for any learning. Darling-Hammond (2013) contended that activities that are “disconnected from practice do not allow teachers the time needed for rigorous and cumulative study of the given subject matter, for seeing exemplars or receiving coaching, or for trying out ideas in the classroom and reflecting on the results” (p. 102). Similarly, Hawley and Valli (1999) argued that when professional learning is distanced from classroom practice, and imposed upon, rather than developed by, teachers “as a program or a series of formal scheduled events, or is otherwise disconnected from authentic problem solving, it is unlikely to have much influence on teacher or student learning” (p. 144). Aligned with earlier comments regarding relevance, connectedness, and teacher construction, embeddedness is a critical component of teacher learning. It is a substantial endeavor to challenge the beliefs and philosophies of an experienced teacher. Notions of teaching and learning are developed by individual teachers over time and are socially constructed. A teacher develops philosophies, and subsequent approaches to teaching and learning, based on experiences with students, interactions with colleagues, and engagement with school culture (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). In the context of the TPA, circumstances by which teachers may or may not be receiving feedback from an administrator who may or may not be a subject-matter expert, who may have spent precious little time in that teacher’s classroom, keeps the learning component of appraisal at arm’s length. Feedback, and proposed follow up interventions or development activities fall flat because they fail to connect with not only what the teacher is experiencing in the classroom each day but with a teacher’s perception of the work that they do. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) argued:

The skills in which teachers are trained are all too often implemented out of context—their appropriateness for the teacher as a person, for the teacher’s purpose, or for their particular classroom setting in which the teacher works, being overlooked (p. 6).

Sustained teacher learning and growth requires the opportunity for teachers to contextualize, internalize, explore, and experiment with new ideas. Teacher professional growth is not nearly as simplistic as the current model of TPA would suggest.
Summary

Findings from data collected through EPTPA survey results, teacher follow-up interviews, and interviews with administrators and OSSTF representatives, as well as within policy documents related to the TPA, determined that there are significant limitations in the current policy of appraisal for experienced teachers in Ontario. The most significant limitation is that the TPA policy is designed to be implemented as a snapshot of teaching practice, once every five years and yet is not aligned with other policies to have administrators in classrooms, talking, observing, and working with teachers in a manner that can provide for ongoing, timely feedback. The TPA policy exists concurrently with an overextended, and ultimately ambiguous, role of an administrator as both manager and instructional leader. The urgency found in most daily tasks of the administrator places a disproportionate emphasis on responsibilities outside of the classroom and beyond the realm of teaching and learning (i.e., health and safety, ministry objectives and new initiatives, budgeting, as well as urgent student behavioral issues). The volume of paperwork, and number of TPAs that must be conducted in each school, each year, creates a limitation on follow up opportunities. Some provisions are made for teachers who have been unsuccessful in a TPA to receive interventions, follow up and ongoing support, with additional observations set out in a timeframe, but does not allow for those teachers who may have been considered “Satisfactory” to receive the same. The TPA allows for effectively only one perspective, that of the administrator and, as a result of the amendments to the policy as well as the cultural expectations that have developed in its implementation within a unionized environment, the TPA policy effectively excludes alternative perspectives such as that of students, parents, and colleagues. Summarily, the four most significant limitations of the TPA policy in Ontario, in its current form, are: (1) it presupposes a narrow view of teaching; (2) it is inconsistent in implementation not only across the province, but within school districts and even within schools; (3) the policy holds conflicting objectives of both
accountability and teacher growth and development; and (4) the process does not serve as a vehicle for teacher growth.
Chapter VII: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations as a result of this exploration of the perceptions and experiences of teachers, administrators, and OSSTF representatives in regards to the current policy and implementation practices of experienced secondary teacher performance appraisal in Ontario. The four research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the possibilities and limitations of current supervisory appraisal practices for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario?

2. What view(s) of teaching do current appraisal practices for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario connote?

3. How do dynamics of power and professionalism amongst and between organizational participants promote or hinder teacher development through the process of teacher performance appraisal?

4. What are the similarities and contrasts that emerge from the lived experiences of teachers, administrators, and union officials in the implementation of current secondary teacher evaluation practices in Ontario?

Through document analysis, online survey responses, and one-to-one interviews, education stakeholder voices revealed tremendous insights into participant perceptions of teaching, teachers, the limitations of appraisal implementation, and the impact of appraisal upon teacher learning. A number of themes that emerged from this study served to reinforce previous research on this topic, for example, that the TPA is not an adequate vehicle for teacher growth (Maharaj, 2014), that there are inconsistencies in implementation of the TPA process across the province of Ontario (Larsen, 2009), and that the TPA lacks teacher input and voice (Miller, 2009). The significance of this study, however, arises from its contributions to the broader conversation of the ways in which teachers are viewed in Ontario and how those perceptions impact the method and means of performance appraisal but also in how, if any,
learning results from the appraisal process. Key findings are summarized herein as are
recommendations and considerations for future inquiry.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings of this study are presented here in three central realms: The People, The Policy, and The Possibilities. These realms are highly interconnected. Each realm impacts the others by either creating conditions of tension or difficulty, as is frequently the case between the policy and the people, or by creating areas of opportunity. An example of this impact is related to a central finding of this study that teachers broadly supported the engagement of department leaders and other teaching colleagues in the process of appraisal. The policy, however, stipulates that the single appraiser for any teacher is the administrator. OSSTF representatives voiced vehement concerns against any shift from the policy in this regard. Hence, a tension is created between the stipulations within the policy and the expectations and preferences of the people. Each realm is considered more extensively herein.

The people. The opportunity to explore teacher, administrator, and OSSTF voices in the context of this study unearthed significant insights regarding how education stakeholders perceive and experience the current TPA process in Ontario. For teachers, the process is stressful, lacking in opportunity to receive meaningful feedback, frequently at the discretion of the administrator conducting the appraisal, and disconnected from daily practice. For administrators, the process is burdensome, and lacking in both authenticity and opportunities for meaningful follow up. From the vantage point of OSSTF representatives, the process of appraisal is frequently perceived as punitive in nature as opposed to growth-oriented.

Teachers. Teachers widely reported that there is a significant amount of stress associated with the TPA process. The bulk of teacher stress within the appraisal process arises from an increased workload in preparation for appraisal; variances in administrator expectations regarding required paperwork, time spent in meetings and observations, and pedagogical preferences; and, the perception
of unfair or inequitable implementation or assessment. As teachers reported, the stress that they
erience brings about feelings that the process is “pain, without gain” and that, frequently, teachers
feel compelled to alter or modify their teaching practices and showcase their “best” teaching strategies,
during a classroom observation, in order to garner a “Satisfactory” performance appraisal result. These
sentiments raise questions about the authenticity of the process of appraisal for teachers in Ontario. In
order to be a valid assessment of teacher performance, an appraisal process requires sustained
interactions and substantiated observations to capture a more holistic understanding of teaching
practice. The current model of the TPA offers only a “snap shot”. Appraisal, for the purposes of either
accountability or professional growth, cannot simply be about a teacher’s “best” or “worst” day.
Teaching is such an extraordinarily complex enterprise, and teachers themselves so entirely diverse as
both practitioners and learners themselves, that an isolated examination of performance, once every five
years, is inadequate. The stress associated with appraisal does not currently offer a sufficient return on
the investment of teacher time.

Second, teacher participants expressed that a multiple perspective appraisal model would be
preferable, particularly to include those of their colleagues (i.e., department leaders or other members)
who are subject-matter familiar and currently in the classroom, or those of other professionals in the
building, as well as students, and parents, over the current single-appraiser model of the TPA. Many
teachers, as well as OSSTF representatives, communicated the perception of the process as punitive in
nature rather than growth-oriented. This sentiment grew largely from perceptions that expectations were
either unclear, inequitable, or changing, but also that the administrator may be unfamiliar with the
subject-area of the teacher being appraised. The central issue in this regard is a lack of constructive,
timely, and relevant feedback. As communicated by teachers, in order for the process of appraisal to
contribute to teacher growth, the absence or presence of constructive feedback, was a critical variance.
Teachers also expressed significant concern that with only one appraiser, the process was vulnerable to
weaknesses in integrity and the potential for bias or vindictiveness. Other issues reported by teacher participants, in regards to the single-appraiser model, arose from teacher perceptions that administrators had neither adequate time to devote to the process nor the necessary skills or knowledge to appropriately and meaningfully assess teacher performance.

Third, according to teacher participants, the TPA is disconnected from daily teaching practice. This is a critical point, in particular because of the rhetoric contained within the policy regarding the integration of appraisal into the broader culture of teaching and learning within schools. A key finding of this study is that the TPA is currently perceived by teachers as an event rather than a process. The process takes place in virtual isolation from colleagues. The process is neither collaborative nor teacher-constructed. The steps of the process, along with prescribed timelines, are restrictive. Teachers as learners exist on a spectrum of readiness, self-awareness, motivation, and learning preferences. Frequently, the points of concern for the administrator are not those of the teacher being appraised. The most poignant example of this is that of the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) with the vast majority of teacher participants reporting little to no connection between the ALP and their daily teaching practice. The ALP is intended for use in the TPA process as a reference point for teacher identified growth areas. Teacher respondents reported that they frequently were instructed on which items to include in their ALP or believed certain areas to hold implied significance because of their connection to the school or board improvement plans. Feedback received, if any, then, in the context of the TPA process lands flat without the opportunity for teachers to make relevant connections between what has been observed, or made a priority, by their administrator and what they themselves are seeing and experiencing in their classrooms each day.

Lastly, the most significant finding from data collected through surveys of, and interviews with, teacher participants was that the TPA does not contribute to sustained professional growth. Again, a lack of constructive, relevant feedback, the absence of meaningful follow up, the perception of the
process as a “dog and pony” show, rather than an authentic examination of teaching practice, as well as the infrequency of the interactions with administrators and the overall disconnect of the process from daily teaching practice, all contributed to the widely reported teacher perception that the current process of appraisal in Ontario is not growing practice.

Administrators. Participants from each stakeholder group accessed in this study reported the perception that administrators do not have enough time to spend in classrooms as instructional leaders to form meaningful assessments of, and to support, teaching practice in the context of appraisal. For administrator participants, this was a particularly emphasized point of concern. Administrators expressed significant frustration with the multitude and diversity of tasks for which they are charged; tasks that require significant time and resources in and out of the school building yet outside the realm of teaching and learning such as Ministry and district level initiatives, health and safety concerns, budgeting, as well as myriad responsibilities that may be considered Urgent or Expected. All of these tasks prevent administrators from spending time in classrooms, in dialogue, and in learning activities working alongside their teachers. With this lack of time, and the resulting absence of sustained interactions between administrators and teachers, the role of administrators as instructional leaders is critically diminished.

For administrators, constraints in time and resources are significant barriers to (a) capturing an authentic understanding of teacher performance, and (b) facilitating meaningful follow up to support teacher growth. Authenticity in appraisal stems not just in the holistic understanding of teaching and learning that is taking place but also in developing the knowledge, insight, relationships, and skill, as an appraiser, to identify weaknesses in teaching. Administrator participants reported that they are very aware that some teachers may present their “best self” during an appraisal observation, and that, due to burdening responsibilities, they are unlikely to capture the fullest, most accurate, understanding of teacher performance; administrators simply do not have the time to provide frequent and consistent
supervision. Administrator study participants contributed specific comments about the extensive paperwork involved in conducting appraisals as well as the large number of appraisals they must conduct each year in their schools. Combined, these factors create barriers to real learning and authentic teacher growth and development in the context of appraisal.

*OSSTF representatives.* The primary concern communicated by OSSTF representatives was that the TPA process has a punitive tone as opposed to one that is growth-oriented. The potential for this is borne by, as previously discussed, the single-appraiser model that is used for the TPA. The potential for bias, or for circumstances in which a misunderstanding occurs based on the administrator’s subject-matter familiarity, creates scenarios by which a teacher may feel inaccurately assessed or even persecuted by their appraiser. OSSTF representatives communicated several examples of teachers who had experienced substantial stress as a result of their experiences with the TPA process. The stress of being judged by another professional, alone, can be challenging, however, as participants imparted, feelings associated with the perception that the process of appraisal does not consider the needs of the teacher as a learner or that the teacher has been in some manner targeted by an administrator are heightened in the TPA’s current form. A growth-oriented process of appraisal, however, would consider the needs of the teacher, would seek teacher input, would engage multiple perspectives (in addition to that of the administrator), and would engage the teacher at the classroom level. The TPA process, in its current form, though, holds such specific limitations and vulnerabilities that the appearance or the perception of a punitive approach, inequitable assessment practices, or inaccurate or unfair assessment of teacher performance, is not uncommon.

*The policy.* In regards to the policy of the TPA in Ontario, there were four key findings. First, through both language and instrumentation, the TPA policy presupposes a particularly limited view of teaching. An investigation of the language of the policy documents revealed a bureaucratic and regulatory tone, similar to that of a corporation (i.e., quality assurance through monitoring and
auditing), and a presumption of compliance. The rhetoric of the TPA documents, however, is polarizing. On one hand calling for an integrated approach to appraisal which becomes ingrained in school culture, while on the other hand, being so prescriptive in its process steps and timelines so as to appear simplistic and essentialized. The tension is heightened by the implication of how teaching is viewed in Ontario; as a series of observable, replicable, and predictable skills for which teachers can be trained. The language of the TPA policy suggests that good teaching can necessarily be measured. It also suggests that all administrators will be capable of accurately assessing teaching performance—without limitation or bias. In this manner, the policy instruments (mandates without inducements, capacity-building, or system changing) impose a rationalized view of teaching and learning in Ontario schools. The policy presupposes compliance without the use of mechanisms to support wide scale support for all stakeholders. It is a key finding of this study that in presupposing such a narrow view of teaching, that conditions have been set for both non-compliance, and for a wide variance in implementation.

Second, the TPA policy in Ontario is inconsistent in implementation. Artifacts collected and used for appraisal, thoroughness of pre and post observation meetings, length and number of observations, absence or presence (and girth) of feedback, and engagement of the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) are all elements of the TPA process which exist on a vast spectrum of variance. Other elements that may vary between performance appraisals, across the province of Ontario, within districts, and within schools, are administrator experience, subject-matter familiarity, pedagogical preferences and expertise, and opportunities for follow up. Variances in implementation stem largely from, ironically, a lack of direction within the policy, but also in a lack of recognition of how policy participants may interpret or employ the regulations. Inconsistencies in implementation are a distinct limitation of the TPA process in its current form. Inconsistencies, and the appearance of inequities, contribute to stress
for stakeholders, a lack of buy-in on the parts of both teachers and administrators, questioned credibility and, overall, a lack of accountability for the process itself.

Third, the TPA policy holds dueling objectives. The two main objectives of the TPA policy are: (a) accountability to education stakeholders and to the general public that schools, and teachers, are being held to high standards, and (b) to contribute to the professional growth and development of teachers. These two objectives, in the context of the TPA in its implementation and the extent to which it is a priority for stakeholders, stand in conflict with one another. School districts are compelled to make funding and resource allocation decisions based on both local and Ministry priorities. Board-level allocations of funds and resources are determined by political, economic, and sociocultural expectations and pressures, while also being guided by board and school improvement plans. Resulting decisions create difficulties in implementation of policies such as the TPA. In efforts to balance priorities, compliance with the TPA policy (the accountability function) may take priority over the real work that needs to be done to develop meaningful appraisal practices, support teachers during and after the process of appraisal process, and to build capacity among administrators to serve as effective instructional leaders (the improvement function of the policy). Based on the perceptions and experiences of study participants, the accountability function of the TPA has been supported, while the improvement function of the TPA has been compromised.

Lastly, the TPA does not serve as a vehicle for teacher growth. It is the chief finding of this study that the TPA, in its current form, fails to provide the conditions to support teacher learning and professional growth. The policy does not provide time for teachers to unpack their preconceived views of teaching and learning and is neither collaborative, teacher-constructed, nor embedded in daily teaching practice. Perceived widely as a “one off” event, any learning that could grow from the appraisal process is significantly diminished by a lack of meaningful, sustained follow up. In order to serve as a sound vehicle for teacher growth, any model of appraisal must consider the appraised as
learners. Personal and professional investment are bred by a belief that a process or an activity has merit, relevance, and integrity. Teacher learning requires such investments but also requires time and facilitation. For far too long teacher cultures of professional isolation have persisted. Working collaboratively with other professionals, engaging in needs identification (both student and teacher), experimenting with strategies, reflecting upon successes and failures, and tweaking to bring about gains in student achievement, are all critical components to processes of teacher learning; components that are currently not provided for in the TPA policy and process.

**The possibilities.** Despite its limitations, the current model of the TPA in Ontario has significant potential. First, the policy has the potential to **create opportunities for teachers to spend time in the classrooms of other teachers.** The TPA policy has allowed for an expectation of teachers that they will be observed in their classroom as part of an appraisal process. Currently it only occurs every five years, and is conducted by an administrator, but teachers are already working with an expectation that at some point, an observer (an adult professional) will visit their classroom to appraise their teaching practice—why not explore this possibility further? With higher frequency of visits, teacher comfort may increase and professional discourse will result as strategies and pedagogical approaches are shared.

Second, teachers emphatically communicated their desire to **engage alternative perspectives in the appraisal process.** Teachers have signaled that they welcome, and indeed are seeking, constructive feedback from their peers. Teachers reported that in order to grow their practice, they require timely, specific, relevant feedback from professionals in their area of study who are familiar with their students, the culture of the school and department, who also have particular knowledge and insight into the unique personality, disposition, weaknesses, strengths, and learning style of the teacher being appraised. This is a particularly significant opportunity within the current model of the TPA and perhaps one of the most surprising findings of this study. It is widely understood in a unionized environment that
colleagues would not interact in any manner that could be perceived evaluative or in judgment of another colleague. OSSTF representatives voiced distinct opposition to any shift in policy or practice that would allow for this to occur, and yet teacher participants communicated overwhelmingly in favor of such an endeavor. Teachers widely reported that they believed growth in practice could more readily result from an appraisal process that engaged the perspectives of colleagues.

Third, the policy of the TPA, and its implementation, have created conditions by which the role, and capacity, of administrators as instructional leaders is reconsidered. It is a key finding of this study that the role of administrators is currently overextended and that as an instructional leader, administrators face enormous barriers of time and resources. The potential within the current model of the TPA is that it already provides for opportunities for administrators to visit classrooms, facilitate dialogue with teachers, identify areas for growth, and to implement interventions and learning opportunities as follow up. The potential lies in the girth and depth of these opportunities that are currently not being fully exploited but may benefit from reconfiguration.

Fourth, the TPA policy currently provides for a distinction between “Satisfactory” and “Unsatisfactory” teacher performance. This rating, currently, holds precious little consequence or incentive for teacher motivation. The potential here is to develop both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives for teacher growth and development within the context of appraisal. Opportunities of such could include differentiating between proficient and developing teachers with a dual track system similar to that which is currently in practice in Manitoba. A dual, or multi, track system provides for the opportunity for teachers who have established proficiency in teaching, to continue to grow and develop in a manner that is self-directed and relevant to their learning needs, career positioning, and interests. Those teachers who are in developing stages of teaching (even those who were perhaps previously assessed as proficient but for myriad reasons require additional support and development) will have opportunities for growth, again, based on their individual circumstances. Effectively, a dual or multi
track system allows for the freeing up of resources by not evaluating all teachers on a five-year cycle while allowing for differentiation within the appraisal process. Furthermore, a track system allows for a more substantial distinction among teachers determined by levels of proficiency. The incentives are, primarily, in the conditions provided to those whose efforts have allowed them to achieve proficiency (i.e., time and resources for self-directed learning opportunities, career advancement opportunities such as Master Teacher designations, department leadership, or opportunities to conduct research or facilitate professional learning opportunities for developing teachers, coaching, or mentoring). Intrinsically, these conditions speak to the value boards place on effective teaching which is both motivating and supportive of learners. Extrinsically, these conditions open doors for career advancement and enhanced professional challenges, currently not available in the otherwise horizontal structure of teaching career trajectories in Ontario.

**Recommendations**

Based on a literature review, broader environmental scan, and data collected from teachers, administrators and OSSTF representatives, as well as through a comparative analysis of documents related to the TPA policy, an identification of both the possibilities and limitations of current supervisory appraisal practices of experienced secondary teachers in Ontario have been outlined. Based on those, several recommendations have been determined. These recommendations do not reflect modifications and developments that may be considered for a more holistic understanding of teacher career trajectories (from pre-service to in-service) including, that of teacher education programs, novice teacher programs, and district and school level hiring practices. While those stages are critical to improving teaching in Ontario, it was the objective of this particular study to focus on one aspect of teaching, which is that of the appraisal practices of currently employed experienced teachers. As such, the following are recommendations to develop and enhance current supervisory practices in Ontario schools:
1. Reexamine the role and capacity of administrators as instructional leaders. Reconsider the delegation of tasks to place greater emphasis on the administrator as lead teacher.

2. Develop appraisal for purposes of accountability separate from appraisal for purposes of teacher growth.

3. Devote and direct more resources (both capital and human) to capacity building and system-changing in Ontario schools. Appraisal processes, whatever form they may take, must be more effectively aligned with daily teaching practice and learning cultures in schools. Processes of appraisal must also make provisions for, in taking a natural-constructivist approach to teacher learning, differentiation in respect to where a teacher is in their career, how each teacher learns, context of teaching, and teacher attributes. This requires time and other resources for collaboration, experimentation, and reflection.

4. Explore the potential of a dual, or multi, track system of appraisal in Ontario which allows for differentiation among teachers with respect to their career stage or individual development. Tracks could include a probationary or development track, along with a proficient track. Currently in practice in other regions, track distinctions allow for a more individualized approach to teacher learning while also assisting in developing both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives for teacher growth and development.

5. Expand the process of appraisal to engage multiple perspectives (in addition to that of administrators), offer collaborative activities, require
teacher input, and sustain the process, through both time and critical resources so that it develops further as an ongoing, iterative opportunity for teaching learning.

Concluding Thoughts and Considerations for Further Inquiry

It was not the intent or objective of this study to prove or disprove the validity of the TPA in Ontario. Rather, the objective of this study was to consider the TPA policy as a regulation of a process in Ontario schools and to better understand the factors that contribute to its implementation by speaking directly with the ground-level policy implementers—teachers, administrators, and union representatives. As the single formal appraisal process in Ontario since 2001, the TPA can be perceived as neither a failure nor a success but rather assessed in its own right for its potential to meet its primary objectives. That said, it was a significant finding of this study that current dynamics of professionalism and power among and between teachers, administrators, and OSSTF representatives, limit the process of appraisal in its current form by preventing it from being either an authentic growth opportunity or an accountability measure with “teeth”. There are effectively four points of convergence of power within the context of the TPA policy that are creating tensions and hindering the process of appraisal:

1. Teacher vs. Administrator: what I learned from the teacher participants of this study is that a perceived power differential, between themselves and their administrator, has negatively impacted the appraisal process. For example, many teachers reported an unwillingness to identify their own weaknesses or to ask the administrator for assistance in a particular area of their practice because they believed it could lead to a negative appraisal, which many believed could impact their career trajectory.

2. Policy vs. Administrator: in examining the policy documents, and in hearing the experiences of many of the participants, the administrators have limited power in bringing about growth and improvement in teachers unless the teachers themselves have elected to do so. For example, the policy contains no extrinsic motivators for improvement such as a raise, promotion, or conversely, a demotion. None of
Laberee’s (2010) “sticks” or “carrots” were evident. Compliance with the policy may be achieved, but authentic, sustained improvement does not necessarily occur as a result of the TPA process.

3. Administrator vs. OSSTF: based on the data collected, it appears as if administrators have to be mindful of what they say and how they say it in terms of criticism of a teacher’s practice. The paper work associated with the appraisal is burdensome and the need to “dot the I’s and cross the t’s” is dire in order to avoid appearing as if an administrator is “out to get” the teacher. Administrators reported a reluctance to either initiate the process of development (associated with an Unsatisfactory appraisal rating) or to “delve too deep” into a teacher’s practice, for threat of OSSTF intervention. OSSTF officials, for their part, reported the need to “protect the process” and clarified that appeals are frequently filed to raise concerns of technicalities—not necessarily about whether the appraisal is accurate but rather whether it was done according to policy.

4. Teacher vs. Teacher: There remains among teachers a closed-door culture and a cultural norm of secrecy. Most teacher respondents indicated, in some variation, that they understood that they were not to say or do that which would appear evaluative of another teacher. Norms of this sort serve to prevent teachers from sharing and receiving relevant feedback.

Tensions among the key actors in the school setting such as teachers, administrators and federation representatives have hindered the appraisal process. I will call this Tension Theory. This is a particularly significant element to the topic of teacher performance appraisal and warrants future inquiry.

As a result of the constructivist grounded theory approach used in this study, and through analysis of the data collected through the process of this inquiry, the seedlings of two other theoretical ideas emerged:

1. Investment Theory: Participants who do not feel an investment in a process will not authentically or meaningfully engage in that process, and a distinction is made here between compliance and
engagement. Without engagement in a process, the impact of that process is severely limited. In the case of the TPA in Ontario, there is a lack of investment in the process of appraisal on the part of both teachers and administrators. Many factors contribute to a lack of engagement with the TPA including, but certainly not limited to: a perceived lack of ownership or influence upon the TPA process, time and resources for follow up, a disconnect from daily teaching practice, a lack of differentiation or individualization built into the process for each teacher, and a distinct perception of a lack of lasting or valued impact of the appraisal. Investment in the TPA process may be enhanced by considering and addressing these factors as part of a system-changing and capacity-building effort.

2. **Default Theory**: Currently, the TPA process is widely perceived as an event as opposed to a process and is largely disconnected from daily teaching practice. By not embedding the process of appraisal into the broader learning culture of the school, teachers are not provided with the conditions necessary for real learning (i.e., time, ongoing support, relevant and timely feedback, as well as the opportunity for experimentation and reflection). For many teachers, the TPA process also lacks meaning. As such, many teachers engage in the “dog and pony” show of designing a lesson for the observation visit that is unlike that which they would normally design. The result is, administrators observe the very best possible lesson but upon the conclusion of the appraisal process, the teacher will return to their regular practice and strategies—defaulting to what they know and have been using in the classroom. Feedback without follow up propels this impact. Real learning takes both time and resources. Learning also requires time and support for trial, error, reflection, and tweaking. Authentic growth and development in teachers is significantly stunted through the TPA process as a result of lacking these conditions.

There are several other areas for further consideration that warrant their own investigation and are presented here as recommendations for future inquiry:

1. What are the factors, and potential barriers, that impact the development of administrators as instructional leaders in schools?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a shift in teacher culture which would call upon teachers to be accountable to one another?

3. Under what conditions and to what degree would extrinsic incentives support teacher growth and development?

4. How does Ontario’s current process for teacher employment termination serve teachers and students?

5. Given the importance of public perception regarding accountability of teaching quality in Ontario, what models for teacher evaluation would best address the current dueling purposes of the TPA?

Broadly, it is the finding of this study that the TPA policy and process has not reached its fullest potential as neither a tool for accountability nor as a vehicle for teacher growth and development. Ultimately, however, it is the finding of this study that the current process of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario holds tremendous potential as a launching point for reexamining the ways in which schools support and develop teachers, how the Ministry of Education of Ontario (and, alas, the general public) views teaching and learning, and how best to capitalize on the resources (both human and capital) available. As the single greatest predictor of student achievement, effective teaching is a critical topic of study and of particular significance, not only for Ontarians but, around the world. While it may be concluded that there is no singularly superior mode of appraising teaching performance, it is an entirely worthwhile enterprise to consider the manner in which the process of appraisal may better serve education stakeholders, particularly the students, in Ontario.
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*Educational Leadership, 28*-33.
Appendices

Appendix A: Experiences and Perceptions of Teacher Performance Appraisal Survey (EPTPA)

Section I: Letter of Information for Participants

Dear Participant,

My name is Jennifer McGrath and I am a graduate student in the Doctoral program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As a part of the requirements for my degree, I am completing a research project on the topic of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

The purpose of my research is to examine stakeholder perceptions of, and experiences with, current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario. I will be conducting this research by inviting all teachers currently employed in contract positions (who have experienced at least ONE Teacher Performance Appraisal) in public secondary schools in Ontario to complete an online survey. It is hoped that that this component of my study will provide insight into the actual outcomes of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

This survey is completely voluntary and no names will be recorded on the survey or used in the final report of this project. The completion of the survey should take no longer than 10-15 minutes. There are no known risks to participating in this study and there is no compensation for being a participant. All information collected for this study will be kept strictly confidential and only the researcher and Research Supervisor will have access to this information. The presentation of this data in the final written report will not allow for the identification of any individual.

As a teacher in Ontario, your contributions to this study may inform decision-making in regards to the process of teacher evaluation in Ontario, and for this your voice and your unique perspective of the process of evaluation is critical.

By completing this survey using surveymonkey.com, it is assumed that you are giving informed consent to participate in the study. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. However, because of the anonymous nature of the survey it will not be possible to remove your data once submitted. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

Sincerely,

Jennifer I. McGrath
Ph.D. Candidate, OISE/UT
(Insert Phone Number)
jennifer.mcgrath@mail.utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor Contact
Professor Carol Rolheiser, OISE/UT
carol.rolheiser@utoronto.ca

NOTICE RE SURVEY MONKEY (surveymonkey.com)
Please note that SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey.com) is a US company that houses its data servers in the US, subject to their Privacy Policy. The Privacy Policy (full version available at the following link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/privacypolicy.aspx) reserves SurveyMonkey’s right to disclose personal data as required by law, when the company believes that disclosure is necessary to protect their rights and/or to comply with a judicial proceeding, court order, or legal process served on them. This includes complying with the provisions of the USA Patriot Act, which gives the US government broad powers to access data stored on servers located within the US.

Section II: Demographic Details

1. With which gender do you most identify?
   Male
   Female

2. What is your age?
   25-35 years
   36-45 years
   46-55 years
   56 + years

3. What are your current contract holdings?
   < .5
   > .5
   1.0

4. How many years of you been teaching in Ontario?
   5-9
   10-14
   15-19
   20-24
   25 years or more

Section III: Agree or Disagree

For this section, please reflect upon your most recent Teacher Performance Appraisal. Please select the MOST appropriate response to each question. Where comment boxes are offered, please provide a frank, detailed explanation of your answer.
5. I found the appraisal process stressful
Agree
Disagree
Please Comment:

6. Overall, my appraisal process (including observations, pre and post meetings and summative report) gave me a clear idea about what my administrator expects of me.
Agree
Disagree

7. My school administrator(s) spend an adequate amount of time observing me in my classroom in order to give an accurate assessment of my teaching performance.
Agree
Disagree

8. Throughout the process of my appraisal, I was provided with specific, concrete feedback about my teaching practice.
Agree
Disagree
Please comment:

9. I spent more time preparing for my observation visit than I would prepare on a typical day.
Agree
Disagree

10. I would choose to participate in the appraisal process if it were not required of me.
Agree
Disagree

11. My administrator(s) appeared to value the appraisal process.
Agree
Disagree
Please comment:
12. I believe my appraisal was conducted in a fair manner, without bias, discrimination, arbitrariness, or bad faith.

Agree
Disagree

Please comment:

13. I talk openly with my colleagues about my performance appraisal.

Agree
Disagree

Please comment:

Section IV: Short Answer

For this section, reflect upon your most recent Teacher Performance Appraisal. Please answer each question in this section. Provide as much detail as possible to express your perception or opinion.

14. How did your appraisal impact your teaching practices?

15. What evidence of your teaching was considered in your appraisal? How was it used?

16. How did your appraisal process connect with your Annual Learning Plan (ALP)?

17. In what ways do you believe that your appraisal experience was consistent with or different from that of your colleagues?

18. What are, in your view, the benefits and deficiencies of the current practice of teacher performance appraisal in Ontario?

19. How do you believe teachers should be evaluated?

20. Please add any opinions or thoughts that you have on the topic of teacher performance appraisal that has not been addressed in this survey.
Appendix B: School Administrator and OSSTF Representative Interview Questions

1. Please describe your experience with the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA)?

2. How would you explain the training and preparation you received or were offered in order to effectively conduct a TPA? (for administrators)

3. What are the most significant challenges you face in the process of teacher evaluation?

4. In your view, what is the most important part of the TPA process?

5. In your view, how does the TPA process benefit teachers?

6. What changes would you make to the TPA?

7. What is the nature of the ways in which the current TPA is able to identify strengths and challenges in teaching?

8. To what degree do you believe the TPA supports teacher learning?

9. To what degree do you believe that the TPA can correct deficiencies in teaching?

10. How would you categorize the role of interpersonal relationships in the implementation of the TPA?

11. How aligned are the TPA and the overall culture of teaching/learning in Ontario?

12. In your view, how should teachers be evaluated?

13. What other comments would you like to make regarding teacher evaluation in Ontario that have not yet been addressed in our time together?
Appendix C: Ethical Approval Protocol

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 31333

February 27, 2015

Dr. N Carol Rolheiser
OFC OF TEACHING ADVANCEMENT
OFC OF THE PRESIDENT

Ms. Jennifer I. McGrath
OFC OF TEACHING ADVANCEMENT
OFC OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Dr. Rolheiser and Ms. Jennifer I. McGrath,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "The people and the policy: The possibilities and limitations of current evaluation practices for experienced secondary teachers in Ontario"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: February 27, 2015
Expiry Date: February 26, 2016
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe,
REB Manager
Appendix D: Letter of Information for EPTPA Survey Participants

Dear Participant,

My name is Jennifer McGrath and I am a graduate student in the Doctoral program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As a part of the requirements for my degree, I am completing a research project on the topic of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

The purpose of my research is to examine stakeholder perceptions of, and experiences with, current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario. I will be conducting this research by inviting all teachers currently employed in contract positions in public secondary schools in Ontario to complete an online survey. It is hoped that that this component of my study will provide insight into the actual outcomes of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

This survey is completely voluntary and no names will be recorded on the survey or used in the final report of this project. The completion of the survey should take no longer than 10-15 minutes. There are no known risks to participating in this study and there is no compensation for being a participant. All information collected for this study will be kept strictly confidential and only the researcher and Research Supervisor will have access to this information. The presentation of this data in the final written report will not allow for the identification of any individual.

As a teacher in Ontario, your contributions to this study may inform decision-making in regards to the process of teacher evaluation in Ontario, and for this your voice and your unique perspective of the process of evaluation is critical.

By completing this survey using surveymonkey.com, it is assumed that you are giving informed consent to participate in the study. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. However, because of the anonymous nature of the survey it will not be possible to remove your data once submitted. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

Sincerely,

Jennifer I. McGrath    Research Supervisor Contact Information
Ph.D. Candidate, OISE/UT                        Professor Carol Rolheiser, OISE/UT
(Insert Phone Number)                           carol.rolheiser@utoronto.ca
jennifer.mcgrath@mail.utoronto.ca

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Appendix E: Letter of Information for Interview Participants

Dear Participant,

My name is Jennifer McGrath and I am a graduate student in the Doctoral program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As a part of the requirements for my degree, I am completing a research project on the topic of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

The purpose of my research is to examine stakeholder perceptions of, and experiences with, current teacher evaluation practices in Ontario. I will be conducting this research by inviting administrators/OSSTF representatives currently employed or engaged with public secondary schools in Ontario to participate in interviews. It is hoped that that this component of my study will provide insight into the actual outcomes of teacher evaluation in Ontario.

The interview is completely voluntary and no names will be recorded or used in the final report of this project. The interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes. There are no known risks to participating in this study and there is no compensation for being a participant. All personal information collected for this study will be kept strictly confidential and only the researcher and Research Supervisor will have access to this information. The presentation of this data in the final written report will not allow for the identification of any individual. Your contributions to this research may inform decision-making in regards to teacher evaluation in Ontario; your voice and unique perspective as an administrator/OSSTF representative is critical to our understanding of the manner in which appraisals are conducted and experienced.

By completing the attached form, you are giving informed consent to participate in the study. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

Sincerely,

Jennifer I. McGrath
Ph.D. Candidate, OISE/UT
(Insert Phone Number)
jennifer.mcgrath@mail.utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor Contact Information
Professor Carol Rolheiser, OISE/UT
carol.rolheiser@utoronto.ca
Appendix F: Consent Form for Interview Participants

Agreement to Participate

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

____________________________________________________________________

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the session being facilitated by Jennifer McGrath. I have had the opportunity to ask the facilitator any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the facilitator of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the University of Toronto’s Social Sciences, Humanities & Education Research Ethics Board. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

________________________________________
Print Name

________________________________________
Signature

________________________________________
Date