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Delivering on the Promise of Support for Growth? Evaluator Perceptions of a New State Teacher Evaluation System

Noelle A. Paufler

Clemson University, npaufle@clemson.edu

Kelley M. King

University of North Texas, kelley.king@unt.edu

Ping Zhu

University of North Texas, PingZhu@my.unt.edu

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Noelle A. Paufler¹, Kelly M. King², and Ping Zhu²

Abstract

This cross-case synthesis gives voice to evaluators in EC-12 and higher education settings who are enacting a state-mandated system of teacher evaluation and support by examining their perceptions of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Questions addressed included: How do differently situated school administrators and supervisors 1) understand the model, 2) describe the implementation of its elements, 3) understand and enact their roles, and 4) assess the impact of the model? Data from EC-12 school principals and clinical supervisors at the university level indicates the system establishes a comprehensive definition of quality teaching. However, model complexity creates challenges. Coaching and mentoring requires time and expertise, and impact on student learning is unclear, raising the question of whether there is space for support through supervision in a model also used for accountability. Combining support with a reified model of evaluation leaves evaluators to negotiate inherent tensions.

Keywords

educational policy; accountability; instructional supervision; educational leadership; teacher preparation

¹ Clemson University, South Carolina, USA

² University of North Texas, Texas, USA

Corresponding Author:

Noelle A. Paufler (Department of Educational and Organizational Leadership Development, College of Education, Clemson University, 102 Tillman Hall, Clemson, SC 29634, USA)

Email: npaufle@clemson.edu

Introduction

A decades-long educational accountability movement has focused on measuring school and educator quality with recent policy shifting to teacher evaluation, often with high-stakes consequences. At the same time, critics have argued that educator preparation lacks rigor and coherence across the pre-service and in-service years (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018; Brandon & Derrington, 2019; Burns & Badiali, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hazi, 2019; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). To address concerns about coherence across the career stages, some states are creating evaluation systems that prescribe a standard view of teacher quality across districts and educator preparation programs (EPPs), such that the same models are being used with in-service and clinical teachers, preservice teachers working in an experienced mentor teacher's classroom as part of a professional preparation program. Existing studies examine evaluation practices and impacts in Early Childhood (EC)-12 (see, for example, Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Derrington & Martinez, 2019; Donaldson & Wolfen, 2018; Hazi, 2019; Robertson-Kraft & Zhang, 2018). Less attention has been given to the evaluation of clinical teachers (CTs) (Burns & Badiali, 2015; Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016a, 2016b; Dangel & Tanguay, 2014; Nolan & Hoover, 2010; Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). Yet, the implementation of new state-mandated evaluation systems across both EC-12 and EPPs engenders a need for a comparative understanding of the role played by evaluators and evaluation in different settings.

Having prescribed a common model of teacher evaluation across EC-12 and EPPs, Texas exemplifies national trends. The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS, 2019) purportedly combines evaluation (accountability) and support (supervision) (Paufler, King, & Zhu, 2020) through observations of professional practice and the use of student achievement data. T-TESS represents an opportunity to standardize teacher evaluation across the state, to shift the focus toward teacher growth through the evaluation process, and to align teacher evaluation across EC-12 and educator preparation. Texas required districts to adopt T-TESS or an aligned model beginning in 2016-2017. The next year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), which accredits all educator preparation programs within the state and has the statutory power to set mandates, required that EPPs train clinical supervisors responsible for evaluating CTs on T-TESS, which encouraged many to adopt T-TESS to evaluate CTs (Texas Administrative Code [TAC], Chapter 228, Sub-Chapter 35, §228.35(h)).

This cross-case synthesis compares the perceptions of evaluators in a public high school and clinical supervisors at a university-based EPP regarding their experiences during the first years of T-TESS implementation. These two cases are part of a multiple case study of teacher evaluation system implementation and impact in diverse settings (See Table 1). The goal of a cross-case synthesis is to “retain the integrity of the entire case and then to compare or synthesize any within-case patterns across the cases” (Yin, 2018, p. 196). To understand the broad implications of evaluation policy and practice for the profession, we asked: How do differently situated school administrators and supervisors 1) understand the model, 2) describe the implementation of its elements, 3) understand and enact their roles, and 4) assess the impact of the model? Herein, we discuss the experiences of EC-12 school administrators and clinical supervisors, referred to as administrators and supervisors, respectively. We use the term

“evaluators” to refer to the participants collectively, irrespective of the role and setting in which they work.

Conceptual Frameworks

Supervision has a long history in American schools (Ingle & Lindle, 2019; see also Kyte, 1930, 1931) with models of supervision refined over time (Ingle & Lindle, 2019). In 1969, Goldhammer proposed a supervision cycle with formalized procedures that remain embedded in supervision practices. As recent policy has shifted toward evaluation tied to accountability, researchers and policy makers have explored the distinction between supervision and evaluation. Nolan and Hoover (2005), for example, identify differences across seven dimensions: purpose, rationale, scope, relationship, data focus, expertise, and perspective. Burns and Badiali (2015) add an eighth dimension: degree of action. Current research documents the tensions inherent in combining supervision and evaluation (Burns & Badiali, 2015; Hazi, 1994, 2019).

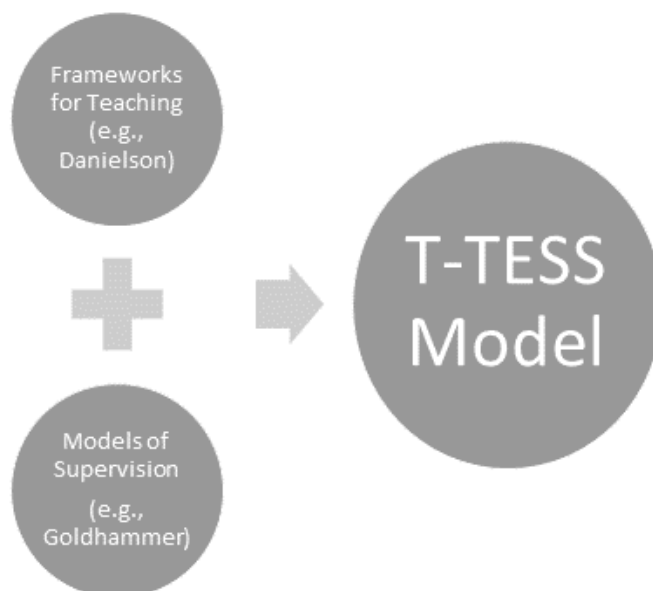
Texas has a history of educational policy focused on accountability, having required high-stakes testing for students and holding schools accountable based on student achievement, often in highly consequential ways for decades (Haney, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Valenzuela, 2015; Vasquez-Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Texas has long evaluated teachers as well (Texas Education Code [TEC] Sec. §21.351 & §21.352; see also Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; Bailey, 2018; Collins, 2014; Haney, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Tanner, 2016a, 2016b; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Teacher evaluation systems in Texas have evolved over time. As originally designed, T-TESS included: (a) goal-setting and a professional development plan, (b) observations of professional practices (using a detailed rubric with ratings weighted up to 80% of a teacher’s overall summative score), and (c) student achievement (based on one of four prescribed growth measures) (TAC, Chapter 15, Sub-Chapter AA, §150.1001(f)). With its state-promoted goal of teacher professional growth, T-TESS represents a departure from its predecessor, the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS, 2004), which essentially functioned as a “checklist” rubric for observing classroom instruction. The vast majority of districts across the state began evaluating teachers using the professional performance component (i.e., the T-TESS rubric) in the 2016-2017 academic year (Texas Education Agency [TEA], n.d.). Rather than adopt T-TESS, districts (and even individual schools) are allowed to develop an aligned alternative evaluation (i.e., appraisal) system supported by locally adopted policy and procedures and approved by TEA, per TEC §21.352 and TAC Chapter 15, Sub-Chapter AA, §150.1001(f). Data on how many districts (and/or schools) have chosen to develop an alternative system is not readily available; however, the number is likely to be relatively low as approximately 90% of districts used T-TESS’s state-developed predecessor, PDAS (Association of Texas Professional Educators, 2017). Considerations including personnel, time, and related costs would likely influence a district’s or school’s decision regarding whether to develop an alternative system. As a result of court settlements, the implementation of the student achievement component was delayed in most districts at the time of the study. Beginning in 2017-2018, Texas mandated that EPPs train supervisors on T-TESS. This encouraged EPPs that were not using T-TESS to adopt the rubric (the student achievement component is not used) in order to avoid redundant training.

T-TESS includes an observation rubric (see Grossman, 2011 for historical understanding of the concept of frameworks for teaching) as well as a system of practices for evaluators and teachers. Although Texas does not credit the theoretical/conceptual bases of T-TESS, we note that T-TESS's model of teaching parallels Danielson's Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2013), including the same four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Within each domain are multiple dimensions. On each of 16 dimensions, a teacher is rated on a 5-point scale. In total, the rubric comprises a substantial 16 x 5 matrix (see the full [T-TESS Rubric](#)) (T-TESS, 2019). Although this differs somewhat from Danielson's (2013) matrix of 22 components rated on a 4-point scale, both value student-centered teaching as indicated by the descriptors for the ratings, which for some dimensions/components range from teacher centered at the low end of the scale, to student centered at the high end.

Like the rubric, the system of practices which comprises T-TESS draws on existing models of supervision cycles, e.g., TAP (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012). The T-TESS (2019) cycle is similar to Goldhammer's (1969) five stages of supervision with goal setting, a pre-observation conference, a formal classroom observation, and a post-observation conference. Using T-TESS, teachers set professional goals in collaboration with their evaluator at the beginning of the academic year and are then rated based on observed evidence collected throughout the year through unscheduled walkthroughs (brief classroom observations), a pre-observation conference, a formal classroom observation of approximately 45 minutes, and a post-observation review. During this review, teachers are to be provided specific, timely feedback about strengths (i.e., reinforcement) and areas for growth (i.e., refinement), and offered professional development training that helps them meet their stated goals (Texas Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA), 2015-2016).

Figure 1. Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and embedded frameworks.



Prior to implementation of T-TESS, school administrators with evaluative responsibilities were required to attend state-sponsored training in an effort to ensure reliability and consistency in evaluations. To ensure that EPPs in Texas prepare teachers ready for T-TESS, the state required all supervisors of CTs to be trained to use it, thus prompting, but not requiring, EPPs to adopt either T-TESS or train supervisors on multiple instruments. Because T-TESS was designed for qualified practicing teachers, EPPs found a need to modify the rubric and procedures to serve the more intensive supervision necessary to support not-yet-qualified pre-service teachers and to meet the state-required minimum number of observations.

Evaluator Roles

Depending on the context for evaluation, evaluators include EC-12 school administrators (e.g., principals and associate/assistant principals) who evaluate in-service teachers or university-based supervisors of pre-service teachers. University-based supervisors include full-time university faculty or part-time adjunct faculty members (e.g., graduate students and retired school administrators or teachers).

Administrators. Existing research has examined school administrators' multiplicity of roles within a broader policy context. Shaked and Schetcher (2017) described the principal's role as a middle leader during policy, system, and reform implementation, which requires mediation between reform demands and the local context (e.g., teachers' attitudes and needs). In implementing reform, principals utilize different strategies, often acting as both an advocate of the reform (i.e., to earn teachers' support) and as a local policy-maker (i.e., by adjusting the reform to teachers' attitudes and needs) (Shaked & Schetcher, 2017). In the case of new, policy-driven teacher evaluation systems, principals function as middle leaders tasked with "making sense of and respond[ing] to messages" from federal, state, and district-level policymakers and the teachers they evaluate (Reid, 2018). Reid (2018) suggested that negotiating expectations and communicating among both groups is a challenging and complex part of the principal's role, especially given tensions between using teacher evaluation as a tool for both growth and accountability. Donaldson and Woulfin (2018) argued that principals use discretion in implementing teacher evaluation systems, most frequently making minor changes to the evaluation structure and reducing efforts to implement a system component, in order to better support teacher growth. Given their critical role, principals' voices as policy implementers need to be understood, especially in the context of state policy driven teacher evaluation systems such as T-TESS.

Supervisors. Within EPPs, evaluation of CTs falls almost entirely to supervisors. Existing research documents the challenges of this role. Burns and Badiali (2015), for example, found that supervisors are often marginalized in both EPPs and schools. They referred to supervisors as "hybrid educators" (Burns & Badiali, 2015, p. 419), referencing the fact that, although they are employed by university-based EPPs, supervisors spend their time in schools and represent the university to the school. They argued that supervisors "may be the most undervalued actors" in the teacher preparation system (Burns & Badiali, 2015, p. 419). Numerous studies have documented an absence of institutional leadership with respect to a clear statement of expectations of the supervisor's role as well as an absence of preparation and professional development (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016a; Dangel & Tanguay, 2014; McCormack,

Baecher, & Cuenca, 2019; Slick, 1998). However, particularly given the critical importance of the supervisor's role, few studies have included the voice of supervisors about their work and their beliefs about it (Levine 2011; McCormack, Baecher, & Cuenca, 2019). Current calls for closer attention to clinical phases of educator preparation (AACTE, 2018), as well as the intensified focus on evaluation for accountability within the profession, highlight the need to understand the perceptions and practices of supervisors regarding their experiences.

Impact on Professional Practice

The long-standing tension between accountability (evaluation) and supervision (support) within such systems is widely recognized. As defined by Hazi (2019), supervision is essentially “about working with teachers to improve teaching” (p. 14). Evaluation ostensibly ensures minimal teacher competence and provides evidence for decisions about employment and compensation. Evidence that evaluation systems improve teaching is limited (Hazi, 2019). Rather, Hazi (2019) argues that many evaluation systems task supervisors/evaluators with the duty “to ensure compliance with bureaucratic mandates yet protect and forge relationships with teachers to work effectively with them” (p. 13). These tensions are inherent to the T-TESS model, which incorporates elements of both accountability and supervision. Compared to Texas' previous statewide educator evaluation model, the rubric is more detailed, and the rating system has been recalibrated to better discriminate between performance levels, presumably for accountability. Further, T-TESS includes a controversial measure of student achievement which has been delayed in implementation. Despite the fact that T-TESS will be used for more intensive evaluative scrutiny of teacher practice, it has been posited as a growth-based model, with an enhanced focus on a cycle of supervision that includes feedback and coaching (T-TESS, 2019). The T-TESS model presumes that evaluators and teachers have both the opportunity and capacity to build and sustain the type of trusting, supportive relationships that are needed to foster professional growth. As defined by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2019), trust is “the willingness to be vulnerable based on the confidence that someone is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (p. 215; see also Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Competent evaluators whose intent is to build the capacity of all teachers in a school by improving the professional practices of those who are struggling while supporting those who are high-performing are able to garner trust and exercise discretion in their roles (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2019). The impact of these shifts on the lived experiences of the evaluators is the focus of this paper.

Methods

This cross-case analysis is part of a larger multiple case study examining the implementation and impact of new teacher evaluation systems in multiple settings (EC-12 school districts and EPPs). The first case study examined administrator and teacher perceptions of the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system in a large, suburban, fast-growth school district in the United States before the passage of ESSA (2015) (Paufler & Clark, 2019; Paufler & Sloat, 2020). The second and third case studies examined perceptions of T-TESS in one high school in a large, suburban, fast-growth district and a large university-based EPP (see Table 1).

For this analysis, we included data collected in two settings (i.e., the second and third case studies above). The high school enrolled approximately 2,000 students and employed

approximately 100 certified teachers/staff and five administrators. The district began using the T-TESS model to evaluate teachers in 2016-2017. The EPP has 500-600 initial certification completers annually in 29 certification tracks across a traditional undergraduate track or a post-baccalaureate certification program. Prior to the implementation of T-TESS at the EPP, the field director attended state-mandated training and subsequently provided training for the EPP's supervisors who would be responsible for using T-TESS with their CTs.

Table 1: *Multiple Case Study*

Case	Context	Participants	Data Sources
State 1 LEA (One School District)	Teacher Evaluation System Implementation (Year 1)	Administrators Teachers	Administrator Interviews ($n=16$) Teacher Interviews ($n=12$) Administrator Survey ($n=43/66$) Teacher Survey ($n=1,051/1,444$) Teacher Focus Group ($n=13$)
Texas LEA (One High School)	T-TESS Implementation (Year 1)	Administrators Teachers	*Administrator Interviews ($n=3$) Teacher Survey ($n=64/87$) Teacher Questionnaire ($n=65$) Teacher Focus Group ($n=7$)
Texas EPP	T-TESS Implementation (Year 1)	Field Director Clinical Supervisors Clinical Teachers	*Field Director Interview ($n=1$) *Supervisor Survey ($n=22/32$) *Supervisor Interviews ($n=7$) CT Survey ($n=83/331$) CT Focus Groups ($n=2/12, 9/19$) CT Interviews ($n=1$)

*Data sources included in this cross-case synthesis. Note: LEA refers to a local education agency, and EPP refers to an educator preparation program.

Data Sources

Data synthesized here include interviews with three high school administrators, interviews with the field director and seven supervisors at the EPP (with pseudonyms here), and a survey sent to 32 EPP supervisors, with 22 responding (68.8% response rate). The small number of high school principals precluded administering the survey in that setting.

Interviews. At the high school, we conducted interviews in summer 2017 with the principal, an associate, and an assistant principal using a semi-structured protocol. The protocol included a total of 19 open-ended questions (including prompts) intended to solicit their perceptions regarding (a) the purpose of evaluating teachers (i.e., in general and as related to the design and implementation of T-TESS); (b) measuring teacher quality (e.g., content adequacy of the T-TESS rubric, future use of student achievement data); (c) impact of T-TESS on their own professional practice; (d) improving T-TESS implementation (e.g., related to the evaluation process, training, the system as a whole); and (e) additional comments (i.e., feedback on T-TESS or teacher evaluation in general). In spring 2019, we conducted interviews with the field director and supervisors at the EPP using the same protocol with questions modified to reflect slightly

different roles and terminology. The interviews from both settings yielded audio-recorded (approximately 311 minutes) and transcribed (approximately 126 pages) data (Yin, 2018).

Survey. The online survey was sent to all supervisors who had evaluated CTs in spring 2018, the first full semester of system implementation. The survey included a total of 18 closed-ended and four open-ended items related to perceptions of the evaluation rubric and process, implementation, and impact. In total, 68.8% of supervisors ($n=22/32$) responded to the survey. One of the respondents did not complete the entire survey, which is reflected in the total response numbers reported below. Most of the respondents ($n=21/22$) had supervised more than four student CTs in the spring 2018 semester. All of them had worked as classroom teachers, while less than half had been evaluators/appraisers in an EC-12 setting or been administrators before.

Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data, we applied key methods from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1995; Yin, 2018) and engaged in multiple rounds of ‘constant comparison’ (Erickson, 1986) to analyze responses to the open-ended survey items as well as interview and focus group transcripts. During inductive coding, we identified instances or units of analysis and their frequency before collapsing the code clusters into major and minor themes. This allowed us to generate assertions regarding participants’ perceptions of teacher evaluation in general and T-TESS in particular. Since the purpose was to better understand supervisors’ perceptions of teacher evaluation, descriptive statistics for closed-ended survey items were appropriate. We compared the qualitative themes to the survey results to construct a multi-dimensional understanding of perceptions.

Findings

Key findings from this study suggest the teacher evaluation system establishes a comprehensive definition of quality teaching. However, model complexity creates challenges which are described further below.

Field Director’s Perspective

An interview with the EPP field director provided insight into the introduction of T-TESS at this EPP and others within the state. As the administrator responsible for implementing T-TESS, he provided information about the training he conducted for supervisors and was able to speak to T-TESS challenges and impact.

The interview with the field director highlighted the state’s extensive role in T-TESS. He noted that the state deadline for supervisor training prompted this EPP to replace the previous internally-designed system on a short time frame. He understood the state’s rationale to be that because the T-TESS training is “overarching,” and “any instrument you use, supervisors would benefit.” For this EPP, adopting T-TESS “just made sense” because in T-TESS training, supervisors “have to rate [teachers] from a video” using the T-TESS instrument. The high cost of training offered by state-approved agencies led the field director to become a T-TESS trainer in

order to train the EPP's supervisors at minimal cost. Each semester, he conducts a one-time, all-day, state-mandated training for new supervisors that is structured in two main parts: (a) understanding T-TESS (i.e., "the rationale for what you're doing and explaining the purpose of T-TESS") and (b) using T-TESS (i.e., watching the videos and discussing topics such as how to "calibrate, unpack the rubric, [understand] the difference in the rubric so you can see the delineation from teacher-focused to student-focused"). He noted that the state provides the PowerPoint and sample videos used to "calibrate" ratings, and that the EPP keeps a list of who has had the training "in case we are audited by the state." Asked what additional training he needed, he stated he "always want[s] training on coaching" because it could help him "be a better trainer" for supervisors, noting, "It's so helpful when you sit down and have someone as the observer to talk to you about things you do well and that you need to improve on as a coach." However, because he does not "have [the] hours" of state-approved coaching training, he is not able to provide coaching training for the supervisors.

Asked about T-TESS's impact at the EPP, the field director noted more work was needed. He stated CTs had not been offered training, and that the rubric had not been incorporated into course work. To address this gap, he had "sent out limited, but some, information to help students [learn] about specific domains and dimensions." He spoke of T-TESS's potential for positive impact: "I think that the message of it being about growth and not an 'I got you' kind of an instrument...I think that's when you see...a change in [teacher] effectiveness," but noted that "it takes time to sit down and have conversations, meaningful conversations" needed for improvement. Noting that time is the "Achilles heel" of educators, he predicted, "Until you are ready to invest that time, I don't believe that we're going to get a whole lot better." He highlighted a greater understanding of T-TESS and focus on conversations about teaching as critical to creating a growth mindset around the T-TESS.

Evaluators' Perspectives

In this cross-case analysis, we examined four research questions: How do differently situated school administrators and supervisors 1) understand the model, 2) describe the implementation of its elements, 3) understand and enact their roles, and 4) assess the impact of the model?

Understanding T-TESS as a growth model. Evaluators generally described the purpose of teacher evaluation broadly and T-TESS in particular as supporting teacher professional growth. Administrators understood and valued the model as teacher-focused, repeatedly citing a focus on growth. In their interviews, they emphasized the importance of building relationships with teachers through T-TESS as a way to support growth. For example, one administrator affirmed her desire to work collaboratively with teachers on T-TESS but worried that teachers would be skeptical of her commitment to the process:

[A teacher might say,] "This know-it-all." I don't want to be in that position, but I want to be more of a team player....We're gonna grow together, because, at the end, we're going to make sure that we're doing the best for our students.

Reflecting on her own experience as a teacher, the administrator added, "I didn't enjoy the process at all, because of that—the need for that relationship piece [that] was not there." As an

evaluator, she tries “to focus on building the relationships, especially in my pre- and post-conferences.” Administrators frequently discussed relationship-building as critical to fulfilling the ideal purpose of evaluation; however, in their survey responses, supervisors varied in their perceptions of the purpose.

When asked about the purpose(s) for evaluating CTs, ideally and in reality (in the event those differed), most supervisors ($n=14/21$, 66.7%) cited helping CTs improve their professional practice. For example, supervisors described T-TESS as “coaching more than it is evaluation” and “an opportunity to give them [CTs] feedback and for them to...improve.” However, some ($n=4/21$, 19.1%) indicated the ideal purpose *should* be to determine whether CTs have the teaching competency necessary for certification. When asked what *is* the purpose in this setting, supervisors were divided with slightly more than half ($n=12/21$, 57.1%) citing professional growth and one-third ($n=7/21$, 33.3%) citing certification competency. One supervisor, who emphasized accountability as the purpose, described T-TESS as a “way to measure all teachers equally”, noting that it provides “a uniform way of comparing teachers’ ability and what happens in their classroom.” Another supervisor noted that T-TESS “gives everyone an opportunity to see what the [CT] is doing, [and] if they’re doing what they need to be doing.” A few supervisors who emphasized accountability also acknowledged, however, that some CTs did not seem to understand what exactly they were supposed to be doing, according to T-TESS.

Evaluators did not question the need for a state-wide definition of quality teaching or the state’s decision to encourage the use of T-TESS as a measure of teacher quality, first in EPPs and then throughout a teacher’s career. Administrators and supervisors expressed confidence in their own general understanding of the T-TESS model, as defined by the state to include two measures, specifically professional practice and student learning.

Administrators and supervisors believed that T-TESS is comprehensive, accounting for most of the tasks of teaching, but administrators found the rubric “way too long.” Asked if “T-TESS measures the most important aspects of teaching” and “which domains or components, if any” were missing, one administrator indicated that the rubric was comprehensive. Another noted that she could not say if anything was missing, because the rubric was so complex, adding, “You would assume [it’s comprehensive], because there’s so much on it.” Several supervisors noted that T-TESS fails to consider relationship building and rapport between teachers and their students. In response to an open-ended survey question about what should be added to T-TESS, five supervisors referenced relationships, e.g., “more emphasis on character and human interaction with students.” One supervisor, a former principal, explained,

It’s difficult to measure sometimes the relationship between the student and the teacher, that cordiality, have they built that. Because I know as a principal that’s one of the questions we always ask. How do you motivate your students? Have you built relationships with them? I’m not sure it totally measures that but other than that, I think it does a pretty good job on instruction and the classroom environment.

In their survey responses, supervisors ($n=8/20$, 40% disagreed; $n=2/20$, 10% strongly disagreed) also faulted the instrument for not accounting for student demographics.

Not only did administrators and supervisors cite some missing components, they also questioned the ability to adequately capture “everything that a teacher does” in one or a few observations. For example, one administrator argued, “You can't cover, on an evaluation, the passion, the dedication, the preparation that they've done months in advance. You can't capture everything in a one-time snapshot.” Nevertheless, she stated, “I think it's a good instrument.” Supervisors were even more concerned about limited observation times than the administrators. One supervisor noted that she does not “recommend only three evaluations rather than four”, noting that having one additional observation required was “critical for most of [her] CTs to have the opportunity for coaching/feedback in order to improve.” In an interview, one supervisor also recognized that, as opposed to principals who are in the same building, “Whenever we do it, we're basing it on what we see on that day, with that lesson, with that group of kids. So I think it's ... I think that needs to be understood”. Despite the flaws noted in the rubric and in the supervision cycle, across survey and interview data, supervisors ($n=15/21$, 71.4% agreed; $n=3/21$, 14.3% strongly agreed) and principals indicated that T-TESS generally captures the teachers' impact on motivation, attitudes, and engagement in the learning environment.

Implementation of T-TESS. Evaluators described implementation of the growth-oriented aspects of T-TESS in terms of the challenges they faced. In particular, evaluators cited the importance of adequate training and time to fully implement T-TESS. In the district setting, administrators believed they were well trained but “muddle[d] through” the process due to the complexity of the model. In addition, they noted that some parts of the process were omitted or rushed due to time constraints. For example, asked whether she needed more training, one administrator stated:

I just want to spend time. I mean, you don't have time at all....Every time you sit down to say I'm gonna – something else is going on. I really want time to spend in the classroom. I really want to be a very, very strong instructional leader, because I want to make a difference.

All the administrators recognized the need for more time to work together, develop consistent understanding, and increase reliability in order to implement T-TESS in a way that is fair to all teachers. At the EPP, all supervisors agreed ($n=15/21$, 71.4%) or strongly agreed ($n=6/21$, 28.6%) that they had been well trained. The vast majority, however, also agreed ($n=12/21$, 57.1%) or strongly agreed ($n=2/21$, 9.5%) they would like more training. Most suggested that greater clarification or a better definition of the rubric criteria would be helpful. Supervisors agreed ($n=5/21$, 23.8%) or strongly agreed ($n=13/21$, 61.9%) that CTs need more training as well, and in interviews, stated that CTs need to experience T-TESS throughout their coursework.

Emphasis on some components of T-TESS over others as well as various time constraints impacted how the evaluation process was completed. The focus on understanding the rubric and applying it fairly (primarily by scoring reliably) resulted in limited time and attention paid to important growth-focused elements of the cycle in both settings. One administrator indicated that “we try to come together to calibrate, [and] recalibrate, because we all have to be on the same page. We spent seven hours together on a Saturday trying to calibrate with T-TESS, and I still don't think...we did a good job at all.” The focus on calibration and the timing of the evaluation cycle impacted implementation and opportunities for the growth-focused activities of the

evaluation cycle. One administrator noted that “you’re also supposed to talk about goals. This district requires us to do our post-observation conferences for some people in February. How can I be talking about a teacher’s goals for next fall in February?”

Supervisors also reported that some growth-focused elements of the cycle were deemphasized. In their survey responses, all supervisors reported that *all/nearly all* of their CTs participated in/completed the minimum of at least two observation cycles (i.e., preconference, formal classroom observation, and post-conference) as well as an end of year summative conference. However, supervisors reported that goal setting and a professional development plan (i.e., one of the three components of the T-TESS model, per the state) had not been completed with many CTs. Only one-fifth of supervisors ($n=4/21$, 19.0%) indicated that *all/nearly all* of their clinical teachers completed that step, while nearly half ($n=10/21$, 47.6%) and one-third ($n=7/21$, 33.3%) reported that they engaged in goal setting or creating a professional development plan with only *some* or *a few/none* of their CTs, respectively. In addition, pre-conferences were held online asynchronously rather than in person and post-conferences occurred right after the observation before supervisors had the opportunity to review the evidence from the observation and assign rubric ratings. Therefore, CTs received the rubric feedback after the post-conference with limited opportunity to reflect with supervisors. However, neither the lack of emphasis on goal setting and professional development planning or in-person interaction was emphasized as being problematic.

Understanding and enacting roles. Evaluators generally understood their role vis a vis T-TESS as fostering teacher growth and valued the communication with their teachers built into the T-TESS process. Administrators noted that “teachers want to talk about their teaching” and cited the importance of building trusting relationships. One administrator described the importance of communication, explaining that she “value[s] the conversations with teachers” and has “always thought teachers need to talk to [her] about what [she] is going to see, and they need the opportunity to explain what [she] did or didn’t see.” Adding that she “knows what good teaching looks like”, this administrator expressed concern that she is “not a good coach [and] sometimes just tell[s] them [teachers] what needs to be fixed” even though she “know[s] that’s not the most appropriate way.” Another administrator highlighted “relationships as very important,” noting that “that’s where [she] think[s] [she has] grown.” Adding that she does not “want to ever come into any position, saying, ‘You need to....’” or “bark[ing] these orders down” to teachers, she would rather ask how she “can help.” The third administrator tied support for teachers to teacher quality as defined in the T-TESS rubric:

We want to be there to support our teachers. I think it ties in really well with T-TESS and providing them support, and the rubric itself you’re looking at in T-TESS, it spells out what you need to do to get there...when you have options for collaboration and communication, you feel like you have a partner on the journey, and that’s not always been there in an evaluation tool, so to know that there’s support instead of it just being a gotcha.

However, despite their best intentions of supporting their teachers, administrators noted the difficulty in “carr[ing] out the time to have those opportunities to discuss, reflect, to plan, [and] to provide feedback.” They also noted a need for training in how to better coach teachers.

Supervisors also valued developing connections with CTs. They described mentorship as the most valued component of their role but did not explicitly raise concerns about having enough time or the opportunity to provide feedback. When asked to recommend possible improvements and identify any needed training, supervisors described what would help them fulfill their role as a mentor. In their open-ended survey responses, a few supervisors focused on improvements they believed would help clinical teachers grow, citing, for example, a greater emphasis on “relationship building [between the supervisor and CT] and goal setting” and “[an additional] observation as [an] opportunity for coaching/feedback.” However, supervisors also frequently described improvements that would support their use of T-TESS for evaluation (e.g., additional time for training/practice [using the rubric], more resources such as a supervisor handbook, better videos for calibrating ratings). When identifying training needs, supervisors also referenced the technical components of both the rubric and evaluation process. For example, in open-ended survey responses, supervisors requested “[to be] able to see a video clip of a classroom lesson and then see how a ‘trained’ or ‘expert’ evaluator would respond”; “training on how to ‘script’ the entire lesson and then categorize the feedback”; and information to help them “stay current with any changes or modifications in T-TESS.” Unlike administrators who cited a need for training on coaching, supervisors emphasized developing their technical precision in using T-TESS.

Impact of T-TESS. Although evaluators were hesitant to assess the impact of T-TESS after one year of implementation, they saw relationship building as the area of greatest potential. Administrators noted that their relationship with their teachers had the greatest impact on their own professional practice. They were unsure about the impact of T-TESS on teachers in the initial year but were optimistic about its potential as a growth tool. They believed T-TESS “ties in perfectly” with school-wide instructional efforts. In interviews, supervisors also described the impact of T-TESS on their own professional practice as positive (e.g., keeping knowledge up to date, receiving additional professional development). Survey respondents ($n=17/21$, 81.0%) agreed, citing T-TESS as providing clarity/focus on good/effective teaching ($n=15/19$, 79.0%); creating dialogue, communication, and discussion about good teaching practices with their CTs ($n=14/19$, 73.7%); and prompting greater reflection on their own practices ($n=12/19$, 63.2%). Supervisors ($n=16/21$, 76.2%) also cited a positive impact on their CTs, again most frequently by providing clarity/focus on good teaching ($n=15/20$, 75.0%), creating dialogue ($n=15/20$, 75.0%), and prompting greater reflection ($n=13/20$, 65.0%). However, supervisors were not all in agreement on whether T-TESS had an impact on student achievement with approximately two-thirds ($n=12/19$, 63.2%) perceiving a positive impact.

Discussion and Conclusion

When evaluators in different settings are mandated by the state to use specific evaluation practices in order to vertically align expectations for teacher performance based on a common definition of quality teaching, their voices about the supervisory work that they do must be heard. This study bridges the supervision and clinical teacher education literature to compare the experiences of evaluators across settings with T-TESS in terms of how they understand the model, describe its implementation, understand and enact their roles, and assess its impact on teacher growth. Our findings suggest that evaluators implementing T-TESS in both settings

understand T-TESS to be establishing a comprehensive definition of quality teaching broadly accepted among evaluators in EC-12 and university settings. Further, evaluators have accepted and value T-TESS as a model focused on teacher growth. However, the complexity of the model creates challenges and necessitates support for evaluators in both settings.

The technical accuracy (e.g., inter-rater reliability) required to use the model for accountability has, to date, consumed the time and attention of evaluators, shaping their preparation and role in implementation. The accountability aspect of T-TESS, particularly inter-rater reliability of scores, appears to be a priority set by the state and emphasized in T-TESS training at every level. Clearly, this concern about implementation is reflected among evaluators who describe receiving training and using time to master these technical elements. Participants in both settings stated they believe that the greatest potential for growth and improvement through the T-TESS process lies in the elements of support built into the model, e.g., coaching, conferencing, and goal-setting. However, the implementation efforts and training so far have focused on understanding and “unpacking” the rubric and achieving inter-rater reliability in scoring. These are elements of accountability, not support.

The role of coaching and support built into T-TESS also requires time to implement effectively, yet participants indicated that they did not have adequate time for coaching. Although they understood this as a key component of their role, evaluators said little about external pressures to improve coaching, which was not emphasized in the introductory state-mandated training. Thus, compliance with state accountability demands overshadowed the potential for the evaluator role to focus on support for growth, even in a system that is promoted as growth-based.

In terms of assessing T-TESS impact, evaluators were unsure, given that they were in the early stages of implementation and their efforts so far had focused on technical accuracy. Notably, principals in this study did not suggest that teachers should not be evaluated nor did they explicitly express an interest in developing alternative evaluation models. Rather, they frequently described the value of improving their skills in coaching and mentoring, especially given the perceived opportunity to focus on impacting teacher growth within T-TESS. Given their keen experiences of time pressures and limited role in developing models and practices of evaluation and supervision, they may not have had the opportunity to raise questions about the suitability of integrating elements of both evaluation and supervision in practice.

Inherent tensions between evaluation and supervision, as found in this study, are also reflected in existing research (see, for example, Burns & Badiali, 2015; Hazi 1994, 2019). Tschannen-Moran (2009, 2019) suggests that a focus on compliance and control is associated with bureaucratic leadership orientations that undermine trust and diminish teacher professionalism (e.g., discretion in their practice), making the structures for teacher professional development (e.g., Professional Learning Communities) more difficult to establish. The ways in which evaluation impacts trust between evaluators and teachers across settings merits further examination. A systems-level culture of trust has implications regarding effective supervision for principals and teachers in EC-12 settings as well as university supervisors and CTs. This could have implications in terms of whether the growth focus promised in evaluation necessitates placing CTs in schools with an established culture of trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2009) or providing professional development to university supervisors aimed at fostering trusting relationships with

their CTs. However, teacher evaluation policy and associated systems seem to disregard the need for trust in the mentoring and coaching relationship, or at best presume that trust is already present or easily cultivated between evaluators and teachers. Creating trusting and open cultures requires focusing on supervision over evaluation, which raises the question of whether supervision is possible in an evaluative setting (Burns & Badiali, 2015).

The field of educational leadership recognizes the role of the principal in fostering trust (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2019) and thus the importance of the preparation principals need to serve as mentors and instructional leaders (Kee et al., 2010). Additional emphasis on preparing principals for these roles and providing them the time to develop and apply their coaching skills is even more critical in changing policy contexts (Alvoid & Black, 2014). As education policy focuses more intensely on both pre-service clinical experiences (AACTE, 2018) and teacher evaluation practices across the profession, the practices principals need for effective instructional supervision are also needed by supervisors in educator preparation (Burns & Badiali, 2015). Our research suggests that coaching may be the most welcome and important element of evaluation and also the most neglected from a policy perspective.

Research Implications

This study suggests future research is needed to address the following questions about whether teacher professional growth at various career stages can be enhanced by systems of evaluation and supervision:

1. Can a common definition of teacher quality apply across career stages? Can a single model measure the effectiveness of both in-service and clinical teachers?
2. What happens after the first year? Is the focus on technical implementation and calibration part of a learning curve or an essential overwhelming feature of the conflation of evaluation and supervision? Can and do evaluators shift focus from the technical aspects of evaluation to the supervisory elements of mentoring and coaching in future years?
3. Should evaluation practices differ across settings and roles, for example in EPPs versus EC-12 schools?
4. What organizational factors (e.g., trust, leadership) impact the relationship between evaluators/supervisors and teachers/CTs? What relationships are needed between schools and EPPs to establish functional systems for teacher support?
5. To what extent can a model with both evaluative and supervisory elements impact teacher growth? What systemic and organizational structures would be required?

In general, further research incorporating the voices of both the evaluators and those evaluated is needed. Future studies that incorporate a systems view of the impact of evaluation policy at all levels of the system could illuminate the potential for or limitations of using policy actions to foster the necessary conditions for supervision that supports teacher growth. As noted in this study, T-TESS combines a purported system of support with a reified model of evaluation tied to accountability, leaving evaluators to negotiate the tensions noted in existing literature (Hazi, 2019). The findings of this study, reflecting the voices of participants, raise the enduring question of whether there is space for supervision in evaluation systems.

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Author Biographies

Noelle A. Paufler is an Assistant Professor – P-12 and the Program Coordinator for the Ed.D. in Education Systems Improvement Science at Clemson University. She has experience as a high school social studies teacher, district administrator, and applied researcher in high-need districts and schools. Her research interests include K-12 educational policy, specifically how educational leaders enact accountability policy into practice and its impact on teachers and students.

Kelley M. King is an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Assistant Department Chair for Initial Certification Programs at the University of North Texas. Her research interests include the history and politics of schooling and education reform, with particular focus on the lives of teachers and education for democratic citizenship. Prior to coming to UNT, she worked for ten years as a public school teacher in Texas.

Ping Zhu is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas. Her dissertation focuses on the effect of parental involvement on teenagers' learning motivation and well-being. Her research interests include parental involvement, high school dropouts, learning motivation, learning engagement, school success, children's perception of parenting, and teenagers' mental health.