

Educational Leadership as Influence: The Provision of Critical Teacher Feedback to Students

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Educational Leadership as Influence: The Provision of Critical Teacher Feedback to Students

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor any material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Lal.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Reshmika Lal

ABSTRACT

Effective feedback is regarded as one of the most influential factors in students' achievement, yet many teachers find themselves unable to meet the demands of providing feedback in secondary school English classes. Teachers recognise the importance of providing effective feedback to students but face circumstances that limit their ability to do so. Therefore, it is important that educational leaders provide teachers with resources and professional development that will enable them to be able to fulfil this crucial aspect of teaching and learning.

This study set out to examine teachers' perceptions about feedback and the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers in providing this. The three research questions guiding this study were: What are teachers' perceptions and understandings of what critical feedback means to students in secondary school English classrooms? What strategies do teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback to students about their learning? In what ways do educational leaders influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback in English? In this qualitative study, 32 secondary school English teachers completed an electronic questionnaire and five participated in semi-structured interviews. The data collected were used to identify the themes and commonalities across the schools.

The findings indicated that there was a general acceptance and awareness amongst teachers that feedback is an influential factor which supports students' progress. The teachers emphasised that successful feedback can be provided to students if certain conditions exist. These conditions included: building relational trust, having access to professional development and protecting teacher time.

This research emphasises that school leaders need to develop and implement a balanced professional development programme that aids in enhancing teachers' pedagogy and, as such, improve their self-efficacy. The recommendations arising from this study have implications for schools that include: educational leaders investing resources into a sustainable and effective professional development programme that is differentiated to meet the needs of the teachers. Another recommendation arising from

this research is the importance of educational leaders attempting to balance the class size and the administrative responsibilities of teachers; and supporting teachers in developing a sound pedagogy in relation to feedback through developing relational trust with teachers.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers in their provision of critical feedback to students within secondary school English classrooms in New Zealand. It explores the perceived benefits and difficulties teachers experience in providing feedback to the students. This study has been conducted in order to identify and critically examine the conditions and tools educational leaders can provide to facilitate feedback processes. This chapter presents the research rationale together with the research aims that underpin the questions. A brief description of the research methodology and data collection is also provided.

Research rationale

Writing is an essential component of learning in the English curriculum area as a core subject, and students find themselves writing in a range of genre for specific purposes and audience. Students have to express their thoughts and views on a number of issues, ideas and texts through writing. This is also a critical skill to have in order for students to attain the necessary literacy credits to complete their National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualifications and to gain entrance to a New Zealand university. Much of the literature I have reviewed (Hattie 1999; Hattie &Timperley, 2007; Hounsell, 2003, 2007; Sadler, 1998) defines feedback as reducing the gap between where a student is with their learning, and where they should be.

Conversely, students often fail to see formative feedback as helpful (Rawlins, 2010). The literature (Hattie &Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 2010; Shute, 2008) suggests that feedback is only considered useful by the students if it contains enough details about their errors and how they can address these errors. Furthermore, research findings support the idea that feedback accompanied by a grade leads to the students ignoring the feedback given, as they consider the grade to be the most important information provided to them (Peterson & Irving, 2008). This idea is also supported in later research by Irving, Harris and Peterson (2011) who explain how comments alongside a grade served no purpose as the students only focused on the grade.

As an educator in New Zealand secondary school, I am consistently being presented with research justifying the effectiveness of feedback and its perceived benefits to students. Professional development programmes at schools citing Hattie's (2009) meta-research and effect size is the current preoccupation of those leading in this area. One of the factors identified through this meta-research is that for feedback to be effective, it has to be timely. Lack of time and the existence of large classes in secondary schools have a negative impact on teachers and their delivery of feedback to students. The constraints of a typical classroom are also explored in a study by Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, and Litjens (2008) who state that the provision of feedback becomes a complex issue when dealing with larger class sizes. These writers also identify time constraints as one of the key factors which has an impact on the provision of feedback.

The assumption of the research by Hounsell et al.(2008) is that students will use feedback in order to self-regulate. According to Zimmerman (2001), self-regulated learners are those who have an awareness of the facts they know and also possess the skills to know what they do not know. Self-regulated learners are able to take charge of their own learning and can actively reflect on the learning they have done. In order for the students to be able to respond to the feedback, they should be able to understand the feedback. This is referred to as the 'feedback loop' by Hounsell et al.(2008) who posit that within this loop there are different steps which need to be completed with the final step requiring the learner to be able to apply what he or she has learned from the feedback to a subsequent assessment.

According to Hounsell et al. (2008), students should be provided with initial support regarding the expectations and requirements for any task. This is in consensus with research by Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins and Reid (2009), who state that students learn best when they take charge of their own learning. Taking charge of setting the success criteria and learning intentions allows students to have a point of reference when completing the task. Students should be encouraged to seek further clarification on what the activity requires them to do. Once complete the students can submit the task for feedback on their performance. This feedback must be reviewed by the students in order to feedforward into the next task they complete. The feedback loop is achieved when students apply the feedback provided by teachers. These steps can be also utilized

for assessments students are required to complete as part of their learning. The following diagram outlines these steps.

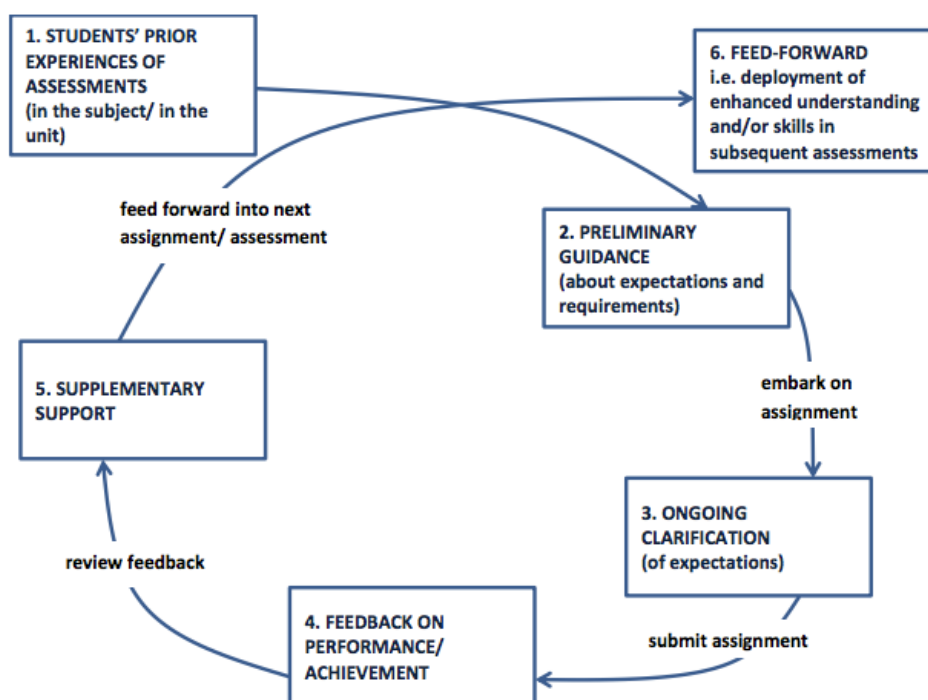


Figure 1.1. The guidance and feedback loop: main steps (Source: Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, & Litjens, 2008, p. 22).

In order for students to apply feedback, they must have a strong self-belief and motivation allowing them to believe they can apply the feedback they have been given. Studies by Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007) focus on the self-efficacy beliefs in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. This study by Pajares et al. (2007) explains how teachers should provide feedback that is private and personal to ensure the experience is perceived favourably by the students. This may not be possible in secondary schools due to the size of classes. In developing his theory of self-efficacy, Bandura (1977) postulated that a person's belief about his/her personal efficacy can determine how the person reacts and the level of persistence the person displays when confronted with obstacles or adverse events. As such, students' self-efficacy plays a critical role in their ability to access the feedback.

The role of educational leaders

Tomorrow's Schools (Lange, 1988) enabled the creation of self-managing and self-governing schools, as part of wide-ranging reform to public education in New Zealand.

As a result, the role principals have in schools has evolved to where the principal is responsible for the quality of the teaching and learning programmes at the school. He or she is also the Chief Executive Officer accountable for the management of the school (Brundett, Fitzgerald, & Sommefeldt, 2006). This creates a challenge for schools and educational leaders to ensure quality teaching and learning takes place and that the audit process conducted by the Education Review Office (ERO) classifies a school as an effective school. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) also highlight the important role the principal plays in promoting teacher learning and development. The principal, together with the senior leadership team, can influence student outcomes by leading learning in the school. This role could include providing access to regular and relevant professional development for teachers to improve their pedagogy and to align the teaching and learning in accordance with the school vision. My research study also highlights the importance of a well-structured and planned professional development which is differentiated for the teacher needs to facilitate teacher pedagogy development in the matter of effective feedback.

The pivotal role school leaders play in the development of teacher pedagogy is crucial for the delivery of the curriculum. DuFour and Marzano (2009) also share these sentiments by highlighting that schools need “learning leaders who focus on evidence of learning” (p. 63). This focus towards learning requires leaders to develop conditions which facilitate professional development of teachers so they are able to support students in achieving success. Bush (2007) states “leadership can be understood as a process of influence based on clear value and beliefs,” reinforcing the influential role educational leaders play (p. 403). Leaders have immense influence if they have the symbolic, human, cultural, social and authoritative capital which they have amassed in their role (Youngs 2012). According to his study human capital refers to the expertise and skills that the leader brings to the school and their role. It also includes having the skills to also identify and nurture leadership in others. Cultural capital is also critical in understanding and responding to the various cultural practices of the institution while social capital is developed through building relational trust and relationships that is based in a culture of care. The final aspect is authoritative capital is knowing the power and expectations of their role. These various forms of capital enable leaders to influence others in the school regarding their pedagogy.

The influence of leaders, in relation to teachers' willingness to take risks and change their pedagogy, is possible through modelling and providing access to professional development that enables this change. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) concur "what those in leadership roles do, may well be, the single greatest influence on the sources of teachers' commitment to change" (p. 146). For teachers to change their pedagogy, the school and mentors assigned to the teacher must provide an environment which is safe. Teachers are also learners and in the same manner as students, teacher need an environment where risk taking is encouraged. A leader can also support teachers through allowing them access to time and resources that will develop greater self-efficacy amongst their teachers. Knowing the crucial role the teachers play in students' motivation and self-belief allows leaders to formulate strategic goals that will allow for greater student success and increased engagement. The primary role of schools is to facilitate learning and the focus should never waver from this (Robinson et al. 2009). To ensure learning occurs students need to develop into self-reflective learners. This is achieved through being able to apply feedback they have been provided with to complete the 'feedback loop.' The development of effective teacher pedagogy relating to the provision of feedback, therefore, is critical. This chapter continues with the research aims and questions used to guide the research process and concludes with an overview of how the thesis is structured.

Thesis aims and methodology

The aim of this research was to examine the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers in providing critical feedback to students. The particular context of the research is learning in English as a core subject in secondary schools. The development of teacher pedagogy in relation to the provision of feedback is therefore critical to enhancing students' performance (Hattie, 1999). Leaders are pivotal in facilitating this feedback by ensuring that teacher pedagogy reflects this. Robinson et al. (2009) define leadership as "a particular type of influence process" (p. 36). Leaders can influence teachers to critically reflect on their own pedagogy in order to become better practitioners.

This research set out to open a dialogue with teachers of English to find out their experiences and perceptions concerning how they give feedback to students and how

educational leaders might further support this process. The *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) states “success in English is fundamental to success across the curriculum” (p. 18). Robinson et al. (2009) state that teachers' ability to use data to evaluate student progress and give feedback is a strong indicator of school quality. Hence, teachers' use of feedback has an impact on student achievement; using feedback effectively should positively impact on students' achievement. It is assumed teacher feedback should warrant a response or change in students' academic behaviour, however, there is little research in this area. Existing research highlights that students find that feedback does not clearly advise them on how to improve (Peterson & Irving, 2008). This suggests empowering teachers to provide effective feedback will empower students to improve in their literacy ability in English classes.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education (2016a) highlights “teachers who combine strong subject knowledge with effective feedback can offer students rich, focused information about their learning and how to improve it” (para. 1). Feedback is effective when it allows students to apply their new learning to another activity where they will be assessed by the same criterion. Feedback that is self-generated is self-regulating. Self-regulated learning refers to the degree to which students are “meta-cognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process” (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001, p. 5). Feedback and self-regulation are also seen as vital components of engagement in and motivation for learning. It was important in my study, to ascertain teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding feedback, how these affected the strategies they chose to employ in the classroom and also to identify the role senior leaders play in influencing the provision of critical feedback.

The aims of this study were:

1. To engage in a discussion with teachers about their perceptions and understandings of what critical feedback means to students in a secondary school English classroom;
2. To identify the strategies that teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback about learning to students; and,
3. To identify the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback about learning to students in the secondary schools' context.

The research questions were:

1. What are teachers' perceptions and understandings of what critical feedback means to students in secondary school English classrooms?
2. What strategies do teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback to students about their learning?
3. In what ways do educational leaders influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback in English?

Data collection

Epistemologically, the creation of knowledge in this project depended on human participants sharing their perceptions and experiences with me. As my research was concerned with understanding the perceptions, values and beliefs of teachers and educational leaders, I worked within an interpretive paradigm as this assumes there are multiple realities, enabling individual perspectives to be expressed and understood (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Teachers and students come with their own beliefs and values and this affects the manner in which they interact with feedback.

My research took the form of a qualitative study that utilised two research methods: a questionnaire and five semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was used to gather data from English teachers about the nature of the feedback they are providing and their perceptions about its effectiveness in improving student achievement. Fifty questionnaires were sent out to English teachers who teach in large secondary schools in a New Zealand city and thirty-two responded. Six volunteers were sought from the questionnaire respondents to participate in the semi-structured interviews; only five of these volunteers participated in the interview as one of the volunteers resigned from teaching. The interviews were used to gather data about how educational leaders can influence teachers to provide critical feedback, and the interview questions were informed by the data collected in the initial questionnaire.

Thesis organisation

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter One has presented an overview of this research project and a rationale for the choice of this thesis topic, followed by the research purpose and specific aims and questions. Finally, the choice of data collection

methods has been outlined.

Chapter Two presents a literature review that critically evaluates the literature relevant to the study.

Chapter Three outlines and justifies the research methodology and the data collection methods. The issues of validity and reliability have been addressed along with the ethical issues relevant to the research.

Chapter Four analyses and presents the findings from the two data collection tools: the questionnaire of English teachers in secondary schools; and the semi-structured interviews with five of the participants. Their perceptions of the nature of feedback in the English classroom and how educational leaders influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback in English in secondary schools are outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Five examines the findings from the data collection in relation to the research questions. I have linked this analysis to the literature regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs about critical feedback and the role educational leaders play to influence the provision of feedback.

Chapter Six completes the thesis with the presentation of the five key conclusions of this study. From these conclusions, final recommendations are presented, along with areas for further research and the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature that is concerned with the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers' practice in providing critical feedback to students within secondary school English classrooms in New Zealand. Although this study takes place in New Zealand within the secondary school context, facilitating effective feedback is not limited to this context. It is essential to discuss this before discussing the New Zealand secondary school context. There are several themes that emerge. Drawing on the literature, the purpose and nature of feedback is explored. A discussion of the importance of self-efficacy and other factors that affect the students' ability to apply the feedback is then provided. Finally, the role of educational leaders in empowering teachers to provide effective feedback is examined. Within this context, the role of the educational leader in terms of the leader's influence on the teaching and learning process will be discussed, followed by an exploration of the conditions that affect teachers' ability to provide effective feedback. These themes form the sub-headings in this chapter.

Purpose of feedback

For the purpose of this research, feedback is defined in accordance with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) definition as the "information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). More specifically this research will examine the feedback provided by teachers within the context of New Zealand secondary schools' English classrooms. The 'feedback loop' as explained by Hounsell et al. (2008) begins with identifying students' prior knowledge and proceeds with guidance and ongoing clarification through feedback, to support and 'feedforward' so improved understanding can be applied to subsequent work. This section will discuss the purposes of feedback and the four major feedback levels as identified by Hattie (2008).

In a classroom, feedback is provided by the teachers at various levels, for various purposes in the teaching and learning process. Hattie and Timperley (2007) explore the four major levels at which feedback is directed. The first level is *task based feedback* –

is the work correct or incorrect? The next level is aimed at the *processes* used for the creation of the task, and the third level focuses on *self-regulation* which incorporates self-evaluation. The final level of feedback is *personal* and Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that it is often unrelated to the task. The nature of the feedback influences the way students respond to the feedback and their willingness to apply it to their work. This argument is supported by Gamlen and Munthe (2014), who posit that it is the quality of the feedback discussions that affect students' ability to become self-reflective learners and who can perform at the expected levels. The quality of feedback is what determines its effectiveness as a change agent in the classroom. If the feedback that is provided by the teachers allows students to become self-regulated learners, they will apply the feedback. Conversely if the feedback is personal and has little value regarding how to improve a sample of work, most students would ignore the feedback.

A review of selected literature (Absolum, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hounsell, 2003; Sadler, 2010) highlights that feedback should allow students to bridge the gap between their actual performance and the desired performance, and hence enable them to move closer to where they should be achieving in terms of this performance. Feedback empowers students to become self-reflective learners. As the Ministry of Education (MoE) explain:

reflection is about students becoming aware of their own thinking processes, and being able to make those transparent to others. It enables assessment of the 'why' and 'how' of the learning, and what needs to be done as a result. (2016b, para. 3)

As part of this process, teachers need to develop students' abilities to become autonomous learners who can self-regulate and, therefore, develop their ability to self-reflect. According to Zimmerman and Schunk (2001), self-regulated learners are those who have an awareness of the facts they know and also possess the skills to know what they do not know. This skill is important for students to achieve the goal of becoming life-long learners.

Given its ability to improve performance, feedback has been considered by many educational researchers as an important aspect of learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & William, 2003; Clarke, 2003; Hattie 2009; Sadler, 1998). Hattie (1999)

suggests that “the most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is feedback” (p. 9). His research explains that learners will benefit most when the feedback that has been provided allows them to review their performance to achieve at the desired level. Hounsell (2003) also posits that feedback plays a crucial role in learning and development, as learners do better when they know how they are doing and what they require to do to reach the aspirational level. Students must be aware of their learning goals so the gap between the current level of performance and the desired level of performance can be addressed.

This suggests that teachers should be encouraged through professional development and government policy to provide critical feedback to students that will allow them to regulate their own learning. Brown, Harris and Harnett (2012) state that New Zealand teachers have endorsed the crucial role that feedback plays - to improve learning. Feedback supports learners to grow as self-directed learners who take ownership of their own learning. Although Hattie and Timperley (2007) cite other agents of feedback, primarily it is the teacher’s role which is being explored as this study’s primary unit of analysis. My teaching experience in New Zealand secondary school classrooms suggests that teachers provide students with feedback through written and verbal modes. There are also opportunities for peer review through both conferencing and online tools such as school learning management systems and class blogs. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2010) uses ‘Assessment for Learning’ as a key approach to encourage students to become reflective practitioners:

Students should be encouraged and supported to be involved in all aspects of their learning including setting goals, developing success criteria and exemplars and self and peer assessment, reflecting on their learning, identifying what they are doing well and why, and considering what they need to do next to further their learning. (MoE, 2010, p. 25)

It is apparent that effective feedback will enable students to be able to drive and improve their own learning.

The ‘Assessment for Learning’ approach (Black & Wiliam, 1998) is based on the premise that students who understand and are involved in their learning will be able to achieve greater academic success. According to the MoE (2016b) these students know what they

need to learn, the level at which they are currently achieving in their learning and what their next steps will be. To enable students to take charge of their own learning they need to be deliberately and systematically taught how to become adept at using the feedback on their assessment and engage in their learning. Assessment for learning emphasises the need for students to become autonomous and self-regulated learners (Sadler, 2010) who are, to a large degree, responsible for their own learning. To become autonomous and self-regulated learners, students need to understand the learning goals and their current level of performance. Students who are actively involved in their learning can be “thought of as assessment capable or active learners” (Ministry of Education, 2016b).

Feedback is also used by teachers in formative and summative assessments. Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins and Reid (2009) suggest that educators need to instead move to using assessment *for* learning to refer to formative assessments, and assessment *of* learning when referring to summative assessments. The focus is not on the assessment or the tools used to conduct these assessments but more on the quality of feedback that is generated as a result, and how learners can use this information to bridge the gap in their own learning. Carless (2007) also focuses on the view that formative assessment opportunities and feedback should enable students to become self-regulated learners. This places self-regulated learning in the context of Vygotsky’s (1986) social constructivist theory which includes students being active agents in meaning making because knowledge is a “human construct” (Phillips, 2000, p.6). Hence, feedback enables the learners to consolidate their understanding and then apply their new found understanding to their learning, encouraging them to be active participants in the teaching and learning process.

Factors that influence students’ response to feedback

Feedback has a significant impact on learning but this impact is dependent on the quality of feedback that is provided and students’ engagement with it. Feedback is effective only when the students can apply it to improve their work, or to showcase that they have acquired the learning which was previously a gap. Hattie and Timperley (2007) seek to clarify this by asking educators to change their perspective of feedback so the focus is not on the feedback being given but rather on the feedback being received. The focus

most certainly needs to shift from teachers giving more and more feedback, to students being given tools to know how to implement the feedback to minimise the gaps in their learning. Sadler (2010) has been critical of the notion that feedback is a one-way communication activity, whereby the source of the information is not the learner themselves. He further elaborates that this one-way communication results in learners becoming very dependent on the source of the information and hence not becoming actively involved in their own learning. The vision of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is to develop “young people who will be confident, connected, actively-involved, life-long learners” (p.7). This requires feedback in the classroom to become a process whereby the students can develop self-regulating skills.

It is crucial to note that feedback occurs within the social construct of a classroom and this context and the dynamics within the classroom are critical to the response to and application of feedback. Feedback is a critical component of teaching and learning (Hattie, 2009). The context of feedback, is therefore, determined by the social setting of the classroom which is governed by the nature of the teacher-student relationships, peer relationships and the general culture of the school. The rapport students develop with the teachers is important as it determines the classroom environment. Plank, Dixon and Ward (2014) highlight the importance of the teacher developing strong relationships with the students by moving around the classroom and displaying keen interest in every student’s learning. This allows the teachers to have private conversations with students without the students feeling negatively about the feedback, and allows the teachers to accept that every student acquires mastery of a task at their own pace and teaching ‘en masse’ does not facilitate differentiated learning. Plank et al. (2014) also reinforce that students appreciate the efforts of teachers who recognise the importance of planned and substantial opportunities during class time to provide feedback. Essentially students and teachers need to work alongside each other to take advantage of the impact of feedback. This leads to the conclusion that “the climate of the classroom is critical, particularly if disconfirmation and corrective feedback at any level is to be welcomed and used by the students” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 100). This is also reinforced by Cowie (2005), who highlights the difficulties some students face in participating in these conversations because of a lack of trust and mutual respect within the classroom.

Another factor which is critical to the application of feedback is providing students with models and exemplars of the acceptable level of performance as a guideline. The provision of exemplars is described as “a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher” (Sadler, 1989, p.121). Provision of exemplars is part of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) requirements and these are provided by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Schools also generate their own exemplars and this practice should also be incorporated at the junior levels (Years 9-10) in secondary schools. Shute (2008) also reinforces the importance of exemplars to support student learning. However, consideration should be given to the premise that although feedback has the capability of enhancing student performance, simply providing feedback does not automatically lead to improvement (Crisp 2007). For feedback to influence student learning, it must address the gap in the student learning. Having exemplars allows students to match their own efforts with a sample that is already assessed equipping them to better meet the criteria for the specific activity.

The amount of feedback provided to students also affects the response of students to the feedback. Feedback should be in manageable chunks that students can act on (Shute, 2008). Too much feedback could discourage students as they may view this as a reflection of their lack of understanding. Hargreaves (2013) state “a balance must be struck between the teacher giving enough support but not undermining the child’s sense of autonomy” (p.8). This affirms the finding by Hattie and Timperley (2007) that students prefer feedback that reinforces the learning processes rather than the task. Cues and prompts have a longer effect as these provoke students to think deeply for themselves. Wiggins (1993) argues that feedback is effective when learners can learn through dialogue with teachers and become confident enough to generate their own feedback information through self and peer assessment. Feedback should contain information that students can act on through self-questioning and thinking deeply for themselves thus developing into lifelong learners. Feedback therefore should be manageable and should encourage students to engage with it.

It also is worth noting that feedback is only effective if students have the ability and skills to apply the feedback. Hattie (2012) states that for teachers to be able to provide

effective feedback they should be aware of where exactly the students are placed regarding their learning goals and their expected achievement level. It is also critical that this status be made clear to the students who can then develop more autonomy by self-reflecting and self-regulating. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) effective feedback answers three critical questions: Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next? (p.87). The answers to these three questions underpin the purpose of feedback. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) also explain that feedback helps make clear what good performance is. This is important for students as they are then equipped with advice to extend their own performance to attain the desired level.

The value students place on feedback is another important factor that affects the response to feedback. Often students do not regard feedback as important as the grade which accompanies the work. In their study Peterson and Irving (2008) found that students consider the grade to be the most important information provided to them. Students found that feedback does not necessarily advise them on how to improve their work to minimise the 'gap' between where they are and where they should be. This finding is also supported in the later research by Irving, Harris and Peterson (2011) who state that comments alongside a grade served no purpose, as the students only focused on the grade. The comments accompany the grade was ignored by the students as they did not deem it as important as the grade they had been awarded. Therefore, students consider feedback as a useful tool if it allows them to apply their improved understanding, as a result of the feedback, to another assessment permitting them to attain a higher grade. In other instances, teachers allow students to apply the feedback they have been provided to improve their existing work and re-submit it for a higher grade.

The timing of feedback is also a determining factor in the application of feedback. According to Freeman and Lewis (1998), feedback needs to be given as soon as possible after the completion of the task in order to have maximum impact. They surmised that a delay will make the students less likely to find the feedback useful or to be motivated to act on it. They also state that feedback if given too early, can also have adverse effects on the students. In the reality of the classrooms in urban secondary schools, the opportunity for immediate and quality feedback is very limited (Price, Handley, Millar &

O'Donovan, 2010). They explain that with large classes and the pressures of time, teachers find their ability to provide timely feedback limited. The constraints of a typical classroom are also explored in the study by Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, and Litjens (2008) which supports the notion that, with larger class sizes, the provision of feedback is a complex issue. These writers also identify time constraints as one of the key factors impacting the provision of feedback. Good feedback is about 'moment in time' learning: "It is just-in-time, just-for-me information delivered when and where it can do most good" (Brookhart, 2008, p.1). This is not possible in many instances as teachers cope with the pressures of time and the large classes many teach.

The form in which the feedback is provided also influences the application of it. The term form here refers to whether the feedback is in an oral or written medium. Written feedback, to a certain degree, is a delayed process where teachers make notations on students' work. To some extent the delay can be minimised with the use of digital tools such as Google Classrooms or Google docs (Holland & Sockalosky, n.d). Clarke (2003) explains that sometimes students find it difficult to implement the feedback provided by teachers to their own work. Written feedback should be accompanied by a verbal conference where students can verify their understanding. Hargreaves (2013) explains that feedback is a two-way process. This suggests that the feedback process is dialogic in nature and teachers should ensure written feedback is accompanied by an oral discussion. The oral discussion provides students with the opportunity to seek any clarification.

Role of self-efficacy

Student and teacher self-efficacy is another factor which plays a crucial role in students' engagement with and response to feedback. Bandura defines self-efficacy as "people's judgements of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Bandura (1977) posits that there are two elements to self-efficacy – the efficacy expectation which links to a person's confidence and an outcome expectation, that allows the person to believe that the outcome will be positive and rewarding. Both factors are crucial in a classroom to allow students to apply the feedback that they receive on their writing. If the students find application of the feedback to their own work achievable but not advantageous,

then the motivation to apply the feedback is negatively affected. This is relevant to feedback provided in the English learning area where students know that it is contextualised to a specific activity only and not relevant to another. The development of self-efficacy amongst students is therefore critical in the application of feedback. Feedback does not serve its intended purpose if the learners do not use the feedback.

Feedback is considered by learners as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. The provision of effective feedback and its application is affected by students and teachers' self-efficacy. Studies by Pajares, Johnson and Usher (2007) highlight the importance of teachers providing feedback that is private and personal. This is to ensure that the feedback experience is perceived favourably by the students. Their research also highlights that students with higher self-efficacy will respond differently to the feedback when compared with students with lower self-efficacy. Those with higher self-efficacy would be confident to apply the feedback or to engage in dialogue about the feedback with teachers. Those with low self-efficacy would perceive feedback as another critique of their work resulting in reduced motivation to apply the feedback. Conversely, Harris, Brown and Harnett (2014) state that most students in New Zealand secondary schools perceive feedback as part of their growth in learning and see the teacher as a legitimate source of usable feedback - their experience with feedback is mostly considered positive. This does not necessarily mean that students apply or know how to apply the feedback. It is often students' self-efficacy determines the application of the feedback.

On the other hand, if the students see the outcome of applying the feedback to their work as advantageous but doubt their ability to apply the feedback, then once again the outcome is negatively impacted. Students with low self-efficacy doubt their ability to be able to apply the feedback to their work (Schunk, 2003). This could stem from a lack of understanding of what is required or being overwhelmed by the considerable editing that is required which could result in negative attitude towards feedback. Students can successfully apply the feedback to their learning to become self-regulated learners when they are confident that the task is both achievable and advantageous. Schunk (2003) highlights how learners are unwilling to engage in activities which they believe will result in negative outcomes. Accepting feedback requires students to have high self-efficacy.

Hargreaves (2013) also highlights that teachers need to be aware that acceptance and reaction to feedback can be an emotional experience. It could result in anxiety and self-doubt and therefore, limit the students' potential to access the feedback. Anxiety and self-doubt is closely linked with students' self-belief in their ability. Those with lower self-belief are likely to respond in an emotional manner to the feedback as they often link the feedback to a personal critique rather than as suggestions for improvement. Hattie (2009) explains that personal feedback is the least impact on student learning and although teachers do not intend the feedback to be personal, learners with low self-efficacy could potentially perceive it as such.

Schunk (2003) further suggests that students who have high self-efficacy will engage with feedback readily. However, many students with low self-efficacy would require the support within the classroom environment to enable them to access feedback. Parr and Timperely (2010) posit that the inherent attributes of feedback influence the impression it has on students. Students must develop confidence to be able to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning. This is possible in an environment which is supportive and respectful (Dixon, 2011). Students have to be active participants in the feedback dialogue in order to have an impact on the students' learning. This active participation once again is linked to the students' self-efficacy. Those with low self-efficacy would be reluctant to be a part of a dialogue as a discussion of this nature is often linked to their self-esteem. Hattie and Timperely (2007) also reinforce that students' willingness to become active participants in the feedback dialogue is reliant on the classroom culture that exists. The classroom culture should allow for students to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue that will aid them to bridge the gap in their learning. Engagement and self-efficacy is closely linked – if a learner believes he can be successful, they will engage in the learning. Those who have convinced themselves they cannot succeed are unlikely to engage with the feedback dialogue.

Realm of educational leadership

One of the key ways that educational leaders can influence the provision of effective feedback is through highlighting the importance of students' learning and achievement. There have been a number of leadership models that have developed over time, and the interest in educational leadership has grown. Although this study takes place in New Zealand, the role and impact of an educational leader is a global concept and it is

prudent to discuss this before specifically exploring the New Zealand context. It is important that an effective educational leadership model allows for the development of teacher pedagogy which includes teachers' ability to provide effective feedback. Effective leaders are "able to inspire their people with a vision that energises them and encourages them to work collaboratively towards a common good" (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009, p.85). In a school this translates into educational leaders being responsible for the effective delivery of the curriculum that is consistent with the vision and values of the organisation. This does not necessarily mean educational leaders themselves are delivering the curriculum but are more involved with developing strategies and conditions that will facilitate and encourage teachers to deliver the curriculum which is aligned to the school vision and values.

The realm of educational leadership is evolving. Bush (2008) posits that there is no one correct definition of educational leadership. He proposes three dimensions that could potentially be used to develop an understanding of the complex nature of educational leadership. The first dimension views leadership as influence. This idea of influence of a leader is also echoed by other writers in the field (Cuban, 1988; Northhouse, 2013; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Yukl, 2010). Influence is seen as the manner in which educational leaders shape their school ethos around learning and the learners, the teachers, parents and the community. This influence has an impact on others by modifying behaviour or encouraging existing behaviour. Yukl (2010) agrees with this notion and defines leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 26). Arguably, this influence could present itself in schools through the manner in which leaders ensure teachers provide critical feedback to students by providing the conditions that are needed for this to be done effectively. The other two dimensions proposed by Bush (2008) include: the process of influence is intentional meaning the educational leader exercises his influence for a specific purpose. The last dimension explores how this influence is not limited to one person and that groups within the school can influence change. This dimension encapsulates the distributed leadership approach that many schools adopt.

Being an educational leader requires influencing, inspiring and working with a team which includes, teachers, middle and senior leaders, learners and the parents to achieve the core business of improving student outcomes. Hattie and Timperley (2007) state “feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement” (p.81). This influence can be either negative or positive. Educational leaders can influence teachers to establish conditions that will facilitate a positive response to feedback. Fundamentally “leading learning at any level in a school involves the act of influencing and working with others in a highly collaborative, collegial and supportive environment that encourages risk and innovation and which places learning at the centre of all activities” (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, p. 8). This includes empowering middle leaders to move out of their subject-dictated silos and become more open to schoolwide achievement objectives. Youngs (2011) is critical of the work of Robinson et al. (2009), postulating that one needs to keep in mind the transferability of context. He explains that there is a possibility of ignoring other aspects of school leadership and management activity because it is not a case of ‘one-size-fits-all’. MacBeath (2006) proposes five principles that highlight the role educational leaders play in influencing learning. These principles require that leaders have a learning focus, create optimal learning conditions, share of leadership, communicate well and are accountable. Other studies also reinforce this influential role of a leader (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie 2003; Robinson et al., 2009; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson 2010).

It is critical that educational leaders recognise that the provision of effective feedback will impact students’ learning and achievement. In essence an effective leadership model should be focused on learning (Cardno, 2012; Robinson et al., 2009; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Seashore Louis et al. (2010) describe this as “focusing the school's and teachers’ attention on goals and expectations for instruction and student achievement is part of building a shared vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, and creating high performance expectations” (p. 73). An effective leadership system should be designed with the ākonga (learners) and with their context in mind. The context of the organisation must be considered in shaping the leadership direction. This can include developing structures and opportunities that allow for quality learning and teaching to take place in the school through collaboration (Seashore Louis et al., 2010). The focus on quality teaching is central to being an effective leader. The core business

of any school is teaching and learning, and the focus should not shift from this. Feedback is an influential factor in relation to student achievement and educational leaders need to establish system and develop conditions that will enhance this process in the classroom. It is crucial to implement and monitor systems to assess, track and respond to student progress and attainment.

Influence of educational leaders on the provision of feedback

Leaders have direct influence on teachers and their pedagogy development through opportunities to engage in conversations in a safe environment; this is fundamentally entrenched in a culture of care. Since leadership is linked to influence (Gronn, 2003), the development of relationships with others, trust and care are at the very core of leadership practice. Lingard et al. (2003) refer to this as the development of a culture of care in the school. The manner in which this culture of care manifests in schools is varied. It includes building a supportive environment and building relational trust (Robinson et al., 2009). In a more practical and tangible manner this culture of care can translate into protecting teachers' teaching time and supporting teachers when dealing with students and parents/caregivers (Seashore Louis et al., 2010). With teachers having access to time and resources they would be able to provide feedback to students that would be timely and effective. Teacher pedagogy in relation to feedback translates into their classroom practice when providing feedback to students. Teaching and learning are at the heart of any educational institution. Robinson et al. (2009) state "when leaders have a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning processes, they can lead and participate in discussions with teachers and other leaders, bring about necessary changes, and raise student outcomes" (p. 25). Robinson et al. (2009) highlight the critical role educational leaders play in improving student outcomes. The study highlights that educational leaders should promote and participate in teacher learning and development.

Influence also occurs through the development of sustainable professional relationships which allow teachers to enhance their own practice. Effective leadership involves establishing and fostering strong relationships. The strength of these relationships will enable teachers to reflect about their own practice in terms of providing critical feedback to students. Bryk and Schneider (2002) explain that relational trust has four

interconnected facets: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. In the first instance, respect involves understanding the role each of the stakeholders play in educational institutions. The stakeholders include the teachers, learners, parents and the school community. The next facet is competence which encompasses the professional role the principal plays in reducing vulnerability through their sound understanding and execution of their professional responsibilities. The third aspect of relational trust is personal regard which involves demonstrating a culture of care and the willingness to support others beyond their role. The final aspect of integrity manifests itself in the honesty and strong principles that educational leaders display. The Ministry of Education (2008) explain relational trust is developed by a principal “among all members of the school community contributes to building a collaborative learning culture that can help bring the school community together around the core values that underpin the vision” (p. 16). This would also reflect in teachers’ ability to establish high-trust relationships which is fundamental to students’ response to feedback.

Robertson (2009) maintains trust is a difficult concept to define as trust is more of an experience. Without trust, individuals find it difficult to reveal their areas of vulnerability and ones that require most growth and development. With trust and vested time leaders can facilitate discussion which goes beyond the need to hide and engage in self-protection. With relational trust, teachers can take risks knowing these will not be held against them. What is essential is the investment of time and resources to develop such bonds. The *Professional standards for secondary teachers* (Ministry of Education, 1999) and the *Practising teacher criteria* (Education Council, 2013) both expect teachers to “demonstrate a commitment to their own ongoing learning and participate individually and collaboratively in professional development activities” (p. 10). Access to professional development is one way in which this will occur within the school context. The influence of professional development is addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Conditions that affect provision of feedback

Teachers and middle leaders are directly responsible for the teaching and learning process. Providing feedback is part of the teaching and learning process and educational leaders should aim to create a culture of learning which supports the provision of critical feedback. Cardno and Collett (2003) state that principals acknowledge that it is teachers and middle leaders who are involved in the direct implementation of the curriculum. The middle leaders (e.g., deans, heads of faculties/learning areas) are leaders of learning. There is a need for educational leaders to “invest energy in developing the capacity of others to influence the critically important issues of teacher quality and student achievement” (Cardno, 2005, p. 297). Cardno (2005) further suggests that these leaders will create a culture of learning where teachers can critically reflect on the effectiveness of their pedagogy and where providing critical feedback to students would be the norm. This is also encouraged by Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) who suggest that leaders should influence teachers to take risks and engage in classroom practices are innovative. Teachers should be willing to take risks and adopt new strategies to enhance student achievement. The Ministry of Education (2012) suggests that trust can be built by observing classroom practices and allowing others to observe their practice where they model desirable pedagogy. Educational leaders have been given the opportunity to develop leaders with strong self-belief that allows them to achieve success. It is critical to build strong relationships which allow teachers to create a culture of care and learning. Getting feedback on their own practice would enable teachers to become reflective practitioners.

Having a mentor to critique their practice is also another way teachers could develop their pedagogy (Swaffield, 2007). A mentor could provide teachers with pedagogical support and aid in the reflection process. Leaders should encourage teachers to take risks and be willing participants in critical conversations which allow them to change and grow (O’Mahony & Matthews, 2005). A positive school culture will encourage such relationships that influence improved pedagogical practice. A number of other studies (Brookfield, 1995; Feldman, 2005) postulate that it is crucial for teachers to have a chance to critically reflect on their practice to gain a deeper understanding of themselves. The same is recommended by Robinson (2007) who describes leaders who focus their influence on learning and relationships with teachers have a greater impact

on student outcomes. Actively providing conditions where teachers can engage in professional conversations around pedagogy will also create a culture of learning. When teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their feedback practice through professional conversations with colleagues, it allows them to grow as leaders of learning. The Ministry of Education (2012) suggests that trust can be built by observing classroom practices and allowing others to observe their practice where they model desirable pedagogy. Educational leaders have been given the opportunity to develop leaders with strong self-belief which allows them to achieve success.

Furthermore, just as the context of the classroom and the learner is crucial to the application of feedback, the context of the school is equally important (Hallinger, 2003). There is no 'one-size-fits-all.' With several educational initiatives, the assumption is that these will bring success to all. There is little regard for context which is the un-doing of any positive outcome. Considering the context results in establishing more socially just schools where students get the opportunity to receive feedback on their work and are granted time to make these changes. Hallinger (2003) reinforces the importance of context by suggesting "leadership must be conceptualised as a mutual influence process, rather than a one-way process in which leaders influence others" (p. 15). Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their context. The context of secondary schools in New Zealand is varied. The assumption of this research is that the role of the teacher in implementing effective pedagogy through the practice of feedback is applicable to any number of contexts.

The role of professional development

Access to regular professional development is one of the ways that educational leaders can support teachers in developing their pedagogy regarding the provision of critical feedback to the students. Beatty (2000) highlights the importance of professional development as part of educational leadership change. This is also reinforced by Ball and Cohen (1999) who posit that making professional development a combined decision would "knit professional development inextricably into the practice of teaching" (p.19). It is clear that professional development is closely linked to enhancing student learning and overall teacher development. Teachers' learning is associated with the ability to critique their own pedagogy which allows them to take further opportunities to develop

their practice. The provision of professional development is a critical component of one of the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers. Ensuring that the professional development model at the school is robust will enable teachers to review their practice, allowing them to continue to learn and change. Professional inquiry into their own practice is one of the ways teachers can influence the content of the professional development programme at the school (Ball & Cohen, 1999). It is crucial leaders provide teachers with access to professional development that will enable them to become effective practitioners. School-wide professional development programmes should be developed in discussion with teachers and middle leaders with focus on what will improve student achievement. Participation in professional learning will support teachers to become more skilled at providing effective feedback to students.

One of the most important aspects of teacher development is being innovative and open minded about new pedagogy and the willingness to critique their own practice (Harrison, Dymoke & Pell, 2006). They assert that the learning process for teachers must be about their practice and this should never stop. The learning cycle means the teacher continues to evolve as they reflect, experiment and learn. Many of the theories (Bandura, 1977; Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1986) concerned with the learning of the students also apply to the teachers. With teachers taking ownership of their own development it is likely they would be more ready to engage in reflective conversations and practice and hence be willing to take risks and experiment (Harrison et al., 2006). Cavanagh and Prescott (2010) state that one of the key aspects of quality teaching is reflective practice. This is also supported by Loughran (2010) who posits that reflective practice allows for critical self-evaluation and this results in improved practice. With improved pedagogy, teachers can influence student outcomes. An aspect of effective teacher pedagogy also includes the provision of critical feedback to students.

Taking account of teachers, their interests and pedagogical needs would be the basis for the development of an effective professional development model. There are many studies that re-affirm that the model and content of the professional development programme that is adopted at the school should take into account teacher voice (Beatty, 2000; Labone & Long, 2016; Meissel, Parr & Timperley, 2016). It is important that the

teachers are consulted by educational leaders when planning the strategic goals for the school. The professional development programmes are developed in response to these goals. The goals as mentioned earlier should focus on teaching and learning which is at the heart of all schools. Student learning is directly influenced by the provision of feedback. Accordingly, the development of pedagogy relevant to the provision of effective feedback should then become one of the areas for development. This would then result in a marriage of individual goals with school goals. Labone and Long (2016) explain the synergy between individual and school goals is a verification of the interaction which takes place between the educational leaders and teachers. Teacher practice and the need to develop skills in certain areas of the practice should become part of this interaction. Provision of effective feedback is one area that has been identified by Hattie (2009) as one of the most critical factors influencing students and this should register within the professional development curriculum that schools choose to adopt.

Also a professional development programme needs to be engaging for it to be effective. It is teachers who deliver the curriculum and are the change agents in the classroom. If teacher pedagogy is to be influenced by educational leaders, then the professional development programme needs to be engaging. Hawley and Valli (1999) highlight “teachers modify curricular, intentionally or not” (p.128). A contextualised and engaging professional development programme will produce change. On the other hand, if the professional development programme does not engage the teachers then it is a waste of time and could lead to disengagement. Teachers must see the importance of professional learning to engage with it. Tait-McCutcheon and Drake (2016) describe the various jackets one wears when responding to professional development. They describe how professional development can be likened to being in a ‘strait jacket’ when the professional development restricts you. Any such professional development would do little to influence teachers’ practice and it is crucial educational leaders critically review the curriculum of the professional learning at their schools.

Summary

To summarise, this chapter has argued that while feedback is seen as one of the most effective ways in which student outcomes can be affected, the ways in which students engage with the feedback is varied. The conditions needed to provide effective feedback also need to be considered especially in the secondary schooling context. It is essential to create the conditions needed to ensure that feedback has the intended effect. This will enable students to develop the skills needed to put this feedback into effect. Teachers and students are social beings and their self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in the manner with which they engage with the feedback. The goal is always to develop learners who are autonomous and self-reflecting. Educational leaders can support teachers to develop their pedagogy around providing effective feedback to students. A sustained professional development plan will enable teachers to become reflective practitioners. Teacher self-efficacy should be built through access to professional development in order to reduce teacher attrition and build teacher confidence in being able to provide quality feedback that does indeed have an impact on student outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with an overview of the research methodology used in this study. It presents the rationale for the adoption of an interpretive paradigm and consequently a qualitative approach to the methodology, research design and data collection. An explanation of the research design and school sampling is then provided, with a brief description of the data analysis framework.

The next section describes the data collection and data analysis methods. This is done in two sub-sections which are: (i) the questionnaire; and (ii) the semi-structured interviews. Finally, a discussion of validity, reliability and ethical considerations relevant to this study conclude the chapter.

Research methodology

Overview

This qualitative research adopts a subjectivist epistemological approach with a relativist ontological position. Bryman (2008) defines constructivism as an ontological position where “social phenomena and their meanings are continually accomplished by social actors” (p. 19). Two methods of data collection, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, were utilised and an interpretive approach for data analysis was adopted. My own ontological position and epistemological beliefs determined my methodology.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions, values and beliefs of teachers regarding feedback to students in secondary schools’ English classrooms and the manner in which educational leaders can influence this. Therefore, I adopted a qualitative research framework to gain depth of understanding across a small group of participants. Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, a qualitative research design was adopted. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Mutch (2005) agrees that qualitative research includes the lived experiences of the participant which is essential in the understanding of phenomena.

This is relevant to this study as the research questions asked the participants about their beliefs and perceptions of feedback and the manner in which educational leaders can influence this process. Qualitative research, according to Mutch (2005), “focuses on a few examples that exemplify particular cases” (p.21). This links directly to this study as the research design included a questionnaire that was completed by secondary school teachers with a range of experience. Additionally, Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research as “one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives” (p. 18). The ontological position of constructivism was therefore adopted by the researcher. Constructivists also assert that this phenomenon is a result of social interaction and is constantly evolving. Mutch (2005, p. 16) describes the propositions underpinning constructivism in the list below:

- Reality is not fixed but constructed.
- Knowledge and truth are created not discovered.
- Meaning is socially, culturally and historically situated.
- We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of our experiences.
- We test and modify our models and schemes in light of new experiences.
- We recognise the plurality of symbolic and language systems.

As teachers and their perceptions and practice relating to feedback given to students evolves based on their experiences, it fits in within the constructivism school of thought. There is also no one fixed reality as the social and cultural context of the teachers in this study vary hence allowing them to form their own perceptions based on their own setting and experiences.

Teachers make meaning of their own experiences which allow them to develop beliefs they transfer to the classroom and their own pedagogy (Sheridan & Moore, 2009). With ever increasing and evolving experiences, teachers recreate these meaning and therefore their pedagogy in the classroom. The manner in which students interact with this feedback will result in an evolving perception of feedback on part of both students and teachers. Students will realise the importance of feedback as they see the ‘gap’ in their understanding reducing, while teachers see the benefit of providing critical feedback. It is equally important that students engage with the feedback they have provided to complete the ‘feedback loop’. In addition to this, Creswell (2014) highlights

the importance of the researcher's own background as it affects the manner in which the researcher interprets the findings and positions themselves to make meaning of it. As a secondary school English teacher, I came with my own experiences of feedback as a student, as well as the manner in which I provide feedback to students in my own classroom. In addition to this, as an educational leader, I also brought with me my experiences as a leader who holds the portfolio of professional development programmes in the school and my views on its effectiveness. Hence the constructive ontological position is the most appropriate for this study.

Epistemologically, a subjective approach was adopted as it assumes that people perceive the world in different ways and construct their own social reality (Creswell, 2013). Researchers who espouse a subjectivist approach believe the "social world as being of a much softer, personal and humanly-created kind and will select from a comparable range of recent and emerging research techniques – accounts, participant observation and personal constructs" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 8). Teachers in this research incorporated innovations into their classrooms that matched their personal epistemological beliefs. Epistemologically, therefore, the participants in this research are shaped by and also shape their environment as the knowing subjects. Teachers come into classrooms with a set of beliefs they have developed based on their own experiences as students, their previous schools, their educational training and many other such experiences. These beliefs define their behaviour and, hence, dictate their actions. As a teacher of English, I also came into this research with my own beliefs and perceptions about feedback and this, to a degree, affected the manner in which I analysed the data. I have maintained the position that feedback is effective only if the students are able to apply the feedback and its effectiveness is controlled by other factors like time and the amount of feedback given.

Interpretive paradigm

As this study sought to examine the perceptions, values and beliefs of teachers with reference to teacher feedback to students in secondary schools' English classrooms, and the manner in which educational leaders influence this, an interpretive paradigm was adopted. Paradigms are defined as a worldview that is, "a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world" (Patton, 2002, p. 69). Somekh and

Lewin (2011) define the interpretive paradigm as one “which seeks to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications revealed in the data about people” (p. 324). Epistemologically, the creation of knowledge in this project will depend on human participants sharing their perceptions and experiences with the researcher.

This paradigm assumes that there are multiple realities, enabling individual perspectives to be expressed and understood (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Humans are social beings and they develop their own social reality depending on the group they are currently in. In this study, the interpretative paradigm enabled the interpretation of teachers’ beliefs and perceptions about feedback and the role of educational leaders in influencing the quality of this feedback. These topics were viewed from their own unique and individual perspective. The importance of the environment in which the research takes place is crucial in the interpretative paradigm (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

The interpretive paradigm assumes that people act intentionally and make meaning in and through their actions (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). It also assumes people actively create their social environment and events are non-generalisable. The final assumption is that situation and behaviours evolve over time and are affected by the context and people (Cohen et al., 2007). The interpretive paradigm, therefore, is relevant to this. Educational leaders are also influenced by their context in the manner in which they can support the development of teacher self-efficacy in providing effective feedback to students. This paradigm takes into account the subjective nature of human experience and focuses on the intentional behaviours.

Some of the limitations of the interpretive paradigm include the manner in which these meanings are reached and the power others have in order to impose their own meanings to the situation (Cohen et al., 2007). This could include the power educational leaders have over the teachers and the manner in which teachers respond to innovations in the classroom relating to feedback. Another limitation includes the failure to acknowledge the effect of external forces such as the Ministry of Education (MoE). These limitations were taken into account in this study’s research design. To eliminate the notion of power over the participants, this research was not conducted at the school I am currently employed at or at schools with which I already have existing relationships.

Furthermore, the data collected through the semi-structured interviews addressed the impact of external forces by gathering data related to outside agencies like New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and MoE.

Research design

Research design is described by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials,” (p.25). Hence determining a research design is a crucial aspect of any study. Bryman (2008) agrees that research design provides a structure for the “collection and analysis of data” (p. 31). As I sought to explore, describe and explain the nature of feedback and gain an understanding of the influence of educational leaders in this process, a qualitative study was the most appropriate approach. Qualitative research encompasses discovering if the problem exists, describing the phenomenon in detail and then explaining the cause and effect of the problem. To increase the validity of this research I employed two different research tools and techniques across a number of secondary schools.

Phenomena can be researched both directly through exploring human knowing, and indirectly through investigating human being (Titchen & Hobson, 2011). A direct approach was considered as the researcher remains detached, therefore, limiting any power play and prejudice. According to Titchen and Hobson (2011), it is a more systematic approach where the focus is on participants’ experience of the phenomena. For the purpose of this research, I have presented the lived experiences of the participants through questioning and analysis of the data gathered. Once data were collected through the initial questionnaire, common themes were identified across the data collected from the participants. This approach allowed the development of suitable structure for the analysis and interpretation of data.

The first factor taken into consideration was the selection of the research tools to gather data from the participants in this study. It was decided that a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews would provide information on the teachers’ perspectives of feedback and the role of educational leaders. The next factor taken into account was the selection of schools. Bryman (2008) defines convenience sampling as one which “is simply available to the researcher by the virtue of its accessibility” (p. 183). Hence, for

this study teachers were selected based on convenience of geographical proximity to the researcher. All the teachers who participated in the questionnaire were based in secondary schools I could readily access in terms of distance and travelling time from my home. The selected schools were large urban schools within a New Zealand city with student population of approximately 1800-2500.

Research methods and data analysis

This section outlines the methods used for collecting and analysing data. It is categorised under two sub-headings; questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Within each of these headings, the data collection methodology and the analysis of it will be discussed.

Method 1: Questionnaire

For the purpose of this study, I used a questionnaire with a range of questions using both open ended and multiple choice formats. Questionnaires are a useful and popular tool when collecting data from a large number of participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Hinds, 2000; Lewin, 2011; Mutch, 2005; O'Toole & Beckett, 2013). Hinds (2000, p. 43) gives the criteria to employ when determining when to use a questionnaire. These criteria are outlined below:

- The information sought is not complex.
- You are seeking information about facts, either in the present , or because of the influence of memory, in the recent past.
- You are certain that a questionnaire will produce the type of information you need.
- You are certain that barriers such as language and literacy do not apply to your population.

The data I was trying to gather were not complex as I was seeking to identify teacher beliefs and perceptions regarding feedback in the context of their own settings. The information was a recount of what they do in the classroom. Also, the language used in the questionnaire was suitable for the purpose of gathering information. For successful questionnaire development, Cohen et al.'s (2007) eight stages of questionnaire development were used. The first stage required a crucial decision about the purpose

of the questionnaire. This was a key step in developing a successful questionnaire that would gather valid data. For the purpose of this study, I wanted to explore the beliefs and perceptions of teachers regarding feedback and the manner in which educational leaders influence this. Bryman (2008) adds that the questions you develop for a questionnaire should allow you to address your research questions. Therefore, careful consideration during the development of the questions was essential in order to avoid wastage of time on the part of the researcher and the respondents.

The next stage of questionnaire development is determining the participants who would be completing this questionnaire. For this study this was determined to be teachers in the secondary school sector. All the teachers responding to the questionnaire had to be teachers of English in mainstream English classrooms in New Zealand secondary schools, as this study examined feedback in these schools. Being aware that the participants were all English teachers in secondary schools was essential as it guided the wording of the questions especially with reference to the educational jargon that could be employed. To assist in gaining a number of responses, Heads of English learning area were emailed a self-completing questionnaire developed using Google Forms. This questionnaire was then emailed by the Head of English to all the teachers of English within their school.

Another factor that was taken into account included the selection of the concepts to be addressed through the questionnaire. The questions were informed by the literature review that was conducted as part of this study, and also by professional and informal discussions with colleagues. These discussions were limited to teachers in my current school as they would not be part of the final research and aimed to reduce any bias or power play.

The subsequent stage of questionnaire development takes into account the kinds of questions that would be utilised in the questionnaire. The use of a range of questions facilitated access to the information that I was seeking. It is important to use a range of questions and approaches to questioning as it allows the researcher to gather purposeful data (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Two types of questions were included in the questionnaire. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to answer questions

however they wanted to (Bryman, 2008). On the other hand, open-ended questions are rather time consuming to complete and can result in respondents overlooking instructions while trying to put all their thoughts on paper (Cohen et al., 2007).

Multiple-choice questions allowed the researcher to have some level of control over the responses (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The option of 'other' along with space to explain their response, allowed the respondents to answer the questions appropriately if the provided options were not suitable (see Appendix A). This reduced the loss of spontaneity that could occur if the respondents did not locate an option that best matched their perceptions, beliefs or experiences (Bryman, 2008). The other reason multiple-choice questions were included was because these are fairly quick to answer, encouraging the respondents to complete the questionnaire. Careful consideration of the wording avoided any ambiguity. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that researchers should avoid complex and loaded questions, ambiguous language and questions that use negatives or double negatives.

In order to cross reference, the questionnaire was piloted with a group of teachers at my current school and their feedback indicated that I needed to link questions with two parts so participants had a reference point when answering the second part to the question. In order to support this, both parts of the question and the responses were visible to the participants while answering the question. Bryman (2008) explains that piloting the questionnaire allows the researcher to find out if the research instrument functions well. This is particularly important with a self-completing questionnaire as the researcher is not present during the response stage. Piloting the questionnaire allowed me to re-look at any 'problem' questions. The final stage was to implement the questionnaire. I included a cover letter/email to the principal of the schools outlining the research project and purpose. The letter also outlined the rights of the participants. In addition to this, I met with school principals and explained the research and answered any questions they had regarding the study. As Bell (2005) states, there are advantages to being able to explain the project in person and, you are likely to get increased co-operation.

Method 2: Semi-structured interviews

Punch (2014) argues that interviews are a key tool employed by researchers undertaking a qualitative study as it is an effective way of “accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and construction of reality” (p. 144). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) similarly state that interviews generate useful information about “lived experience and its meaning and produce situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes” (p. 47). Mutch (2005) describes the following three types of interviews: structured interviews which have pre-determined questions; unstructured interviews, which rely on one broad question and then discussions are developed from this; and semi-structured interviews, which include a balance of pre-determined questions, and questions arising from these discussions between the researcher and participant. Marton and Booth (1997) have a similar view and postulate that in a phenomenological study it is essential that the interview is a dialogue between the researcher and the participant as it is about the subject’s perceptions and experience of a phenomena. Therefore, semi-structured interviews should not contain too many pre-determined questions. The questions should follow on from the answers provided by the participant. Since this study is about teachers and their perceptions the semi-structured interview was selected as best suited to gather appropriate data. Furthermore, Mutch (2005) posits that semi-structured interviews have an advantage over written questionnaires as the researcher is able to clarify the content of the question and aid in the understanding of what is being asked. This view is also supported by Bell (2005) who explains that one of the major advantages of using interviews is their adaptability – interviews give the researcher the opportunity to probe further into participant responses and seek to investigate the participant’s motives and feelings. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to engage in a dialogue with teachers and at the same time, it allowed me to seek clarification and further investigate any information related to the themes.

There are some limitations when employing semi-structured interviews to gather data. Barbour and Schostak (2011) highlight some of these limitations: the power structures and social status that exists which may limit honest sharing of information and the value of the information being shared. Also, a lack of trust regarding the confidentiality of information being shared could limit data gathering. The meaning and interpretation of answers and the uncertainty linked to manner in which the meaning is understood also

act as limitations in a semi-structured interview. Therefore, it was crucial to point out the ethical considerations that bind this research whereby the confidentiality of the participants' identities was always maintained. It was also important to highlight to the participants that they would get an opportunity to read through the transcript of their interview before I would use their data. Another crucial aspect that needed to be taken into account was piloting the interview questions (Bryman, 2008; Creswell 2013). Piloting allowed me to consider the flow of the questions and to re-organise them to improve the structure of the questions. The interview questions were piloted with a colleague who provided important feedback pertaining to the phrasing of some of the questions and the clarity around the meaning of what I wanted to find out. This provided me with an opportunity to clarify some of the pre-determined questions and refine them to reduce ambiguity. Further to this, before the interviews took place, I emailed the participants an outline of the interview process including the reasons for using the audio-recorder. This also acted as an ice-breaker before the semi-structured interview took place.

The next aspect that needed to be taken into consideration was the recording of the responses from the questionnaire. Cohen et al. (2007) posits that audio-recording the interview allows the researcher to record all information that is shared during the discussion. It is an effective tool to keep track of all discussion whereby the researcher can still maintain eye-contact and remain engaged in the dialogue that is occurring, whilst being able to have a record of all the details of the conversation that takes place. In qualitative research there is equal importance of what is said and how it is said (Bryman, 2008). As such, audio-recording the interview allowed this to occur effectively. Another advantage of audio-recording is that it can be later transcribed. Bryman (2008) defines transcription as "the written translation of a recorded interview or focus group session" (p. 700). The accuracy of the transcription is crucial. Furthermore, for every hour of recording, it can take an average of six to eight hours to transcribe (Bell, 2005; Hinds, 2000). I used a university approved and recommended transcriber to transcribe the interviews. This also reduced any bias and researcher subjectivity on my part (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). The transcriber also signed a confidentiality agreement before any recordings were transcribed. The participants were also provided with an opportunity to verify their transcript before the data were utilised in the study. They

had two weeks within which to read and confirm that the transcriptions were consistent. This, once again, enabled me to ensure the accuracy of the conversations which took place.

In addition to this, in order to gain an insight into what is said and how it was said, I worked with the written transcripts as well as the original audio recordings. Cohen et al. (2007) explain that it is insufficient to transcribe only the spoken word as it makes one lose the synergy of the whole interview. Using the audio recording alongside the transcripts allowed me to limit this from occurring. I was aware of the ethical issues pertaining to conducting interviews and reinforced these during the interview assuring participants they had the freedom to choose to stop the interview at any time or to choose not to answer a particular question. Interviews require high-trust environments to allow the participants to share a lived experience and their emotional well-being during the interview must be a priority. Participants also had the opportunity to select the meeting place and time to determine when and where this interview would take place. Most of them chose an on-site meeting room as it gave them more privacy than the staffroom or their own classrooms.

Data analysis

This research focused on the English teachers in secondary schools as I am an English teacher and educational leader in this sector. As the study involved secondary school teachers from different schools, a range of factors needed to be taken into account including: New Zealand teaching experience, their personal beliefs and perceptions about feedback, the systems in their school that support or hinder this process and the requirements of the external factors such as NZQA and National Certificate in Educational Achievement. These factors affected teachers' perceptions and beliefs, making the interpretation of data complex and multi-faceted. Cohen et al. (2007) highlight that it is critical that the researcher must know what he or she wants the data analysis to do and therefore determine the kind of analysis that is adopted. There are two key considerations taken into account in order to conduct the data analysis. The first was the approach to data analysis and the second was the management of the large amount of data.

Data were analysed through an interpretive approach. Responses by question were compiled on separate large sheets of paper with each response identified by the corresponding participant's pseudonym. Following this, each theme was highlighted in a distinct colour, and notes in matching sticky note paper were attached. These sticky notes were later placed by colour and emerging themes were identified and linked. Figure 3.1 below reflects this process.



Figure 3.1. Manual coding process.

Patton (2002) posits that analysis of data within the interpretive paradigm focuses on “making sense” of what was said and identifying patterns or themes (p. 380). Analysing information qualitatively using a thematic approach is referred to as inductive analysis. Inductive analysis is based on data and the themes emerging from these (Bryman, 2012; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). This method was adopted because it allowed me to identify prominent themes in the participants’ responses. Thematic analysis involves identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language and patterns of belief that link people and settings together. The initial set of data was gathered from

the questionnaire. The themes that emerged from this guided the development of the semi-structured interview questions. The data collected in response to these questions formed the second set of data.

The second consideration involved the management of large amounts of data. Creswell (2013) asserts using a matrix enables a researcher to organise the material gathered. This includes the organisation and analysis of large amounts of data. This required me to read the information I had gathered to get a general sense of the data and from which codes were developed. Figure 3.2 below displays the coding process that can be utilised when analysing qualitative data.

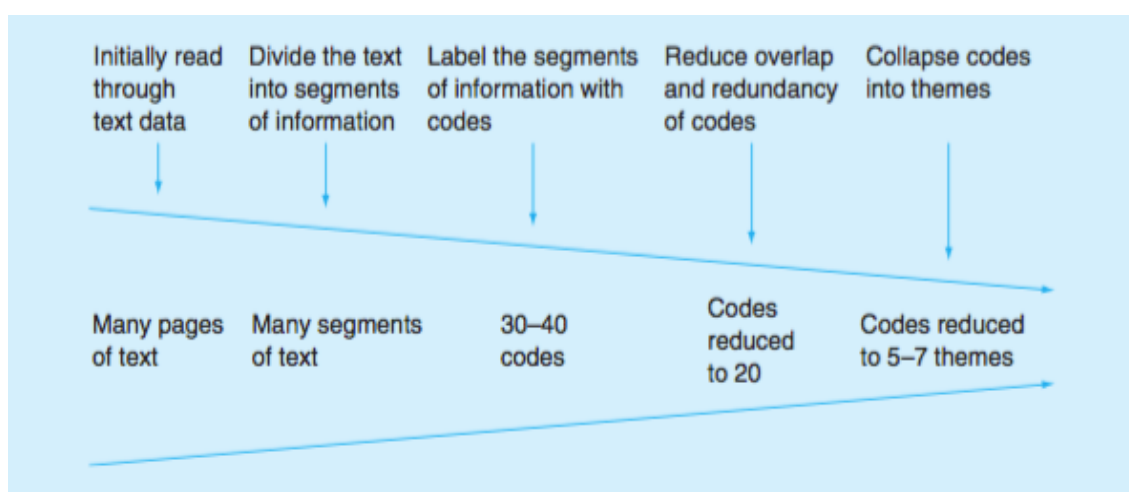


Figure 3.2. A visual model of the coding process (Creswell, 2013, p. 244).

For the purpose of this research data were classified according to respondent. Participants' context relating to the number of years of teaching experience, position and number of years at the school were taken into account when identifying the themes that emerged from the data. This included organising data from the various participants, by reading through the transcription to make initial "codes or categories" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Through identifying the categories, data were then reduced to the most important and relevant points which I employed to describe the themes and patterns emerging from the data that had been collected. The themes were identified manually and these were noted on the margins of the interview transcripts and later categorised under headings and sub-headings to shape the study.

Reliability and Validity

Throughout this study, reliability and validity of the research were addressed. In qualitative research, reliability is concerned with ensuring that the data can be trusted. Bell (2005) defines reliability as “the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (p. 117). Hinds (2000) concurs, explaining reliability as the ability to gain the same results if the processes were repeated. In a qualitative study reliability can be referred to as trustworthiness for it is a better summation of the term (Bryman, 2008). Trustworthiness is further divided into: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. This study adopted a subjective approach which assumes that people perceive the world in different ways and construct their own social reality. In this case teachers perceive the provision of feedback and the role of educational leaders differently to construct their own social reality.

To ascertain credibility in this study the participants were each provided with their transcript which they could check and amend. Using a transcriber approved by the university added to the credibility of the data collected. Transferability in a qualitative study can be achieved through contextualising the research by providing detailed descriptions of the context (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). In this research, detailed accounts were provided so that the readers would be able to draw their own conclusions with regard to the transferability of the findings to their own setting. Dependability is concerned with ensuring that detailed and accurate records are kept throughout the study. This was achieved in this study through ensuring that I had ready access to all the data collected and transcripts of the interviews without compromising confidentiality of the participants. Finally, conformability is concerned with ensuring that the researcher has not “overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and findings” (Bryman, 2008, p. 379). I have ensured that the methods used for data collection and analysis were consistent and accurate records were maintained during all the interviews.

Validity takes into account authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness in reference to data and its analysis. Bell (2005) defines validity as “whether an item or instrument measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe” (p. 117). Cohen et

al. (2007) posit that qualitative researchers are part of the world that they are investigating and they cannot be completely unbiased; therefore, other people's beliefs are just as valid as our own and the research aims to uncover this. Bias of any nature renders the credibility of the findings as questionable. In order to minimise bias, this research was not undertaken at the school at which I am currently employed. Furthermore, teachers voluntarily participated in the semi-structured interviews, thus, ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings. All coding of responses and data interpretation was undertaken with an open mind. My personal bias related to feedback and the influence of leaders was taken into account when analysing the data. The crucial factor taken into account regarding validity was ensuring that data were collected and recorded in a consistent manner. All data from the questionnaire were collected via Google Forms and the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded.

Internal validity is defined as corroborating the explanations that can be drawn from the findings (Yin, 2009). Cohen et al. (2007) reinforce this by defining internal validity as the findings being able to "demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data" (p. 135). This can be achieved through triangulation. Triangulation is defined by Bryman (2008) as using more than one method of collecting data. For this study I employed two methods of data collection: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Triangulation was employed to ensure greater credibility of the findings. Also using two tools allowed me to cross check my findings and reduce any bias that could have occurred if the results were determined by one source only. The semi-structured interviews gave an opportunity to delve deeper into concepts of time and access to professional development. The structure and access to professional development differed in each school and having the ability to cross-check this through the semi-structured interviews provided better context and meaning to the responses gathered in the questionnaire.

Another method used for internal validation is through member checking (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) explains this as checking the accuracy of the final report by taking it back to the participants and allowing them to read and provide feedback. Bryman (2008) refers to this as respondent validation. For the purpose of this

study the transcripts were given back to the participants so they could check for accuracy of what they had said. At the completion of this study, a summary of the findings would be made available to the participating schools.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in any study as researchers “cannot justify imposing burdens on subjects simply by appealing either to gains to others or to the service of some abstract goal, like promotion of knowledge” (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 14). According to Creswell (2014), ethics need to be taken into account at every aspect of the study including: before beginning the study, beginning the study, collecting and analysing data and while reporting, sharing and storing the data. Bryman (2012) postulates that there are four aspects to be taken into account when considering ethics. These include: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. Similar concepts have been explained by other writers using anonymity, confidentiality, trust, privacy, conflict of role, integrity, reciprocity and advocacy (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Punch, 2014; Snook, 2003). For the purpose of this study the issues of minimising harm to participants, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were relevant.

Minimising of harm

In order to minimise any harm to the participants a number of steps were taken. There was always the possibility that the schools would exert pressure to access the information shared by the teachers. Principals were provided with access to the findings of the study but they had no way of identifying the participants as pseudonyms were used throughout the research. In addition to this the self-completing questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were trialed before implementation to ensure that the questions protected the identity of the participants. The participants of the questionnaires were protected as their confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout this study. The confidentiality of the participants who volunteered for the semi-structured interviews were maintained through the use of pseudonyms. All data were recorded and reported honestly with care taken with transcribing the interviews. The transcriber indicated a time stamp on the transcription wherever, she could not clearly hear what was being said by the participants. Having the recordings allowed me to cross-check these times stamps against the recording to clarify what had been said.

Participants were not burdened in this study as they were made aware that their comments would not in any way be shared in a manner that could cause them stress and grief.

Informed consent

Informed consent refers to ensuring the participants are fully informed about the purpose of the study by providing them with adequate information that would allow them to make informed decisions. Consent is only given when the participants are fully informed about the study and have had an opportunity to seek clarification. Informed consent refers to the consent being voluntary and that the participants know and understand information pertaining to the study (Mutch, 2005; Snook, 2003; Tolich & Davidson, 2011; Wilkinson, 2001). Researchers should be able to answer any questions the participants may have and provide truthful responses and avoid any form of coercion.

In this study, informed consent took the form of the researcher obtaining permission from the schools' principal, curriculum leaders of English and teachers who would complete the questionnaire and those who would be participants in the semi-structured interviews. A detailed information sheet about the study including the purpose, aim and methods and presentation of the research was also provided to them. Once principals agreed with the information provided by the researcher to the curriculum leaders who emailed the questionnaire link to the teachers in the school who had the choice to participate or not. This also reduced any coercion and bias on my part. Tolich and Davidson (2011) explain that all participants must be fully aware of what they are opting into before they can volunteer to be participants in the research. Hence, all the schools were provided with the information sheet outlining the research study and had the opportunity to ask any questions pertaining to the study. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any point if they believed ethics had been compromised.

Consent forms were also collected prior to the interview taking place (see Appendix D). The consent form clearly outlined the purpose of the study and the data collected would only be utilised for this research. The participants also had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions before the interview to seek clarification with reference to the

questions that would be posed in the semi-structured interviews. This was not possible for the self-completing questionnaire; however, the questionnaire had been trialed before it had been implemented and necessary edits had been done. In addition to this, all the participants for the semi-structured interviews were provided with their transcripts before the data were utilised in the research. This gave them the opportunity to read and edit any comments they believed did not adequately present their views. The data collected were only viewed by the researcher and the research supervisor. The participants were informed about the storage and disposal processes for all the information that would be collected through the study. Any digital data would be stored on my personal laptop which is password and username protected.

The participants were also aware of my role in the research. Participation in research has to be voluntary and without any coercion or force. Wilkinson (2001) states that the wellbeing of the participants has to be maintained. There is always the issue of power which could result in exploitation. Prior to the research I clarified my role with the participants. I also ensured that this research was not conducted within the school I am currently employed at because of any abuse of power that could occur.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Another ethical consideration I took into account was the manner in which the participants were treated. Cohen et al. (2007) describe the essence of anonymity as “information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity” (p. 64). Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants was critical considering the risks involved on the part of the participants who volunteered to participate in the study. In order to minimise any harm to the participants and their school, I used pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of their identity. I also ensured that identities of all participants remained anonymous in the reporting of data which helped protect their identity. Participants were advised that this would be the process that would be adhered to as part of this study. Care was taken at all times not to identify the teachers in any way.

In addition to this, data confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that any audio recordings, transcripts and questionnaire responses could not be linked to any school or specific participant. Individual folders were created for the participants under their

pseudonyms and data relevant to that particular pseudonym were added into the folder. All the audio recording, transcripts, questionnaire responses and notes written by me were securely locked and other than my supervisor and I, no one else had access to these. As per university requirements this would also be destroyed after six years. Also the transcriber who was employed by the researcher signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure that the identity of the participants remained anonymous.

The final consideration that was taken into account was maintaining the confidentiality of the schools where this research took place. As discussed earlier in the chapter this study utilised convenience sampling. All the teachers who participated in the questionnaire were based in secondary schools which the researcher could readily access in terms of distance and time from the location of the researcher. I did not have any influence or power in terms of my relationships with and within the schools selected. This ethical consideration was crucial to the research design to ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants remained protected.

Summary: Research methodology

This chapter has discussed the research method and methodology that was employed in this study. The justification for adopting a subjectivist epistemological approach to this study within an interpretative paradigm was also provided. Since this research is situated within a qualitative research domain with a constructivist ontological position, I have also explained the selection of the two methods of data collection: questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Within this study, the justification for using an interpretive approach for data analysis has been provided with detailed description of how validity and reliability was ensured. Finally, I have examined the ethical considerations taken into account during this study. In the next chapter I will display the findings of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter findings from the questionnaire and interviews are presented. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather the perceptions of teachers about the provision of feedback and the ways in which they can be supported by leaders in providing more effective critical feedback to students in secondary school English classrooms. The second phase of data collection comprised semi-structured interviews with five teachers who had indicated an interest in participating in the interview phase by providing their contact details at the end of the initial questionnaire. The questionnaire and interview questions are included in Appendices A and B.

This chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of the questionnaire and the process used for data analysis is outlined. The questions used for the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews provide the headings for the presentation of the data. Tables and charts are used to highlight the frequency of the specific sub-themes that emerged from the data and a brief commentary discussing the data is also included.

Research participants

Questionnaire participants

The sample of participants exhibited a range of experience, from teachers new to the profession to those with more than 25 years of teaching experience. Fifty questionnaires were administered of which 32 were completed, a response rate of 64%.

Semi-structured interview participants

Participants in the questionnaire were asked to indicate if they would like to be part of the second phase of the data gathering via the final question in the questionnaire. On answering 'Yes' these teachers were then directed to another Google Form where they could provide their name and contact details. Six teachers indicated their interest. One of the teachers who indicated an interest was no longer employed at school and as such she was unable to participate in the interview as her new school had not indicated an interest in the research. The remaining five teachers were interviewed.

Findings

Questionnaire

Question 1 asked: How often do you provide critical written feedback on students' work in English classes?

As shown in Figure 4.1, 48% of the teachers identified that written feedback was provided to students once a week. Those who indicated 'other' explained the frequency of feedback also depended on the nature of the task the students were engaged in. If the students were working on a written task they were provided frequent feedback. However, if the students were involved in a project where they were creating a portfolio with multiple samples of writing in varied genre, this feedback was usually provided only on random samples. A portfolio includes writing samples which students can revisit at any point and edit and then finally submit what they consider as their best example of the writing required for assessment. As Irene and Saul stated:

Irene: It depends on what we are doing.

Saul: My class has been producing written work for an internal assessment, they have received ongoing written feedback regularly however, my Year 10 classes are only just producing their first written piece which I have yet to give feedback for. At this stage their feedback has been largely verbal.

The participants indicated that when they provided students with written feedback it was often accompanied by oral discussion. The aggregated responses to Question 1 are shown in Figure 4.1.

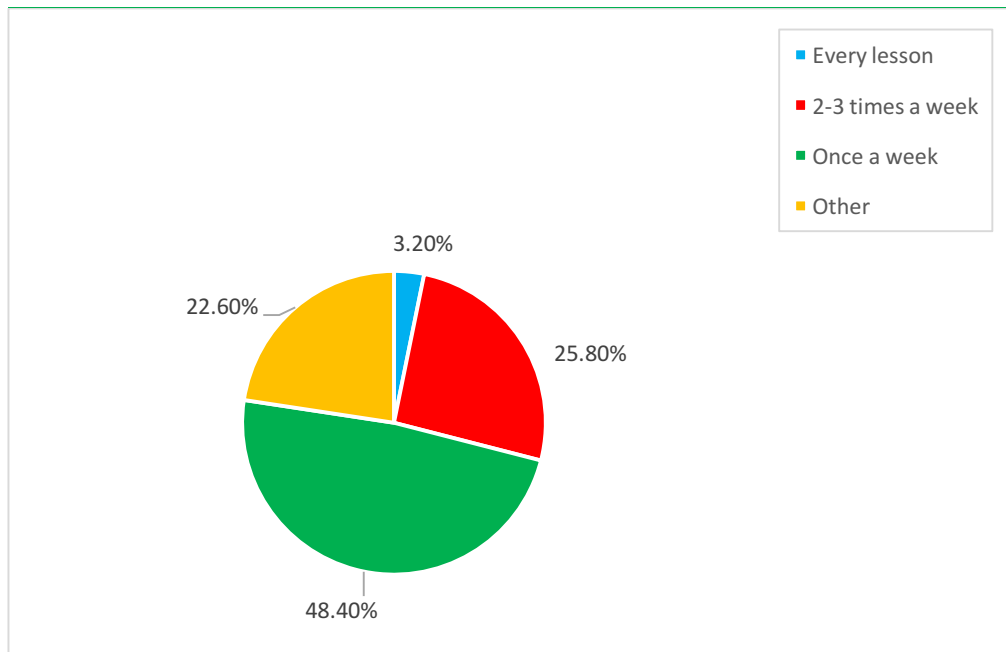


Figure 4.1. Question 1: Frequency of written feedback.

Question 2 asked: How often do you provide critical oral feedback on students' work in English classes?

Teachers identified that they provided more oral feedback when compared with written feedback to the students. Nearly 50% of the participants provided oral feedback to the students every lesson. The aggregated responses to this question are shown in Figure 4.2 below.

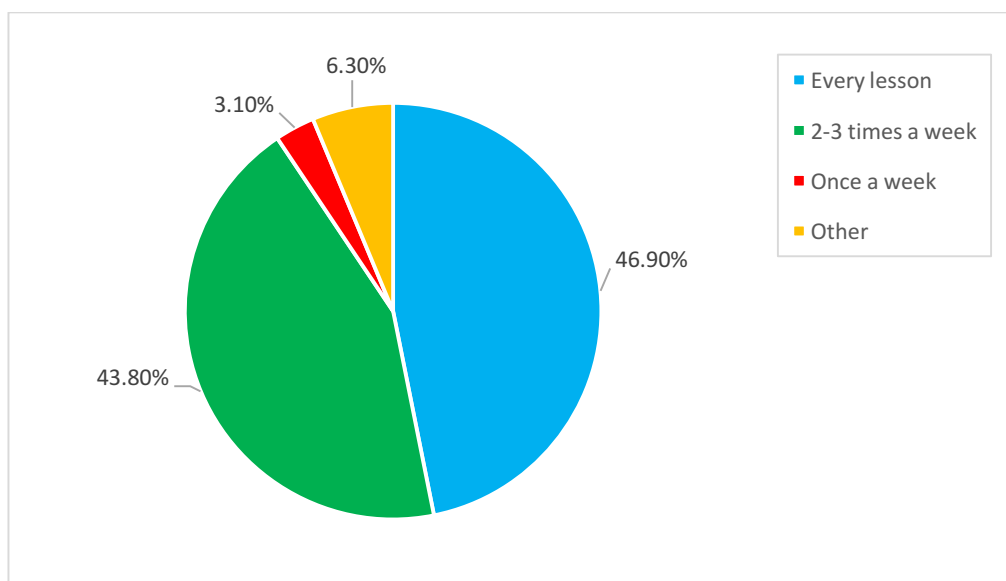


Figure 4.2. Question 2: Frequency of oral feedback.

Question 3 asked: What do you consider as important factors when giving students feedback on their work?

Teachers could select up to three criteria for this question. As Table 4.1 shows, 69% of the teachers identified that it was crucial that feedback was timely and ongoing for it to be effective. Providing students with feedback that was criteria referenced was also considered important by the teachers (50%). The criteria, according to the teachers, should be reflected in the feedback. This ensured that the feedback was demonstrative and utilised the vocabulary present in the criteria allowing students to see all the possible responses and hence be able to match these in the next assessment. Demonstrative feedback refers to feedback teachers provide which shows students how to meet an expectation for the task. For instance, if the writing requires students to utilise a range of sentence starters, then the feedback should include examples of some of these starters that students can utilise in their own writing. Teachers also highlighted the importance of using student-speak to ensure students have a better opportunity to apply the feedback to their own work. As the participants were able to include more than one factor, the percent score on the table added to more than 100% in total.

Table 4.1:

Question 3: Factors considered important by teachers when providing feedback.

Factors	Number of Responses	Percentage
Feedback should be timely	15	68.2
Feedback should be ongoing	13	59.1
Feedback should be criterion referenced	11	50.0
Feedback should be in student-speak	8	36.4
Feedback should be consistent.	6	27.3
Learners should be able to re-submit or be re-assessed on the same task	5	22.7
Other	3	13.6

Another factor identified by teachers was that feedback should allow students to develop a better understanding of the actual task, which translated into students being able to display their improved understanding through a different task at later date:

Irene: Students should record and understand the feedback and review it before doing another task.

Anna: Feedback should also be demonstrative- making use of key jargon and demonstrating possible responses.

Teachers admitted that it was important students reviewed the feedback provided by them and had the opportunity to apply it to the next activity. Students' application of the feedback to a new or existing activity showed they had understood the feedback. Teachers also highlighted the importance of the highly individualised nature of feedback.

Question 4 asked: Do think students value this feedback?

Figure 4.3 below shows 94% of the teachers surveyed believed students valued the feedback they had been provided by the teachers.

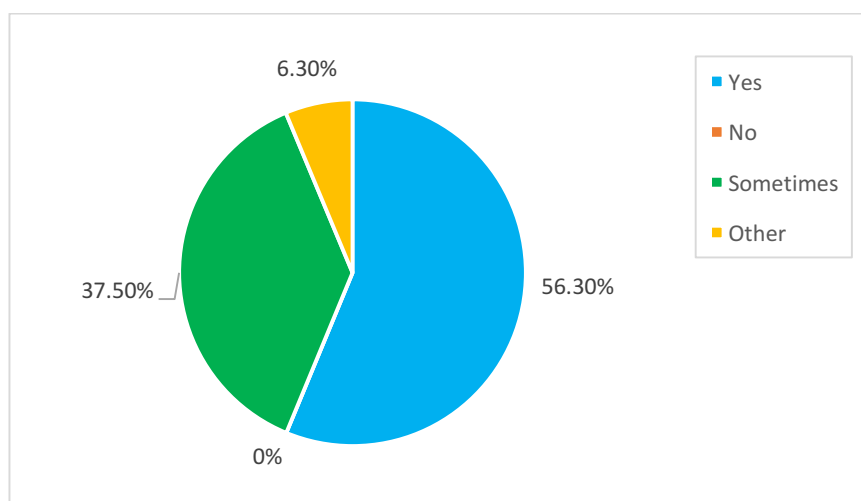


Figure 4.3. Question 4: Do students value feedback?

However, teachers identified two crucial factors that affected students' response to the feedback – the age of the learners and their self-motivation. Younger learners were more likely to be interested only in the grade whereas the more senior students understood the importance of feedback. Students' motivation and work ethic also determined whether the feedback would be positively or negative responded to. These

two factors strongly affected the manner in which students applied and responded to the feedback:

Peter: The older students definitely do, the younger students are more interested in their mark.

Daniel: Depends on the work ethic of the student. Not many care. Those who care use it.

Question 5 asked: How do you know students value this feedback?

Most teachers believed that students valued the feedback and this was evident when they applied the feedback to the next activity or assessment. Another way teachers knew the students valued the feedback was evident when students verbalised to the teachers through one-to-one conversations that they appreciated the feedback and often sought elaboration. Other students also requested teachers for more feedback and opportunities to resubmit their work to show their improved understanding of the task. The opportunity to edit their initial responses in light of the feedback provided to them by the teachers gave them an opportunity to showcase their understanding of the feedback. As Saul and Anna stated:

Saul: Often they ask for clarification of or elaboration on my feedback, they also take it on board and try to adjust their work accordingly.

Anna: They can edit their initial response based on what was discussed in the feedback.

Teachers also explained that they used feedback as a teaching point. With students' permission, teachers used the marked sample of work and discussed the feedback in order to teach the skill to the whole class. When this was done, teachers found that students generally showed increased levels of engagement in the subject. Jane explained this in the following way:

Jane: They can edit their initial response based on what was discussed during feedback. Sometimes I'll say "Now tell me how you'd answer that differently based on what we've just discussed."

These data suggest that feedback was used as a teaching tool and teachers found that they could hold productive conversations about students' work. However, teachers also noted this was not the case with all students. Students' responses to feedback depended on other factors such as their work ethic and motivation.

Question 6 asked: Hattie (2013) identifies feedback as “among the most powerful influences on achievement”. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

In total, 91% of the teachers surveyed agreed with Hattie’s (2013) statement that feedback is among the most powerful influences on achievement. As shown in Figure 4.4 below, it is also worth noting that no teacher disagreed with this statement.

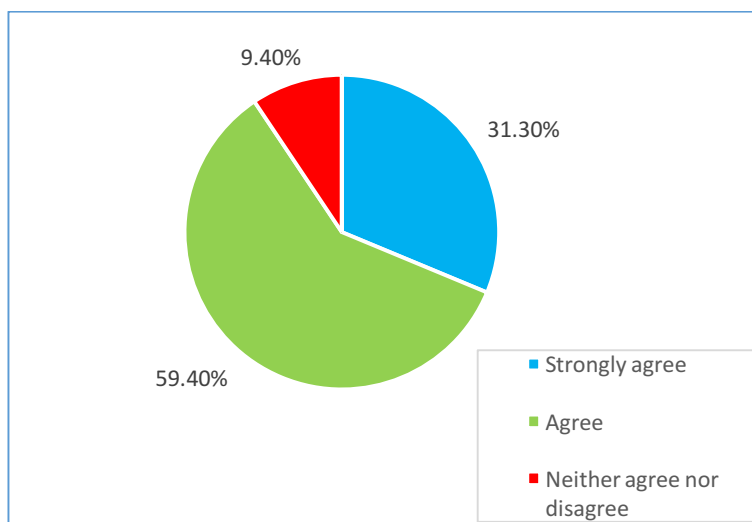


Figure 4.4. Question 6: Extent to which teachers agree that feedback is an influential factor.

Question 7 asked: Please explain the reason for your answer to question 6.

While 91% of teachers responded that they strongly agreed feedback was among the most powerful influences on achievement, they also acknowledged feedback should be accompanied by an oral discussion with the students for it to be effective. This oral discussion allowed students to seek any clarification or elaboration needed. The opportunity to have this conference with the teachers should be available with all the feedback students receive.

Ruth: Feedback leads to the teacher and student entering into a conversation about their work and this can be very powerful in terms of students learning how to improve their work.

Another factor highlighted by the teachers was that feedback was a powerful tool to build strong teacher-student relationships. Based on the strength of these relationships students would be more willing to take risks that they would not otherwise. These relationships allowed for a dialogue to take place whereby the feedback was no longer one-sided but allowed for meaningful conversations to take place. These enabled students to be able to achieve more success. This is reflected in the following participants’ comments:

Peter: Providing feedback leads to the teacher and student entering into a dialogue about their work and this can be very powerful in terms of students learning how to improve their work.

Anna: I think feedback can build the relationship between teacher and student and make students feel more listened to and valued by you.

Teachers also noted that there were other factors which influenced students. Feedback was only effective if the students engaged with the feedback. Factors such as developing skills to utilise the feedback were also considered as important. The role intrinsic motivation and positive attitude played were also highlighted by the teachers:

John: Student response is variable. Those who connect with the subject, cultivate a positive attitude and take things step by step usually value the teacher's feedback.

Saul: I believe that there are also other powerful influences on achievement, such as personal interest in subject (intrinsic motivation) and commitments outside of school etc.

Students' peers also played a crucial role in the response to the feedback. Students were more likely to accept feedback if it was considered a socially acceptable norm. Another aspect identified by the teachers was that if a grade accompanied the feedback, most students disregarded the feedback if they valued the grade most. If the primary concern for the students was achieving a grade or a mark, then the feedback was not something they responded well to. Generally, teachers agreed feedback was an influential factor but believed that there were many other factors that needed to be taken into account.

As Irene noted:

Irene: Feedback is extremely significant for the individual and class but teaching and learning is multidimensional and other factors (such as class size, student socio-economic status, school policies etc.) affect outcomes and also affect teacher's capacity to provide feedback

Teachers also reinforced the idea that feedback was individualised, therefore making it more relevant to the learners. In describing the individualised nature of feedback, Matt and Ruth noted:

Matt: If feedback is very specific and individual then students take it seriously.

Ruth: I agree that feedback is 'among the most powerful influences on achievement' because it is personalised and promotes a conversation.

Question 8a asked: What support do you currently have to put these strategies (feedback that is timely, ongoing, criterion referenced and in student-speak) into place?

For this question teachers could select up to three strategies they believed supported them in providing effective feedback to students. In total, 81% of the teachers agreed that developing high trust relationships with their students allowed them to provide effective feedback as shown in Table 4.2. Teachers noted that it was also important for these relationships to be developed so that the students responded to the feedback. As the participants were able to include more than one factor, the percent score on the table add to more than 100% in total.

Table 4.2:
Question 8a: Current support to implement strategies.

Existing support available to teachers	Number of Participants	Percentage
High trust relationships with students	26	81.3
Access to resources such as technology and time	19	59.4
High trust relationships with peers and curriculum leaders	19	59.4
Other	4	12.5
Having a mentor	2	6.3

Teachers explained that their personal experience equipped them with skills that allowed them to become better at providing effective feedback. They also highlighted the high-trust relationship that existed within the school which allowed them to use whatever strategy they deemed most appropriate when providing feedback. In explaining these high-trust relationships one participant stated:

Joan: At the moment it is fairly independently driven by the teacher. There is no departmental monitoring of how we are using feedback/forward systems. It is mentioned in teacher interviews with HOD.

Question 8b asked: Please explain your answer to question 8a.

Teachers maintained that access to technology allowed them to provide more effective feedback. Having ready access to fora such as Google Docs and Google Classrooms allowed teachers to provide immediate feedback, as Ryan and Simon noted:

Ryan: Google Docs allows for immediate intervention and feedback.

Simon: Using sites like Google Classroom and docs helps me provide written feedback as I don't have to collect in 30 books and lug them home.

Further to this, participants mentioned the importance of developing high trust relationships with students. The strength of these relationships were based on the high trust model that existed within the classroom:

Simon: High trust models in the classroom are imperative to create a learning environment where students can receive oral feedback knowing that their self-worth is not at stake.

Liz: I find having a relationship with students that means they are open to receiving feedback and have confidence in questioning what feedback means.

The benefits of feedback were noted by the teachers. However, they also highlighted the lack of time in order to provide the students with this feedback. Although technology was regarded as a useful tool, time, once again was mentioned as a constraint.

John: Effective written feedback takes a lot of time and this means teachers don't provide it as often as they would like.

It was further noted by the participants that teachers were often placed into whānau/houses in large secondary schools. This meant there were usually one or two subject specialists within the whānau. Such placement did not allow for much collaboration with other teachers within the learning area. This increased teacher isolation as they had limited access to a supportive peer who would have acted as a mentor. Like students, teachers also required someone to provide them with feedback on what they were doing or with whom they could engage in dialogue about current pedagogy. The whānau/house system according to the participants was not conducive for such practice to occur. The lack of a physical space in which teachers from the same learning area could get together and discuss successful pedagogy made this isolation even more pronounced. As John noted:

John: The structure of our school does not place a focus on the department so there is little practical support there. I do not have a mentor. There is some trust with peers, but not a lot of contact because we do not have a physical place where the department regularly meets.

Other participants also accepted the importance of having access to a peer who acted as a sounding board and was crucial in developing pedagogy regarding feedback. This was especially important when identifying texts and strategies to engage learners from a range of cultural context, interest and ability. For example, Anna noted:

Anna: My colleagues are a storehouse of relevant texts and wisdom about how to reach all manner of personalities.

Question 9a and 9b asked: What factors limit your ability to provide critical feedback about learning to students? Please explain your response.

For this question teachers were able to select up to three factors that they considered to be limitations (see Table 4.3). Teachers identified lack of time as one of the key factors that limited their ability to provide critical and individualised feedback to the students. Participants' comments on the lack of time available, and the large class sizes included:

Ryan: Quality feedback can take up to 20 minutes per student at senior levels. Finding this time for every student would take too long.

John: I have some very large classes, especially NCEA. With the care required with assessment, this is time-consuming and requires careful management.

It was also noted by the participants that lack of time did not just affect the teachers but also the students. The pressure to complete all that was required of the students in various subjects they were enrolled in made it hard for them to find time to apply the feedback to their work. One of the participants stated:

Simon: The lack of time isn't lack of time to complete the feedback but there is a lack of quality time for students to work on the improvements required. It feels that at times we are rushing through the content and not allowing students the time to apply the feedback and therefore make it meaningful to them.

Another teacher explained that oral feedback may be an option that ensured students are provided with timely feedback. A consideration that had to be taken into account when giving oral feedback was how much of it would be retained by the students. In describing oral feedback one of the participants stated:

Matt: Oral feedback is quicker, but not always as good, as it's sometimes more difficult for students to process and they forget it quickly.

There was clear recognition of the issue of large classes and teachers' ability to provide critical feedback. Students' lack of interest in the feedback was also highlighted by 28%

of the teachers who participated in the survey. Participants comments on students' lack of interest included:

Anna: Some students just don't care. They'll respect your passion but really school is a total chore. It happens.

Joan: Students have also gathered that me making comments means more work for them! Not all students are 'grateful' for this opportunity...to do more work! So attitude change needed all around.

The final factor participants highlighted was at senior levels of teaching, assessment drove the learning. The pressure of having multiple assessments completed with feedback and meeting the requirements for moderation, meant that teachers did not have opportunity to provide the feedback they would have liked to. Limited opportunities to provide detailed feedback affected students' ability to apply the feedback as the following participants noted:

Joan: Usually flying through content has a negative impact on the opportunity to spend time with the students.

Simon: It feels that at times we are rushing through the content and not allowing students the time to apply the feedback and therefore make it meaningful to them.

Inexperience with providing feedback was also identified by the teachers as a limitation for them. Teachers who were new to the profession were unsure about their ability to provide critical feedback.

Table 4.3

Question 8: Factors that limit teachers' ability to provide critical feedback about learning to students.

Factors	Number of Participants	Percentage
Lack of time	28	87.5
Large class sizes	23	71.9
Students lack of interest in the feedback	9	28.1
Inexperience in providing critical feedback	4	12.5
Inability to access resources	3	9.4
Other	0	0

Question 10 asked: What are the ways in which educational leaders influence/ assist/ facilitate the provision of feedback?

For this question, participants had the option of selecting up to three ways leaders can influence their provision of feedback (see Table 4.4). There was awareness amongst the participants that educational leaders could influence the provision of feedback. In total, 68% of the teachers acknowledged that educational leaders could influence their provision of feedback, by allowing them regular access to regular professional development. Access to professional development was perceived as allowing teachers to improve their pedagogy regarding to feedback. Developing a safe environment for teachers to take risks was also highlighted as one of the most important ways in which educational leaders could influence the provision of feedback. Providing ready access to resources including time was also a crucial factor.

Table 4.4

Question 10: Ways in which educational leaders can influence/ assist/ facilitate the provision of feedback.

Ways leaders can influence the provision of feedback	Number of Participants	Percentage
Access to regular professional development - both internally and through external providers	21	67.7
Developing a 'safe' environment for teachers to take risks	18	58.1
Providing ready access to resources including time	16	51.6
Supportive mentoring/coaching relationships that allows teachers to develop their pedagogy	14	45.2
Other	1	3.2

Question 11 asked: What do you perceive the role of a mentor/coach is in regard to supporting the development of your pedagogy in the classroom?

Teachers understood the role of a coach/mentor regarding the development of their pedagogy in the classroom but highlighted that not many have any such provision in their school:

Ryan: I expect a mentor / coach to have a certain level of expertise so that they can push me to become stronger. Unfortunately, I feel this has been lacking in my own development for the last three years.

John: I don't have the support of a mentor/coach in the classroom.

Mathew: I don't have a mentor as such. Nor do we 'chat' much, because we are in 'Houses' with teachers mostly from other subjects, not English

Teachers also conceded that if they did have a coach or a mentor, they would expect them to share ideas and model effective pedagogy relevant to feedback. The guidance provided by the leaders would allow teachers to develop their pedagogy.

Saul: To provide guidance, offer suggestions, areas for improvement and encouragement.

It was noted by one participant that the appraisal process at his school was not aiding him to improve his pedagogy. The isolation felt as a result of being part of a whānau/house had further ramifications on the development of pedagogy. In describing this inadequacy one participant stated:

John: I have had a couple of appraisals where no feedback was given. I don't have a mentor as such. Nor do we 'chat' much, because we are in 'Houses' with teachers mostly from other subjects, not English.

Teachers recognised the role mentors could play but there was little evidence from the findings as to whether the mentors had adequate training to fulfill their role in providing the support the mentees required.

Question 12 asked: What other support is provided to you in regard to your pedagogy development?

Teachers acknowledged that having access to professional development enhanced their pedagogy, however, they noted that this area needed much greater attention at school. Participants commented that the professional development provided by schools did not take into account individual strengths and weaknesses and it was more of a 'one-size fits all' approach:

Ryan: Our professional learning programme is quite weak - there is a lack of differentiation, innovation and clarity. It often seems ad-hoc and very 'wishy-washy'... This is regardless of experience, interests and personal goals.

Mathew: PD in my school is very limited... Often it is hit and miss with PD

Teachers agreed that schools needed to seek external professional development together with access to subject associations, for example The New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE). Subject associations allowed teachers to have access to exemplars and also to moderate across schools. As Henry stated:

Henry: More useful training has come from attending symposiums in my subject area, delivered by specialists in language.

Lack of time as well as the pressure felt by teachers as a result of technology initiatives that were adopted by schools, were other concerns for the teachers. Some teachers did not have access to external professional development and this had to be actively sought by the teachers themselves. There was also useful professional development provided internally by some schools where the teachers could meet as a faculty and develop their own pedagogy.

Semi-structured interviews

Question 1: What support do you currently have in providing effective feedback to students?

Two participants in this study highlighted that they received varying degrees of support in developing their pedagogy in relation to feedback. For example:

Daniel: We haven't had any professional learning on what is effective feedback ... there isn't any time to do readings on that as such.

Sue: The support I have tends to be very self-directed, so it tends to be if I am not 100 percent sure what kind of feedback I should be providing I take it on myself to go and ask somebody.

Others highlighted that the support focused more on ensuring there was uniformity in the marking of assessments especially those being externally moderated. The content of the support was more directed at systems development and not pedagogy:

Iain: There's the moderation type of arrangement where teachers get together and look at the assessment criteria and then compare how they apply them in their marking of a set of student's work.

Sue: We have moderation meetings with the staff. If there are any issues around a particular assessment, then that will be discussed and we'll somewhat come to a conclusion about how we're going to all deal with it.

Another participant highlighted that support was externally provided through mentors/lecturers within the TeachNZ programme. TeachNZ is a two-year scholarship

programme whereby students complete a Diploma in Teaching in a field-based environment. This programme aims to address educational inequality by ensuring that the scholarship applicants are based in lower decile schools for their field-based experience. Students also receive full pay while they teach and study part-time. These students receive support in form of a university mentor who supports them in developing effective pedagogy. The TeachNZ participants, however, received no support from any school-based professional development. Other participants elaborated that this could be because there was an existing high-trust model where the educational leaders assumed the teachers were actively seeking out opportunities for professional learning of their own accord. As Iain stated:

Iain: It's really up to us to improvise and decide this is the most effective way to feedback on this particular assessment.

Question 2: How can you be supported in developing your pedagogy in regard to feedback?

All five of the interview participants agreed that being able to participate in professional learning relevant to providing feedback to students was the most effective way they could develop their pedagogy. For example, Daniel stated:

Daniel: In terms of the feedback feed forward, what was done in, like I said, a previous school it was about questioning skills and if that was the area that you were interested in developing. I think the professional learning model can be more effective and hopefully it will be here that we can develop pedagogy.

In addition to access to professional development participants mentioned factors including having more time and using exemplars from colleagues to develop their own pedagogy. Increased time allowed teachers to have the opportunity to observe other teachers who were more skilled and then being able to adopt some of the strategies about feedback to their own class. Exemplars of written feedback on students' work also served as a benchmark on which they could evaluate their own feedback to students. Another teacher highlighted the need for more pedagogical development through mentoring and faculty support especially for teachers new to the profession. This could be in the form of faculty leaders allowing teachers new to the profession to observe their classes and provide feedback. It could also develop into opportunities and time given to the more experienced teachers to have a new or beginning teacher to mentor.

Question 3: Time and class size are often mentioned as constraints in providing effective feedback. How would you address this issue?

All the interview participants agreed time and class size affected the manner in which they provided feedback to the students. Both factors acted as constraints and limited the opportunities teachers had to provide effective feedback to the students. Participants commented on how they found the two factors frustrating because it prevented them from providing the feedback they wanted to. For example, Iain stated:

Iain: I think it is glaringly obvious that the smaller the class is, the more attention every student gets. And pretending that you can somehow spread an expert teacher incredibly thinly and still get the same quality output is just blatant stupidity really.

Other participants acknowledged that although time and class size were an issue, they were trialing other options pertaining to providing effective feedback which was timely. The use of digital tools such as Google Classrooms, Docs and Drive were options teachers had explored. Participants also stated that they combined the written feedback with an oral conference so that specific matters could be addressed. One of the drawbacks they found with oral feedback was that many students forgot the content of the discussion, hence rendering the feedback useless. Feedback was only useful when students applied it to their work. For example, Nikki stated:

Nikki: But I think the majority of feedback that we give to be useful for the students has to be written because if you give them verbal feedback sometimes they go home and their parents will say, "What do you need to improve?" And they go, "I don't know, I can't remember."

Question 4: What other constraints would prevent you from being able to provide feedback to students?

The participants involved in the interviews explained that there are a number of factors that affect the manner in which they provided feedback. Two of the most common factors were the assessment guidelines provided by external authorities like New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), and their own skills. As Sue explained:

Sue: NCEA assessment criteria frustrates the teacher, it frustrates the students, and it means learning is slower. If you could show them what's wrong, show them how to correct it, and get them to redo it like the old fashioned corrections that people used to do, it's actually more effective than this.

Although the majority of the teachers believed that they could provide the feedback required, they still maintained that they needed professional learning in terms of being

more effective in providing feedback. Moreover, teachers highlighted that students' own attitudes and abilities to apply the feedback also affected the manner in which they provided feedback. Students' socio-economic status, self-efficacy and ability limited teachers' abilities to provide the critical feedback they wanted to. For example, Nikki stated:

Nikki: Another one though, the biggest one, is shame. For me they feel such shame and their efficacy is low and when they get a grade that, if they've worked really hard for something and the grade comes back and it's not what they wanted.

Time was an additional factor which was mentioned by the participants, not just in terms of teachers not having enough time to provide feedback, but also students not having enough time to apply the feedback provided by the teachers. Students were unable to apply the feedback due to time constraints and a demanding curriculum. As Sue stated:

Sue: I think for our students the biggest constraint is having such a full curriculum and giving them feedback that is probably quality feedback, but not giving them the time to be able to absorb it and start incorporating it into their writing.

Question 5: How do school leaders influence the provision of feedback?

Participants highlighted that one of the direct forms of influence educational leaders had on teachers' practice of feedback was through providing teachers access to professional development with a focus on feedback pedagogy. This was succinctly explained by David:

David: I think that a professional development programme definitely can facilitate this, but I do truly believe that any programme you do needs to be one that emerges out of a relational trust.

Another aspect teachers highlighted was that educational leaders needed to provide an environment where teachers would be willing to take risks. This could be possible through the development of relational trust amongst the teachers and leaders. This relationship included the availability of educational leaders to provide feedback on the teachers' pedagogy. For example, Iain stated:

Iain: I think if you can equip teachers with the ability and the self-efficacy in the creative culture of relational trust where they feel that they have the right to give feedback to others and they are safe to do so and they are safe to receive feedback.

Participants also explained that increasing the number of subject-related meetings within the school would assist in them developing their ability to provide critical

feedback. This was possible as peers provided subject specific advice and support. Subject-related meetings also included having opportunities to attend cluster meetings for moderation and general sharing of ideas. Furthermore, the participants emphasised that it was critical that the model of the professional development took into account the teachers' skill set. The participants all agreed that a professional development model needed to be developed in consultation with the teachers. Furthermore, teacher-voice needed to be present when determining the professional development model, as many tended to disengage when a 'top down approach' was adopted for decision making. For example, as Daniel stated:

Daniel: In terms of teacher needs I guess it depends on who's identifying the needs. I think as professionals we all want to have a voice and we all want to be heard and all want to be in control of our own development, I suppose, or to an extent. But when that's coming from a top down approach it's very easy to disengage.

Workshop-based professional development was preferred by the teachers. Such models allowed teachers to 'opt-in' based on their self-identified needs or interests. This would keep teachers engaged. The participants also explained that the opt-in model would work if teachers were willing to critique their own practice and identify areas to develop. The teachers were also aware that there were many constraints on the school when planning a professional development programme, including time and money. As Nikki stated:

Nikki: Time, money and what the goals of the school are that are set affects the nature of the professional development.

Question 6: What would you consider an effective professional development model?

Participants agreed that the professional development programme had to be developed in consultation with the teachers. They believed there would be a greater buy-in from the teachers if they determined for themselves the content of the professional development programme. It was also agreed that the professional learning model should take into account individual teacher's abilities and that a differentiated approach should be taken so teachers had the choice to opt into areas that they were keen to develop or find out more about. For example, Sue stated:

Sue: We would have certain ideas or certain strategies or themes that you would opt into as staff, so that when you opt into it you've got like-minded people who are all researching into the same area, rather than a one size fits all.

Participants also described professional development that did not take into account teachers' pedagogical and professional goals as more of a burden than a tool. Sue described such professional development as:

Sue: More periodic detention than professional development.

Question 7: What skills are needed to be able to provide critical feedback?

Participants explained that teachers and students should aim to develop relationships where feedback was regarded as scaffolding to bridge the gap between where the student was and where he/she should be. These relationships developed over time as students developed relational trust with the teachers. Without trust, it was very difficult for students to display their vulnerabilities.

David: It again comes down to that trust environment with the students where it's okay for them not to be getting excellences and we're looking at effort and where were you and value added and what are you doing now.

Teachers also noted that they themselves needed to have strong self-efficacy in order to trust their own judgment when providing feedback to students. Participants remarked that self-efficacy in regard to this area of their practice developed over time with increased experience. Furthermore, two of the participants agreed that having a mentor in the same learning area supported the development of self-efficacy amongst teachers. Others found referring to exemplars provided either by the school or NZQA helped in growing their confidence

Question 8: What support do you believe is necessary to build self-efficacy amongst teachers so that they can provide critical feedback on students' work in English?

Regular access to professional development was identified as one of the key ways in which teachers believed their self-efficacy could be developed. They noted that building self-efficacy takes time and it was crucial there was an environment which was safe and allowed teachers to take risks. As David stated:

David: These skills grow over a long period of time through experience. When this happens so does teacher self-efficacy.

Two of the interview participants who have mentors also noted that having the capacity to meet regularly with someone they considered as a mentor supported them in developing their skills in the matter of providing critical feedback. This resulted in increased teacher self-efficacy. Teachers also highlighted that, although this support could be provided by the head of their faculty, they needed to have non-contact time

strategically added to their timetable to realistically be able to support the teachers. Teachers placed a lot of value on the professional development opportunities that would support them in developing their self-efficacy. Any such professional development would take into account teachers' specific needs and be individualised to engage them and also provide opportunities for growth. For example, Nikki stated that:

Nikki: PD that we do as teachers needs to be more individualised and more tailored to where a teacher needs to learn. I think that would be what will be the biggest difference to teachers' self-efficacy down the learning curve.

Question 9: Do students value feedback if it is accompanied by a grade?

All the teachers noted that providing grades together with written feedback made the feedback null and void as most students concentrated on the grade only. The grade is what the students knew was reported on and if the grade was acceptable, many did not bother to take into account the feedback to re-craft and edit their work. For example, Daniel stated:

Daniel: They don't really want to improve the work as long as it's of an acceptable grade to them.

According to the participants, one of the other reasons that students hesitated to apply feedback was because once the students had completed the writing required for the activity, they considered it complete. The students were not keen to apply the feedback as they were ready to move on to the next activity. Participants highlighted that it was crucial that feedback was not accompanied by a grade as the feedback made the students reflect on their own writing. Students should instead be provided with an assessment schedule, and have the opportunity to reflect on the comments and predict their own grades. This reflection also gave them a better opportunity to apply the feedback before their next submission. For example, Sue stated:

Sue: One of the things that I do is I don't give them their grade. I will give them their comments and give them the marking schedule and get them to reflect on where in the marking schedule they went right or not, predict what they think their own grade is, set next steps and then I give them the grade.

Question 10: Do students know what to do with the feedback once it is received?

In most instances teachers explained that students knew what to do with the feedback. What students did with the feedback was determined by their abilities and their attitudes towards teacher feedback. Feedback was applied by the students when they understood the feedback and had the inclination to apply it. Not all the students saw

feedback as positive; many saw it as more work they had already completed and, in their mindset, had moved on from. As Daniel stated:

Daniel: For many students, feedback is pointless as they are now on the next achievement standard. Others regard feedback as the teacher's written another essay about my essay and I still don't know what to do.

Other teachers explained they used specific strategies like consolidating written feedback with an oral conference to support students with applying the feedback. For example, Sue stated:

Sue: Sometimes I've got the students to highlight the key words from the piece of feedback they've been given and then highlight it where they've used it in the next piece of work.

Teachers also emphasised that students had to be scaffolded through the process of applying the feedback before they reached the stage where there was increased autonomy on the students' part. This autonomy came with practise. Teachers also highlighted that the skills required by the students in order to apply feedback had to be taught. They explained that the practice of teachers providing feedback, and expecting students to apply it to their work, should become part of what they do even in primary schools. Hence, when students encountered feedback as part of secondary schooling, they would already have the necessary skills and attitude to respond positively to it. As Nikki who stated:

Nikki: It's that rising tide that raises all ships. If we can give good feedback from the start of their schooling life and teach them what to do with the feedback when they're given it which is, I think, the step that we often forget to do.

Question 11: When and how do you give this feedback to students?

Feedback was provided by teachers at various stages of the activity. This was determined by the activity the students were involved in. If the students were just beginning to explore an idea, they were given more oral feedback to make them think more deeply about the issues. In the later stages teachers preferred to ask questions to make students think about the content of their writing. Another factor that controlled the content and amount of feedback teachers provided to the students was the assessment conditions that had been determined by external forces such as NZQA, as noted by Iain:

Iain: A lot of times it is already decided for you by the NCEA assessment conditions.

All the teachers agreed that written feedback was more effective when accompanied by an oral conference as it gave students the ability to seek clarification:

Nikki: Unless you actually physically sit down with them, explain what that means, give them some examples, it really just becomes, look, the teacher's written another essay about my essay and I still don't know what to do.

Some of the teachers also explained that they had re-assessed their own practice relating to the timing of the feedback to enable students to get most from the feedback:

Daniel: So when I give feedback that's just the beginning of my steps. It depends on the task at hand, but generally speaking when I will give that feedback at a check in point where then it's not the summative.

Question 12: What factors would you consider when giving feedback to students?

The participants highlighted that they ensured students did not feel shamed by the feedback they received. At all times teachers made efforts to ensure the feedback process was private. These were one-on-one conversations in reference to the written feedback they had already received on their work:

David: Because that (whole class feedback) would be just too overwhelming for them and they'd be very likely to just not pay any attention to it.

Teachers also focused on the ability of the students when providing critical feedback as this affected students' ability to apply the feedback. The feedback had to be manageable at the student's individual ability relating to content and language teachers used:

Nikki: You have to write it in words they can understand and you have to deliver it in a way that they can see the value for them trying to apply it.

Timeliness and transferability of the feedback also played a critical role in the type of feedback that was provided by the teachers. Students should have the time to apply the feedback. Transferability of the feedback was also a critical factor. Teachers admitted that they had to be well aware of the assessment guidelines that had been determined by external authorities like NZQA to ensure they met the requirements. Failure to meet these guidelines could result in students failing a specific assessment and missing out on crucial credits:

Nikki: You have to look at the guidelines and clarifications. Obviously the feedback needs to relate to the assessment criteria, but you can't tell them specifically.

Participants also noted their practice was continuously evolving as each year the students in their classes had different needs.

Daniel: If they need a little bit more processing time, having a little video feedback specifically on that work where they can either revisit it and look at it again or pause it.

Summary

Chapter Four has presented the information gathered from English teachers at New Zealand secondary schools through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. An effort was made to present the data in a clear and unbiased manner in the order that the questions were asked. Direct quotes from the participants have been used as well as paraphrasing to summarise responses. There has been no willful omission of any information. Participants have all had the opportunity to amend their responses prior to this chapter of findings being produced.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the overall findings from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview data presented in the previous chapter.

The research questions form the sub-headings, and the discussion for each research question is completed under several sub-headings that emerged from the data analysis. These themes are displayed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
Research questions and themes

Research Questions	What are teachers' perceptions and understandings of what critical feedback means to student in a secondary school English subject classroom?	What strategies do teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback to students about their learning?	In what ways do educational leaders influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback in English?
Themes	Processes of effective feedback including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the purpose of feedback; • time; • student ownership; • students' self-efficacy and motivation; • social setting; and • oral and written feedback. 	Conditions necessary for students' application of feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on-going; • criterion referenced; • timeliness; • student-speak; and • student-teacher relationships. 	Influence of educational leaders in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building relational trust; • access to professional development; • mentoring • access to department space and time for meetings • school structure – whānau/house • protecting teacher time; and • availability of resources.

Discussion of findings related to research questions

Research question one

What are teachers' perception and understanding of what critical feedback means to students in a secondary school English classroom?

This section will describe teachers' perceptions and understanding of what critical feedback means to students. It will also identify how these relate to literature. The understanding and perceptions of feedback as described by teachers are also discussed in relation to the difference between the espoused beliefs and the actual practical application. The factors that can enable teachers to provide optimal feedback will also be described.

Purposes of feedback

In order to describe teachers' perceptions and understanding of what critical feedback means to students, it was important to discover the purpose for which teachers currently provide feedback. Teachers identified that feedback was used by the students to either attain a higher grade or to develop a skill that was necessary to achieve a particular activity. As this study is within the interpretive paradigm it is important to seek explanations for similarities and differences in teachers' beliefs and perceptions in providing feedback. Punch (2014) postulates that these explanations provide an understanding of the meanings teachers assign to their context and specific situation. The findings of my study revealed that most teachers agreed feedback is a crucial aspect of the learning process but their ability to provide this feedback was affected by a number of factors which may or may not be within their control.

Teachers' beliefs about feedback affected the manner in which they provided feedback to students. It was teachers' own beliefs about feedback influenced the strategies used by them in providing feedback which allow students to become autonomous and self-regulated learners (Sadler, 2010; Swaffield, 2011). According to Sadler (2010), feedback tells the learners what they have scored and why and also provides students with enough information to improve their work. Utilising this feedback allows the learners to develop self-managing skills that enables them to become autonomous learners. It is important that educators focus time and resources into increasing the efficiency and

effectiveness of feedback. The findings of my study indicated that teachers valued feedback but the strategies they employed in order to provide feedback differ based on the context of the teachers and students. Teachers play a critical role in determining what they consider to be effective feedback and this is governed by teachers' beliefs about feedback. If teachers regard feedback as important, they would spend time providing it but if they did not perceive feedback as useful then the likelihood of them spending time on it is diminished. Furthermore, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007), the teacher's role within the formative assessment and feedback process, is to promote learning and help the students understand the goal they are aiming for. Sadler (1989) also sees feedback as a practice that is focused on feedback loops where students use the information to close the gap in their understanding. Teachers reported that they put significant time and thought into the feedback they provided to students. They saw feedback as a tool that could be utilised by students to achieve the desired level of performance. In other words, teachers do know the importance of providing effective feedback and employ effective strategies to provide it. However, they found that factors such as time, students' self-efficacy and ownership of the feedback, their social setting and their ability to have an oral conference about the feedback affects the manner in which students engage with the feedback.

Time

Time to provide effective feedback to students and time to apply the feedback on part of the students was often mentioned as a constraint by the teachers who participated in this study. Hargreaves (1989) aptly sums this up by explaining "time structures the work of teaching and is in turn structured through it" (p. 3). Work intensification in the teaching field has been noticeable for a period of time. Although the establishment of *Tomorrow's Schools* (Lange, 1988) saw New Zealand schools becoming self-managing with a greater sense of autonomy, in recent years there has been an increase in government mandated systems which have challenged this ideology. These systems, which have been established to increase accountability and to standardise students' outcomes, are more suited to the business sector rather than education (Knudsen, Markey & Simpkin, 2013). The result has been an increase in the administrative tasks that teachers are now expected to complete. Although teachers maintain autonomy in regards to curriculum delivery in the classroom to a large degree, external systems and

expectations placed on them have had considerable impact on time. This intensification in workload has resulted in teachers having to compromise on certain aspects of their pedagogy that they can no longer realistically maintain. In the classroom, this could effectively mean teachers are able to provide feedback on a certain aspect of a writing task rather than the whole piece. It could also result in teachers providing more detailed feedback for activities that are higher stakes like NCEA, and neglect junior classes. Clearly with the current work intensification of teachers, lack of time is having a negative impact on their pedagogy. One of the ways educational leaders can reduce this workload is to move the administrative aspect of teaching to non-teaching staff (Greene, Lee, Springhall, & Bemrose, 2002). There is an obvious increase in cost to allow for this to take place but, if the focus of the school is on improving students' outcomes, then certain costs have to be accounted for. It could also mean the school seeking volunteers from the parent community to support them.

Teachers added that the large classes together with the pressure of time as a result of the assessment driven nature of the teaching programme, resulted in many of them being unable to provide as much feedback as they would prefer to. Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) explain that the effect of class size on active interaction with teachers is profound. Their study found that in smaller classes students receive more individual attention; in larger classes students spent more time listening to the teacher talk to the whole class. It is important that leaders and policy makers take into account the effect of large class sizes and the provision of effective feedback. According to Hattie (2009), feedback is one of the most powerful influences on students' achievement. Although he mentions that class size has relatively smaller effect on achievement, later commentaries by Snook (2009) states that Hattie's (2009) research fails to acknowledge other contributing factors such as access to professional development. Class size cannot be viewed in isolation from all the other variable like teacher pedagogy, students' age and ability. In other words, the provision of feedback affects student achievement and, in order to raise student achievement, teachers should be encouraged to provide this feedback. As already mentioned, findings of my study revealed that teachers already know the role feedback plays but are handicapped by factors like lack of time to provide the feedback that they would like to. This is where it is important that educational leaders also recognise the role of feedback and provide teachers with time to do what

they do well – support students with their learning through feedback. This could translate into looking at the class size by ensuring the low ability students benefit from having smaller class sizes and also providing tools like Google Classrooms to support teachers to provide feedback. It is also the role of educational leaders to protect teaching time and to take away some of the administrative aspects of the job that teachers have to complete such as data entry (Greene et. 2002).

Time is a factor that not only affects the teachers but is a factor that also affects the students. The time between assessments, the drafts and final submission become blurred in the classroom. Iain highlighted how the feedback that he provided could become second priority for the student as they have already begun focusing on the next assessment. Students need time to apply the feedback they have been provided by the teacher but this may not be the case where there are external pressures of assessments such as the National Certificate in Educational Assessment (NCEA). Often the assessment criteria require students to submit work within a timeframe, hence reducing their opportunity to apply the feedback. This contrasts with Gamlen and Smith's (2013) research found that students sought specific feedback from teachers that allowed them to improve their work. This feedback is only useful if the students are allowed time to discuss the feedback and apply it to their work. It was further noted by teachers that students had more opportunities to apply the feedback in junior classes because pressure for time was less in these classes. Since the curriculum is less assessment-driven in the junior classes, teachers had increased opportunities to allow students to apply feedback to another activity. According to the participants in this study, senior classes, most of the academic year is filled with a number of internal assessments and practice examinations; teachers and students rarely have time to apply feedback. Furthermore, the nature of the tasks also affected the application of feedback. In junior classes feedback that is given is relevant to multiple writing opportunities whereas in the senior classes feedback is specific to a task and this feedback may not be applicable in the next assessment. It was evident that assessment drives the learning in the senior classes and this determined the teaching that occurs in the classroom. This is beyond the control of the teachers as often schools attempt as many achievement standards as possible within a learning area to provide students with increased opportunities to attain the required number of credits needed for passing NCEA. School leaders need to

re-assess how NCEA is delivered in schools. Often numeracy and literacy credits can be attained through other learning areas thus reducing the pressure on teachers of Mathematics and English to provide so many Achievement Standards each year.

Ownership of feedback

This study showed that teachers fundamentally believed feedback is effective when students complete the 'feedback loop' by applying the feedback they had been provided (Hounsell et al. 2008). They have noted that students should take ownership of this process in order to maximise the perceived benefits. In other words, feedback is only effective if students apply the feedback they had been provided. Teachers maintained that the feedback they provided to the students allowed them to improve their work. Hence, if students applied this feedback they would see improvement in their grade or general ability to replicate the skill in another activity. This view is supported by Gamlen and Smith's (2013) study which found that students preferred feedback that contained suggestions for improvement. This type of feedback encourages dialogue between students and teachers to elaborate on the feedback. Hattie and Gan (2011) also explain that the power of feedback is more in 'when' and 'how' it is received by the students rather than when and how it is given. It is crucial that this skill of applying feedback and seeking elaboration becomes second nature for students. Students should be exposed to the process of receiving and providing feedback early in their schooling life so that applying feedback becomes a norm. Receiving and applying feedback ought to become the culture of what occurs in a classroom from very early on so students can maximise their learning. Often it is factors like time and students' self-efficacy that prevents students and teachers from making the most out of the feedback process.

Students' self-efficacy and motivation

Students' self-efficacy also plays a crucial role in the application of feedback. In order for students to apply feedback given by the teachers to their own learning, they must understand the purpose and content of the feedback and have the motivation to apply it. Essentially students' ability and self-efficacy is critical for completing the 'feedback loop'. Students' self-efficacy is determined to a large degree by their prior experience involving feedback and their own motivation. According to Ekholm, Zumbrunn and Conklin (2015), students would be more willing to apply feedback if they believed in

their own ability to do so. Teachers in this study reinforced the importance of students having positive prior experience with feedback as it often motivated them to continue to seek feedback. Either too much feedback or too little feedback can have a negative impact on students' self-efficacy. Peterson and Irving (2008) explain that too much information on how to bridge the gap can be overwhelming and, therefore, students would disregard the feedback as it is too difficult to apply. It is important that teachers know how much feedback to provide students. Too much feedback can be demoralising for students who may not know where to begin. It is critical that teachers provide feedback that is accessible to students in terms of their current level of performance (Hattie, 2009). It is equally important that teachers provide students with positive experiences with feedback as this often helps build students' self-efficacy. Pajares (1992) reinforces the importance of positive experiences and efficacy and highlights that people often partake in tasks they feel competent in. Teachers must build students' self-efficacy by equipping them with skills to apply feedback. If the feedback process becomes inculcated in every aspect of the teaching and learning process, students would become more competent at applying it. Students must be introduced to the feedback process from the start to allow them to respond more positively to it.

Students' self-motivation is also cited by the teachers as a factor that can facilitate the application of and response to feedback. Motivation to achieve a task plays a key role in what students do with the feedback once it is received. Researchers often identify motivation as an important factor in learning (Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Jinks & Lorschach, 2003; Schunk, Meece & Pintrich 2014). Motivation has also been cited by students and teachers as a crucial factor that affects learning. The Ministry of Education (2006) states "only when students are motivated and enjoy learning are they likely to make the progress they are capable of in their literacy and to perceive themselves as successful literacy learners" (p. 22). This motivation is also linked to the classroom environment and the relational trust between the students and teachers. Motivation to learn cannot be taught to students. Educational leaders should provide students with academic counselling and access to career advice to motivate them to learn. Academic counselling "generally refers to trained professionals counselling students on their academic plans, for course-taking while in secondary school as well as for postsecondary education"

(Hughes & Karp, 2004, p. 3). Academic counselling is meant to guide learners through pathways that will produce improved results.

Social setting

The application of feedback is controlled by factors like students' contexts in terms of learning and social expectations. Hattie and Gan (2011) agree that feedback should be viewed in the contexts of the students' learning. This context includes their peers and the adults involved in teaching the student. For feedback to be meaningfully received the context of the learner is critical as it determines the response of the learner in regard to accepting the feedback. Social acceptance is important to students and the general attitude towards accepting feedback in the classroom context will determine students' response to it. Although a number of teachers have cited large classes as a factor that prevents them from providing feedback effectively, small group settings may alleviate this issue to a certain degree. Cowie (2005) highlights the importance of small group interaction as this allowed students to engage in more one-to-one interactions. These interactions are especially important as it allows students to divulge their thoughts more willingly. Development of teacher pedagogy that will allow them to employ a range of teaching styles from whole class to small group differentiated learning will enhance the delivery of feedback. In some instances, students may prefer to have opportunities to respond to feedback that is provided through other media such as Google Classrooms or Google Docs. Such platforms are especially useful for those students who may not be as comfortable to have a face-to-face conversation. Educational leaders should look at developing strong digital infrastructure in the school that could support the provision of feedback. This is consistent with study by Wright (2015), whereby, she concludes that "in education, any tool can be used if it has a learning value" (p. 469). Students in our schools are digital citizens who respond well to tools like Google Classrooms and educational leaders should maximise on this.

Oral feedback

In this study, all the teachers clearly identified that the frequency of oral feedback was much higher than written feedback. Teachers in this study clarified that although they valued both forms of feedback, time was the determining factor in deciding which option they explored. Often teachers provided written feedback and followed it up with

a discussion to elaborate on what actions students needed to take. All the teachers who participated in this study admitted that written feedback provided the students and the teachers with the benefit of being able to go back to the task and being able to refer to the comments later on. Oral feedback was provided more frequently as teachers could provide this during the lesson while students were engaged in the activity. This feedback was also specific to what the students were involved in at that point in time. Peterson and Irving (2008) concur that students want specific feedback that will allow them to bridge the gap between where they are and where they need to be. Oral feedback allows teachers and learners to access specific moment-in-time feedback that is critical in the overall response to feedback. Since students are able to immediately apply the feedback they find the oral discussion more manageable, increasing students' self-efficacy as they are able to apply it to their learning.

Research question two

What strategies do teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback about learning to students?

This section will describe the strategies teachers consider important in effectively providing feedback to students. Teachers who participated in this research accepted that feedback was a powerful tool in terms of enhancing student performance. As a result, teachers adopted a range of strategies that they perceived as effective in providing critical feedback to the students. These strategies included providing feedback that is ongoing and timely with a strong emphasis on engaging in learning conversations with students. Links to literature will be made throughout the section.

Ongoing feedback

For feedback to be effective it had to be an on-going conversation about learning. Teachers in this study agreed feedback should not be regarded as a summative tool. Feedback should be provided to students at every stage of their learning to check for understanding and to reinforce the new learning. According to Peterson and Irving (2008), students saw assessment and feedback as being linked. Their study clarifies that students associate assessment as tests in its multitude of forms. Schools should instead adopt the practice where students have increased opportunity to showcase their

learning as a result of the feedback process. It is important that educational leaders and teachers understand that feedback is more than a summative tool. Teachers should aim to provide feedback at the various stages of learning. It would also be beneficial to develop students' capacity to provide peer feedback so that the teacher is not the only person with the responsibility of providing on-going feedback. However, providing on-going feedback may not always be possible as schools have to meet the demands of assessments with externally determined criteria. NCEA was adopted by New Zealand schools as it fits in within assessment for learning domain. Assessment for learning is a pedagogical framework which is meant to promote learning and student engagement with it (Black & Wiliam 2009). Feedback that is on-going allows students to be able to apply the feedback as they are working through the assessment rather than receiving all at once. Shute (2008) concurs that feedback needs to be given in smaller doses for it to be retained. Feedback is a critical aspect of this as framework as it provides information for the students and teachers in regard to performance and what can be done to support learning. Educational leaders have to ensure that the conditions necessary for the provision of effective feedback are provided to teachers.

Criterion-referenced feedback

Participants also identified that feedback which is criterion referenced is considered as an effective strategy when providing students feedback. According to Lok, McNaught, and Young (2016), criterion-referenced assessment refers to assessment that reflects the progress of the learners by matching it with expected outcomes and where grades are linked to a criterion that is aligned with the content being taught. Lok et al. (2016) highlight that one of key advantages of a criterion-referenced assessment is that it allows students to employ higher order cognitive skills. Using higher order cognitive skills develops critical thinking amongst students. Teachers interviewed for this study reiterated that students become autonomous and self-regulating learners as they learn how to apply feedback. Teachers should seek to teach students to apply the feedback, seek clarification and hence develop into self-regulated learners. Self-regulated learning refers to the degree to which students are "...meta-cognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001, p. 5). Teachers should encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning and help them develop strategies that would enable them to achieve success.

Teachers could also use the NCEA assessment criterion as a guideline to provide feedback and students have the opportunity to match the feedback to a grade. It is important that the focus is not the grade. Instead teachers should provide feedback that is criterion-referenced and students are expected to comprehend the feedback, self-assess and then apply the feedback to determine the grade they would expect. In doing so, students would complete the feedback loop which is essential to the learning process. Also, students should be able to readily access the assessment criteria from the moment students begin the task. This will enable students to match the criterion to their own writing and consolidating their learning.

Timely feedback

In order for teacher feedback to be effective, it had to be timely. The pressure of time and large classes is often mentioned by the participants: yet they all believed that for feedback to be effective it must be timely. Also students concur that feedback is useful if it is timely and allow students to act on it (Gibbs, 2006). Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) highlight the importance of timeliness of feedback as it allows students to “check out and correct misunderstandings and to get an immediate response to difficulties” (p. 210). It is advisable that teachers across the various learning areas meet to create a school-wide assessment calendar. In this way they are not working within their own subject silos with the focus on only assessments in their learning area. Instead school-wide planning opportunities would allow teachers to alleviate some of the pressure the students face. Taking into account that most students have assessments in a number of learning areas and are pressured for time, will enable teachers to plan a more balanced curriculum. With the expectations of attaining NCEA, students are expected to accrue a number of credits over multiple internal and external assessments in a range of subjects. This means students could possibly have assessments in more than one subject due on the same day. This limits the ability, on the part of the students, to apply the feedback.

Feedback in student-speak

Another strategy identified by the teachers was feedback should be in student-speak to allow students to readily access the feedback and apply it to their work. Carless (2006) highlights that assessment criteria are often a barrier to the students as many are unable to understand the language and expectations outlined within it. The difference between

feedback that is given and the feedback that is applied is dependent on students' ability to decipher the feedback and then transferring their understanding to the work by making changes. Hargreaves (2013) explains "without the learner's perspective the crucially important affective and interactional aspects of learners' responses to feedback are likely to be missing" (p. 230). Feedback is considered useful if students are able to engage in a conversation where they can discuss the feedback they have been given. This makes it easy for the students to comprehend the feedback and to be able to use the feedback to bridge the feedback gap. Teachers in this study have stated that students find it hard to understand what exactly the feedback means because of the academic nature of teacher-speak. Essentially teachers should aim to provide feedback that results in a dialogue between the teacher and the student. Written feedback is only one aspect of provision for effective feedback. The other aspect of providing feedback is engaging in conversation about the feedback. Teachers must engage in conversation with students to ensure the feedback has been understood.

Student-teacher relationships

One of the key factors that facilitates feedback as identified by the teachers in this study is the importance of establishing and maintaining sound teacher and student relationships. Hattie and Timperley (2007) highlight the importance of these relationships as it allows students to respond to feedback that they have been given. In order for students to be able to seek clarification on the feedback, and engage in a dialogue, students and teachers need to establish a high-trust relationship. One of the ways in which teachers can establish this relationship is by engaging in learning conversations that develops an environment where students feel valued. Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) agree that the classroom environment is influenced by the student-teacher relationships. This relationship also affects students' attitude towards learning and their acceptance of ideas and mistakes. The importance of relational trust is crucial if the students are to respond to feedback (Cowie, 2005; Sadler, 1998). Relational trust improves the classroom environment which is crucial for creating a climate where making mistakes are "the essence of learning" (Hattie, 2012, p. 26). The relationships that exists within the classroom and plays a crucial role in determine the response of the students to the feedback. Teachers need to invest time in developing these relationships. Consistency in terms of retaining teachers is one of the ways educational

leaders can facilitate the establishment of such relationships.

Research question three

In what ways do educational leaders influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback in English subject classrooms?

This final section will describe the manner in which educational leaders can influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback. This includes the provisions of conditions that enable teachers provide effective feedback. The key areas this section will explore are: professional development, relational trust and access to resources. These factors have been identified by the teachers in this study and its relevance will be discussed with reference to literature.

Access to professional development

Teachers in this study have highlighted the importance of a well-developed and structured professional development programme at school which takes into account their varying range of abilities as teachers. According to the participants, having access to regular professional development allows them to maintain and improve their pedagogy regarding the provision of critical feedback. Bredeson (2002) defines professional development as learning opportunities where teachers' creative and reflective abilities are engaged so they can strengthen their own teaching practice. Professional development is about learning. In order for teachers to become reflective practitioners who will be willing to take risks and evolve, they need access to professional development. Cardno (2005) also asserts that professional development is crucial for teachers as it allows them to grow. The importance of professional development is also highlighted in the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES). Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) state that providing teachers with opportunities to engage in professional learning and development has considerable effect on student learning. Access to professional development has an impact on teachers' practice, however, it is important that the professional learning programme takes into account teachers' needs. Professional development is ineffective if it is not differentiated or as Ruth explained can quickly transcend into "periodic detention".

Educational leaders should invest in professional development programmes that provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practice in terms of feedback allowing them to refine their skills as teachers. Fishman, Marx, Best and Tal (2003) explain teachers' professional development should focus on sustaining and growing their professional knowledge, beliefs and attitudes in order to improve student learning. Educational leaders should only adopt a professional development programme that is well planned and delivered. Participants in this study explain that professional development at their school was rarely differentiated for individual teacher needs rendering it ineffective. A number of researchers (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Hawley & Valli, 1999) criticise the traditional professional development model which was implemented with the premise that there is a gap in teachers' skills which needed to be filled. Little investigation was done to find out if the gap was prevalent amongst all the teachers or only a few.

Schools often use either external providers to facilitate professional development or use expertise of teacher and senior leaders within the school. However, as Bredeson (2002) highlights, these opportunities for professional development are, to a large degree, controlled by time, money and structures within the school. It is imperative that educational leaders ensure that whatever professional learning opportunities are made available to the teachers, should take into account the needs of the students and the skill levels of the teachers. Tohill (2009) explains that standardised professional development does little to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills and therefore making them disengaged. The study also highlights that teachers respond more positively to a professional development programme that was tailored to the needs of the school, students and the teachers. Participants in my study also echoed similar sentiments in regard to professional development. Studies by Hustler, McNamara, Jarvis, Londra, and Campbell (2003) also highlight that the 'one size fits all' model of professional development model often causes the negative perceptions amongst teachers. Overall, the findings of this research identified that the teachers' perceptions of professional development in schools is negative because it was homogenised and did not fit the specific needs of the teachers.

This study also found that teachers wanted more professional development that is provided by their learning area associations as it was contextualised and met their

specific needs. Teachers highlighted their desire to have increased opportunities to meet with teachers of English from other schools through NCEA cluster meetings. These meetings provided a platform where they could discuss pedagogical issues like providing feedback to students. Teachers found these meetings very productive as it gave them the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to them and at the same time have opportunity to share ideas. According to New Zealand Qualification Authority (2016), these cluster meetings are not only enhancing assessments for NCEA but also provide professional development for teachers. Cluster meetings are also advantageous in reducing teacher isolation especially when there is only one or teachers in a particular learning area in a school. Attempts to accommodate this through the professional development programme would result in teachers forming strong working relationships with teachers in other schools.

Moreover, for professional development to be effective, it has to be ongoing. However, this in no way implies the professional development overload or as Andrew called it in his interview “death by initiative”. Cardno (2005) explains that often schools take on too many professional development opportunities out of the fear of being left behind. In many secondary schools there is a pressure to achieve results in NCEA. To a degree, this pressure for success for students results in school adopting a number of initiatives without providing time for any of them to actually become well-established in schools. Although Powell, Terrell, Furey and Scott-Evans (2003) support the idea of teachers experiencing continuous professional development without overloading teachers with professional development programmes. Instead Powell et al. (2003) state continuous professional development which the teachers engage with, promotes the ability to reflect. Investment into professional development that advocates and facilitates self-reflection would allow teachers to make necessary changes to their practice which benefits students’ learning.

Another aspect of professional development that was highlighted by the teachers in this study was the use of internal experts. Teachers who are regarded as experts can provide useful professional development for teachers within the school context and also in regard to subject specific mentoring. Rebecca, in her interview, highlighted the key role the head of faculty has played in her professional development. Other participants also considered seeking the support of teachers they regard as experts as instrumental in

their professional development especially in relation to subject-specific assessment expectations and NCEA support in terms of moderation and benchmarking. It is crucial that school leaders recognise the professional development needs of the teachers and plan a programme that would meet these needs (Timperley et al. 2007). Leaders can plan whether these needs can be met internally through expert teachers or to organise external professional development.

Teacher professional development programmes in schools will only succeed if the teachers see any benefit of the programme on students' outcomes. Guskey (2002) posits that teachers' attitudes and beliefs will change when they see that students' outcomes have improved as the result of the changes they have made to their practice. It is also important that there is a link between individual teacher learning goals and the school-wide goals for the implementation of a successful professional development programme. This individual goal setting could be part of the teacher appraisal and mentoring process that schools are involved with. Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth and Smith (1999) reinforce this belief by stating that "people's enthusiasm and willingness to commit themselves naturally increase when they realise personal results from a change initiative" (p. 47). Goals that align individual and school needs would warrant the greatest impact on students' outcome. Labone and Long (2016) argue that there is a need for schools to move towards a professional development programme which focuses on both individual and school goals to ensure improved student outcomes.

Building relational trust

Trust is a crucial aspect of the development of teacher pedagogy. Teachers will be more ready to take risks with their own professional learning and pedagogy development if they believe that they are in a safe environment. According to Tschannen-Moran (2014), trust between principals and teachers is a critical aspect of solving problems that exist in schools and this trust can be fostered or negatively impacted by the leader. Some of the participants in this study explained there was a high level of trust between the head of faculties and the teachers and that teachers were comfortable in seeking their support as needed. A high level of trust does not imply that there is lowered expectations from the teacher. On the contrary, teachers in this study stated that

because their professional and pedagogical knowledge was trusted, they were more inclined to maintain this trust by ensuring that high standard of teaching and learning took place in their classroom. Creating an environment of trust is important at every level of middle and senior management for the development of a positive work environment. Trust is also a critical factor that determines the success or failure of a team. Teachers in this study explain that as a faculty they support each other. It was not always necessary to seek the support of the head of faculty as there were other peers in the faculty who were willing to share time and resources. Moir, Hattie, and Jansen (2014) agree that trust which is developed in teams creates opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making. It is in such collaborative environments that teachers would be willing to take risks.

As such the importance of trust is critical to the development of a sustainable relationship between the mentor and mentee. The importance of strong relationships is also suggested by Lindgren (2005), who states that a good mentor-mentee relationship is based on openness and confidentiality which is achieved through frequent discussions. The mentor challenges the mentee and is an active listener who allows the mentee to develop self-reflective practices. Mentoring not only is a powerful tool for learning and enhancing relationships and self-efficacy, it is also a process where “the learner is optimally engaged and has a constructive self-awareness” (Lindgren, 2005, p. 253). Leaders in their role as mentors can achieve school-wide enhancement and increased student outcome through a successful mentoring programme. High quality teachers can be developed through a consistent mentoring programme which manifests as high-quality learning experiences and increased student outcome. Teachers in this study also highlighted that strong relationships developed on the basis of relational trust. Robertson (2009) states that trust is a difficult concept to define as trust is more of an experience. Without trust, teachers in this study found it difficult to reveal their areas of vulnerabilities and ones that required most growth and development. With trust and vested time leaders can facilitate discussion which goes beyond the need to hide and self-protection. With relational trust teachers are able to take risks knowing that these will not held against them. What is critical is the investment of time and resources to develop such bonds. Teachers need to know that the professional discussions will be confidential and used only for professional

development on mutually agreed goals. It is important that leaders focus on developing relationships which were grounded in respect and trust (Moir et al. 2014). Teachers in this study described the importance of these qualities emphasising the relationship between trust/respect and teacher self-efficacy. This was especially true for teachers who were new to the school or new to the profession. These teachers maintained that the level of trust leaders had in their ability to lead learning in a classroom made them more willing to seek support wherever they needed. Bryk and Schneider (2002) state that without trust social conversations cease and that people would avoid such situations.

Conversely, teacher isolation was identified by the participants in this study as one of the factors that affected their ability to provide critical feedback to students. Most of the secondary schools the teachers were part of had a house or whānau system. Teachers teach all English classes within their whānau and often this meant there were only two or three English teachers in each whānau. As a result, teachers found that they had fewer opportunities to interact as a faculty or to even seek support from each other. The whānau house systems were established in order to increase students' sense of belonging to smaller schools within school. However, teachers in this study highlight that the system may be seen as increasing student belonging, it is increasing teacher isolation. The distance created as a result of the house system also put pressure on teachers to seek colleagues who could provide them contextualised support in relation to their specific subject area.

Protecting teacher time

It is not feasible for principals in large secondary schools to have time to work directly with teachers. Their role as the Chief Executive Officer of the school demands a lot of attention and time. As Harris (2002) points out, secondary school principals can influence teachers and teaching practice through developing a climate that supports teaching and learning. This would mean that educational leaders ensure disruptions to teaching and planning time is minimised. Secondary school teachers have mandatory non-contact time for planning and marking purposes and disruption to this should be reduced. It is important that teachers have time to meet as a team to discuss data, effective teaching pedagogy and develop strategies to address issues that they could be

facing. A well-developed professional learning community will enable teachers to do so. Leaders leading these professional groups must have sound understanding of the curriculum expectations and be up to date with current pedagogy (Hord, 1997). It is also important that educational leaders be flexible and willing to re-organise the organisational structure of the school to ensure teaching time is not compromised.

Availability of resources

In order to implement effective pedagogy, teachers require the necessary tools and resources. Access to tools such as Google Classrooms and a school based learning platform allows teachers to become effective practitioners. To a certain degree it also alleviates the pressure for time whereby teachers are able to provide effective feedback in a timelier manner. Like anything, access to technology has also been cited as a negative. Teachers in this study explained that with access to technology the expectation that more work would be done by teachers in their personal time has increased. Many teachers admitted that access to technology meant their personal time with family was negatively affected. The changing nature of teaching profession places demands on teachers where they compromise on their own personal time. Work intensification has led to many teachers using their personal time to keep up with the expectation (Greene et al. 2002). A balance has to be struck so that technology is still seen as a tool to aid the teaching and learning process.

Summary

This chapter has provided a discussion of the research findings with links to the relevant literature base in Chapter two. The findings revealed that teachers in this study have in general a positive experience in providing feedback to students and employ effective strategies to allow for optimal response to the feedback. The teachers also identified the role that educational leaders play in enhancing their ability to provide effective feedback. The role of educational leaders is influenced by several factors including the context of the school, the symbolic, human, cultural, social and authoritative capital capitals and the demands placed by external authorities. Finally, the research study also highlighted the challenges or difficulties faced by the teachers in implementing effective feedback and how they can be supported through this process by the educational

leaders. These challenges or difficulties will be linked to the final chapter – Chapter six. The following chapter will also look at the research conclusions, research limitations and possible recommendations for further practice, policy and research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored teachers' perceptions and understanding of what critical feedback means to students in English as a core subject in secondary schools. It also considered the role of educational leaders in influencing the provision of feedback. This final chapter will provide an overview of the research, draw conclusions, evaluate limitations and make recommendations for further practice, policy and research. Five key conclusions are presented which are related to the three research questions that have guided this study. A recommendation is provided following each conclusion. It should be noted that these recommendations may be relevant to any state secondary school within New Zealand. Even though this is a small-scale study, readers could take these conclusions which are transferable to their own context. The limitations of the research, suggestions for future research and a final concluding statement completes this chapter.

Key conclusions

Key conclusion one: Governments do not act on research findings to improve student achievement even though their rhetoric is that they want to do something about the 'tail-end' of underachievement.

Teachers in this study admit that despite their best attempts at ensuring that the feedback is accessible and timely, there are factors that prevent them from ensuring that this process is more effective. Teachers understand the importance of feedback and make every attempt to ensure this feedback is provided to students. The importance of feedback is reinforced throughout literature (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & William, 2003; Clarke, 2003; Hattie 2009; Sadler, 1998) and by the teachers in this study who admit that feedback is significant in influencing students' achievement. The Ministry of Education (2015) explains that they will ensure there is "better targeting – of investment, resources, support and expertise to drive innovation and improve results" (p. 16) but they fail to ensure that there are resources available in schools to support such initiatives.

Time and large class sizes have been often cited as the reason why many teachers in this study find themselves unable to provide feedback that they would like to provide. There is a concern for the workload that teachers in New Zealand have to shoulder as a result of work intensification (Knudsen et al., 2013). There is a considerable lack of time for teachers to provide the feedback they would like to. Time is a luxury that teachers in this study highlighted they did not have. The issue of time is often compounded by the large class sizes. Smaller class sizes and its benefits have been highlighted through literature (Dustmann, Rajah, & van Soest, 2003). Teachers in this study also highlighted that as a result of the large classes they were unable to engage in a dialogue about feedback with all the students. Often this meant that a number of students would not receive immediate feedback hence limiting the influence of feedback on their learning.

Although these factors to an extent limits teachers' ability, they are now investing time and resources into incorporating information technology in their lessons to alleviate the issue of time. A number of the teachers mentioned using Google Classroom and Google Docs as tools in the classroom. Another factor mentioned by teachers is the assessment conditions that have been determined by outside stakeholders such the New Zealand Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA). These assessment conditions prevent teachers from providing too much feedback as it places the assessment into jeopardy as it is hard to verify if the student has actually achieved a standard due to his own understanding or because of the support intensive support in the form of feedback provided by the teachers.

Recommendation One:

That Ministry of Education endeavour to implement research findings that support the need to reduce class size to a manageable number allowing teachers to become more effective in their provision of feedback. Teacher time should be protected by encouraging the development of professional learning communities (PLC's) that teachers can be part of. Organised PLC's could meet on a pre-determined afternnon every fortnight to meet any teaching and learning support required by teachers. This time can also be utilized for internal moderation and benchmarking.

Key conclusion two: Schools must do ‘less’ better in terms of professional development programmes and ensure that teachers gain more than just professional knowledge – the programme should aim to change teacher pedagogy.

Teachers in this study highlighted the importance of regular professional development that focuses on pedagogical development. One of the key factors that contributes to the effectiveness of any professional development programme for teachers is the focus on student learning (Guskey, 2002). Professional development programmes are currently in place in the participants’ schools however, there were varying degrees of satisfaction expressed about the suitability of it. Teachers, especially those who are new to the profession find their own self-efficacy relating to the provision of feedback is low. Therefore, access to professional development that focuses on developing this skill is seen by the teachers as key process in which they can continue to develop their pedagogy.

It is essential that schools aim to establish a professional development programme that is based around the strategic goals of the schools. These goals are linked to student achievement and takes into account the priority areas the school needs to develop. The professional development model that the school adopts to enable this occurring could resemble the model suggested in Figure 6.1. This model allows teachers to have choice and builds the leadership capacity of teachers in the school as they lead the various professional development areas. It is important that teachers then develop an inquiry based and tangible professional learning focus which they can develop with consultation with their mentor at school. As the goals are determined by the teachers themselves they would be more vested in achieving these goals as they see them as important to their own professional development.

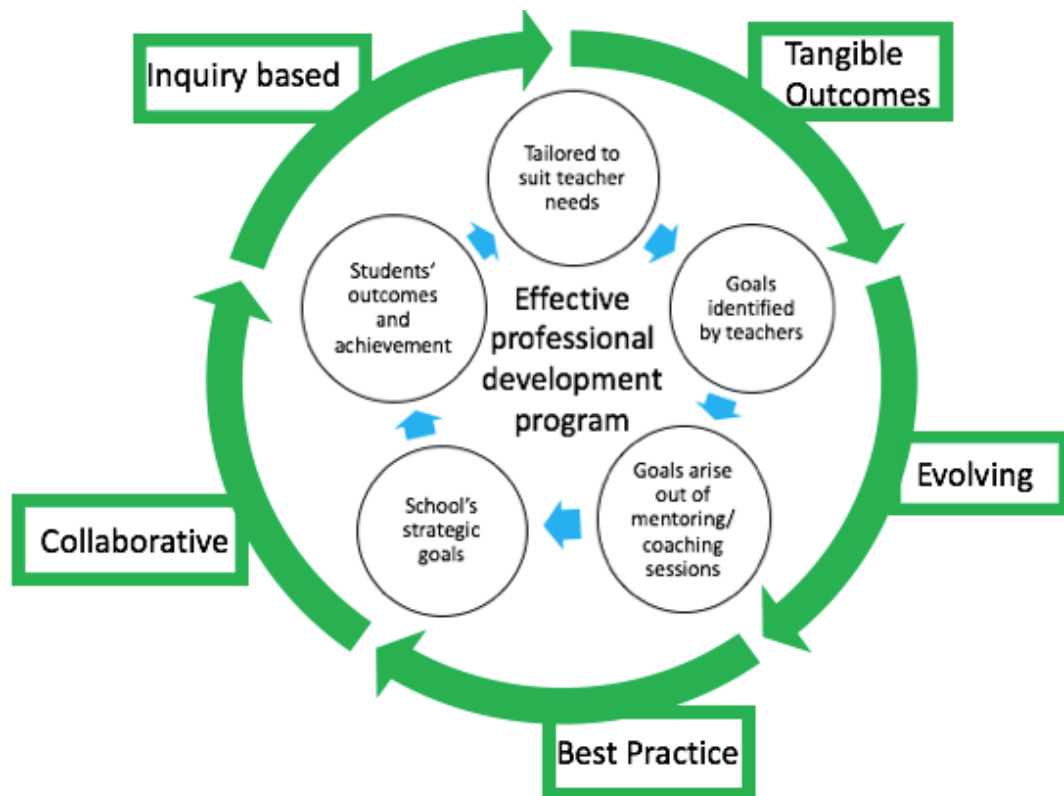


Figure 6.1: Framework for professional development in schools

Recommendation two:

Educational leaders should encourage teachers to align their professional development goals with that of the school's strategic goals. Part of the action inquiry for the teachers should include an inquiry into the development of strategies that could support the achievement of the school's strategic goals.

Key conclusion three: Educational leaders must understand and reinforce the importance of feedback so that they can better facilitate the provision of this in schools.

Teachers in this study recognised the importance of feedback in the classroom, however, the same needs to be accepted by educational leaders. Educational leaders can be catalysts for change (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) and influence all school related factors that contribute towards students' achievement. Feedback enables students to reduce and bridge the gap in their learning and this impacts directly on student achievement. Educational leaders can develop a strategic goal that strengthens teachers' ability to provide feedback to students. They can set the direction for the school culture regarding the teaching and learning programme that the

school adopts. Leaders can also enable the more competent teachers to become mentors and leaders to support other teachers in developing their pedagogy regarding feedback. It is important that educational leaders admit the importance of feedback so that they can then plan the redesigning of the organisational setup of the school ensuring teachers have time and resources to provide feedback to students. According to the teachers in this study, educational leaders can influence teachers and their pedagogy. Hence, it is critical that educational leaders recognise the role feedback plays in students' learning and then work towards establishing systems that will support teachers in providing effective feedback to students.

Provision of effective feedback allows students to bridge the gap in their learning. Much of the literature (Hattie 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hounsell, 2003, 2007; Sadler, 1998) and teachers in this study reinforce how feedback allows students to bridge the gap in their learning. Teachers in this study also acknowledged this role of feedback and ensured that they provided oral and/or written feedback allowing students to develop the skills needed to bridge the gap in their learning. They highlighted the consideration of factors such as timeliness of feedback, provisions for criterion-referenced feedback, the complexity of the language used and students' self-efficacy and motivation when providing feedback. These factors affect the manner in which students are able to access feedback and teachers should take these into account when giving feedback to the student.

Ensuring that students understand the purpose of the feedback and the social dynamics of the relationships within the classroom also has an impact on the application of feedback (Hattie, 2009). Students must understand the purpose of the feedback for them to be willing to apply it. Teachers in this study highlighted that if the feedback could be applied to another task of similar manner or for a higher grade, then most of the students were motivated to apply the feedback. Conversely if the feedback meant more work for the students then they were most likely to disregard the feedback. They also highlighted that the stakes are higher in senior classes where the application of feedback could result in a higher grade. According to the teachers in this study, students were motivated to apply the feedback as it meant they were better able to reach their NCEA targets.

It is also important to highlight that all the participants in this study stated that students take note of feedback that is individualised and specific to their needs. Feedback that is directed at the whole class feedback is often disregarded by the students (Hattie & Gan, 2011) as students do not see any value in it. Both students and teachers face a busy curriculum and as such both parties need time – teachers to be able to provide relevant, timely and individualised feedback, and for students, time to apply the feedback. It is crucial not to waste time of the students by giving feedback that is meaningless to them. It is also critical that teachers' time is protected so they are able to meet the needs of the students.

Recommendation three:

That school leaders consider establishing and utilising professional learning community group meetings led by effective practitioners within the school to fulfil the curriculum needs of the teachers and to encourage pedagogical development in relation to effective provision of feedback.

Key conclusion four: Educational leaders must provide conditions that enable teachers to provide effective feedback

Educational leaders are responsible for creating the shared sense of community of care and trust within the school and the wider community. An environment of care is important as it allows teachers to challenge themselves to do things differently. The culture of care is also essential for it encourages everyone to contribute towards the common goal of improving students' achievement. Firstly, educational leaders must encourage the teachers and students to develop affective bonds to engage and motivate. Students need to know that teachers are vested in their achievement as their success is seen as success for the school. Participants in this research noted that feedback is only effective when students apply the feedback given to them to their work. They also stated that students must have the skills to be able to apply the feedback thus reinforcing the importance of feedback being in student-speak. Teachers must also be recognised for the time and effort they put into developing an engaging teaching and learning programme.

Additionally, ensuring that teachers have ready access to infrastructure and resources to enable them to complete their work efficiently is paramount to the role of a leader. Leaders must provide teachers access to resources such as digital tools that will make the feedback process less monotonous. They should provide opportunities for appropriate training and facilities that enable teachers to provide feedback more efficiently. Some of the digital platforms that teachers in this study mentioned supports them in providing effective feedback include Google Docs and Google Classrooms. Technology does make provision of feedback more efficient but together with technology teachers must have the opportunity to receive appropriate training and time to put this into effect. They must also understand that to develop a sense of shared understanding about the role of feedback, they need to invest time and resources.

Also educational leaders must make every attempt to protect teacher time by ensuring that administrative matters do not take up quality teaching and learning time. It is crucial to stimulate teachers intellectually and at the same time also trust teachers' professional judgement. Teachers by nature care about their learners and would take steps to ensure that students achieve at their highest potential. Giving teachers time to meet as a professional learning group within their learning area and with other learning areas allows them to plan strategically how to meet the school-wide goals of improving student achievement. The following model (Figure 6.2) is suggested as one that could support establishment of conducive condition that enable the development of effective feedback practices.

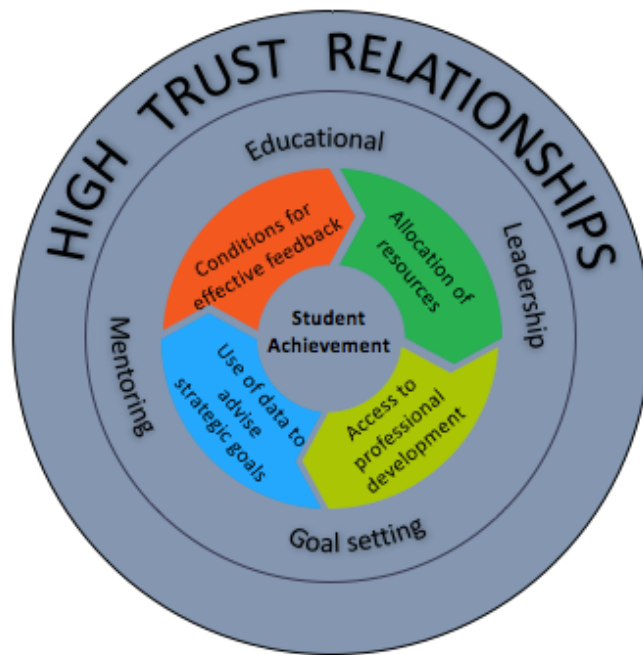


Figure 6.2: Leadership for increased student achievement

Recommendation four:

That school leaders focus on building positive, respectful learning relationships in their schools so that teachers and learners can share in the teaching and learning process.

Key conclusion five: Despite research findings indicating that professional development programmes should be linked to students' outcomes; the current model being adopted by schools are not tailored to meet the needs of the teachers.

Throughout this study, teachers mentioned it is important that whatever professional development the school chooses to adopt; it must take into account the range skill level that the teachers come with. The consideration for teachers' existing knowledge and skill level means the professional development programme considers their specific needs. It also means teachers then attend these sessions with more positivity and willingness to take in the new learning. Professional development could easily turn into "periodic detention" as explained by one of the teachers. The findings in this research stresses the need for a professional development programme that displays clear links with the schools' strategic goals regarding students' achievement and professional development goals. The professional development programmes at school must be

inquiry based and one of the goals in this inquiry should be focused on teacher feedback practices.

In addition to this, taking time into account results in teachers having a more positive experience with professional development. Teachers in this study stated that they need time to consolidate the new learning they have experienced through participating in professional development. They also need time to apply the new learning and seek clarification. Educational leaders must prioritise the needs of the school in terms of the learners and teachers when investing into a professional learning model. It is imperative that teachers have the opportunity to identify areas in which they believe they need most support and this be incorporated into the school plan. Leaders involvement in teacher learning provides them with a deep understanding of the conditions required to enable staff to make and sustain the changes required for improved outcome. It is important to note that educational change is “easy to propose, hard to implement and extraordinarily difficult to sustain” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 1).

Recommendation five:

That Boards of Trustees and school leaders develop a culture of trust and collaboration where teachers are willing to take risks in their own pedagogy development. This could be achieved by school leaders supporting staff by providing access to professional development that is differentiated and tailored to suit their individual needs.

Research Limitation

A limitation of this research study is its size. Due to the small number of participants, it is not possible to generalise the findings of this research study to a larger population. Therefore, conclusions may not provide an accurate representation of the understanding of and provision of feedback in other schools. However, extreme care was taken to ensure the reliability of the data and to protect the integrity of the findings through methodological and data source triangulation adopted during the data collection phase.

Suggestions for future research

This research has highlighted possibilities for future research. These possibilities include:

- That there be research undertaken into the links to teachers' ability to provide effective feedback and the pressures of time and class size in the secondary schools' context;
- That research is undertaken into the effectiveness of current professional development programmes adopted by New Zealand secondary schools.
- That resources such workshops are provided to support Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and staff to understand the role of feedback in the teaching and learning process; and,
- That resources are made available to schools to support their professional development programmes so these programmes reflects current research related to improving student achievement.

Conclusion

This study has explored the perceptions and beliefs of teachers regarding feedback in the English classrooms in secondary schools. It also sought to identify the ways in which educational leaders can provide conditions that will facilitate effective feedback. The findings and recommendations add to the body of literature relating to feedback and role of educational leaders in providing conditions that will promote the provision of effective feedback. This will be available to school leaders who want to explore the provision for effective feedback. There is a need for school leaders to take a considered approach to implementing a professional development programme so that it complies with both accountability and teachers' pedagogical development.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Questionnaire - Educational leadership as influence: The provision of critical student feedback

1. **How often do you provide critical written feedback on students' work in English classes?** * *Mark only one oval.*
Every lesson 2-3 times a week Once a week Other:
2. **How often do you provide critical oral feedback on students' work in English classes?** * *Check all that apply.*
Every lesson 2-3 times a week Once a week Other:
3. **What do you consider as the most important factor when giving students feedback on their work?** *
 - Feedback should be criterion referenced
 - Learners should have the opportunity to re-submit or be re-assessed on the same task
 - Feedback should be in student-speak
 - Feedback should be timely Feedback should be ongoing.
 - Feedback should be consistent.
 - Other:
4. **Do you think students value this feedback?** * *Mark only one oval.*
Yes No Sometimes Other:
5. **How do you know students value this feedback?** *
6. **Hattie (2013), identifies feedback as “among the most powerful influences on achievement.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?** *
Check all that apply.
Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree strongly Disagree Don't know
7. **Please explain the reason for your answer to Question 6.**
8. **What support do you currently have to put these strategies (as discussed in Question 3) into place? Please explain your answer*** *Check all that apply.*
 - Access to resources such as technology and time
 - Having a mentor
 - High trust relationship with students
 - High trust relationship with peers and Curriculum Leader
 - Other:

9. **What factors limit your ability to provide critical feedback about learning to students?** * *Check all that apply.*

- Lack of time Inability to access resources
- Student lack of interest in the feedback
- Large class sizes
- Inexperience in providing critical feedback
- Other:

Please explain your response to Question 9 above. *

10. **What are the ways in which educational leaders influence/ assist/ facilitate the provision of feedback?** *Check all that apply.*

- Supportive mentoring/ coaching relationship that allows to teachers to develop their pedagogy
- Developing a 'safe' environment for teachers to take risks
- Access to regular professional development - both internally and through external providers
- Providing ready access to resources including time
- Other:

11. **What do you perceive the role of a mentor/ coach is in regards to supporting the development of your pedagogy in the classroom?** *

12. **What other support is provided to you in regards to your pedagogy development?**

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions

1. What support do you currently have in providing effective feedback to students?
2. How can you be supported in developing your pedagogy in regards to feedback?
3. Time and class size is often mentioned as constraints in providing effective feedback. How would you address this issue?
4. How do school leaders influence the provision of feedback?
5. Do you think giving feedback to students on their work in English classes is important? Why?
6. What skills do teachers need in order to be able to provide critical feedback?
7. What support do you believe is necessary to build self-efficacy amongst teachers so that they can provide critical feedback on students' work in English?
8. How do you know that students apply the feedback that is provided ?
9. What factors would you consider when giving feedback to students? Please explain your answer.
10. Do students know what to do with the feedback once it is received?
11. When and how do you give this feedback to students?
12. What conditions do you consider crucial in the application and provision of feedback?
13. How can the professional development programmes be developed to address teacher needs and skill development?
14. What would you consider an effective professional development model?

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

This sheet will be provided to the teachers who will be participating in the survey.

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Date Information Sheet Produced:

20/09/2015

Project Title

Educational leadership as influence: The provision of critical student feedback

An Invitation

Kia ora. My name is Reshmika Lal and I am enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership degree at Auckland University of Technology. I have study leave from my role at Mission Heights Junior College during Terms 1 and 2 in 2016.

The aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which educational leaders can influence teachers in providing critical feedback to students. The particular context for the research is that of learning English in secondary schools. This research is part of my thesis, which will allow me to complete a Master of Educational Leadership qualification. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis phase of my study (i.e. 10 days after you receive your interview transcript from me for checking).

What is the purpose of this research?

The aims of this study are:

1. To engage in a discussion with teachers about their perceptions and understanding of what critical feedback means to students in a secondary school English classroom;
2. To identify what strategies, do teachers perceive as important in effectively providing critical feedback about learning to students; and
3. To identify the ways educational leaders can influence teachers both negatively and positively to provide critical feedback about learning to students in secondary schools' context.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Information about this research was sent to the Curriculum Leaders in east Auckland secondary schools and the aims of the research were outlined to them. Following this, the Curriculum Leader has emailed you a link to the questionnaire that will be used for the initial data gathering.

What will happen in this research?

You will be sent a link to complete a survey through Google Forms by your Curriculum Leaders, which will take a maximum of twenty minutes. You will also have the opportunity to volunteer for a face-to-face interview with me, which would take place at your school. I need six interview participants, so if more than six people volunteer; I will select my participants randomly.

What are the benefits?

The findings of this research will assist me in identifying the ways in which teachers provide critical feedback to students studying English in secondary schools. It will also inform me about the ways in which teachers like yourself believe that educational leaders can influence you in providing quality critical feedback. I also hope that participating in the research will give you an opportunity to reflect on your own work as an English teacher.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity, including your name, the name of your school and the names of any other teachers or students you refer to, will be protected by the use of pseudonyms in the final thesis.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The initial questionnaire survey should take a maximum of twenty minutes of your time. If you are selected to participate in the semi-structured interview, then this will take approximately 45 minutes. To negate any costs of travel, the semi-structured interview can take place in a private meeting room at your school if you are comfortable with this location.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Once the questionnaire link has been sent to you by your Curriculum Leader, you can complete it – as your response is anonymous, your identity will be protected. At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another survey question where you can indicate your willingness to participate in an interview with me. Please note that your response to this question is not linked to your questionnaire responses, so the anonymity of your survey response is retained. If you indicate that you would like to be considered for the interview, and are randomly selected, you will have 5 days to inform the researcher of your intent to participate. This interview will be taped and transcribed. You will also have the opportunity to approve the transcripts (within 10 days of receiving their transcripts) before the data in these are used in the findings.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

By responding to the questionnaire, I will know that you have agreed to participate in the questionnaire phase of my research project. At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another survey question where you can indicate your willingness to participate in an interview with me. Please note that your response to this question is not linked to your questionnaire responses, so the anonymity of your survey response is retained. This interview will be taped and transcribed.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. I will provide you with a digital summary of the thesis findings when the final thesis is completed.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

- If you have concerns about this research you can contact me at reshmikalal@gmail.com
- Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to my Principal Supervisor, Alison Smith at- alsmith@aut.ac.nz or phone 921 9999 ext. 7363

- Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor at, ethics@aut.ac.nz, or phone 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Researcher Contact Details:

Reshmika Lal - reshmikalal@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Alison Smith - alsmith@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28th November AUTC Reference number 15/411 Educational leadership as influence: The provision of critical student feedback.

Appendix D: Consent form

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

(This assent form will be held for a period of six years)

Project title: ***Educational leadership as influence: The provision of critical student feedback***

Project Supervisor: ***Alison Smith***

Researcher: ***Reshmika Lal***

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and had them answered.

I understand that my decision to allow the English teachers to participate in this research, or any decision to withdraw from this research will, not have any implications for the school, the teachers involved or myself as Principal.

I give my consent to:

- the Curriculum Leader meeting with the researcher; and
- the researcher to email a questionnaire link to the Curriculum Leader who will then send this link to the English teachers in the school

I understand that all information the English teachers provide will remain confidential. I understand the school name, or any teachers' names will not be used in any written or oral presentation. I understand the school and the teachers' privacy will be respected. I understand that the findings will be used for publication.

Signed : _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the teachers may withdraw themselves or any information that they have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If the teachers choose to withdraw, all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Principal's signature:

Principal's name:

Principal's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28th November AUTEK Reference number 15/411 Educational leadership as influence: The provision of critical student feedback.
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.