

What makes feedback work for primary school  
students? An investigation of the views of some Year 8  
students

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## Abstract

I investigated the problem of why some students do not implement the feedback they are given, when the feedback they receive is formulated in accordance with what we know about best practice in the giving of feedback. I was interested in exploring the factors which may influence students as they do or do not take some form of action to ‘close the gap’ between the standard they have attained and the standard they need to reach. I worked with seven Year 8 boys who were enrolled at an intermediate school in the South Island of New Zealand. The study is qualitative because the methodologies associated with that paradigm are more likely to provide insights into the problem, situated as it is in the experience of students in a classroom setting.

I used phenomenography to identify the qualitatively different ways in which the participants viewed the importance and helpfulness of feedback as well as identifying the factors which influenced their acceptance or rejection of the feedback received from their classroom teacher. The categories I identified included supporting progress towards short- and long-term learning goals; the effect of feedback on personal attitudes towards learning; the relationship between the student and the teacher; the type and timing of feedback; the perceived ownership of the work to which the feedback related; and the conditions and understandings of the student. I discussed each of these and formed a phenomenographic outcome space for each of the three basic areas of importance, helpfulness, and factors affecting response. I then used a case approach to prepare case reports on two of the participants, in order to show how the categories identified through the phenomenographic analysis might be manifested in individuals as well as to allow the voices of the students to be

heard. I found that each individual embodies a unique combination of the categories, and that it is this unique profile which affects his or her reception and subsequent use of feedback.

I then combined the three phenomenographic outcome spaces to form a model of feedback, arranged in four levels, which may be of interest to classroom teachers as they endeavour to improve the learning outcome of the students through tailoring the feedback they give to them. I illustrated the potential use of the model by mapping onto it the profile of the two boys included in the case reports. The differences in, and similarities of, responses of the two boys to feedback are easily discerned. I discussed how these similarities and differences may offer some explanation for differing responses to feedback. To a certain extent the boys have similar outlooks, and may respond in similar ways to feedback which matches with these outlooks. However, at a deeper level, their differences are marked. Feedback which matches the preferences of one is not likely to match those of the other. I argue that in such a case one may accept and act on the feedback while the other may not.

I have identified some areas for further research and development which could build on these findings. These include the need to explore the views of girls and other groups of boys on this subject, together with undertaking a project which allows the academic progress of individuals to be tracked once their preferences were identified and mapped onto the model. It would also be useful to construct a suitable instrument for classroom teachers to use for mapping the preferences of their own class members, and to identify any differences in the modifications to their feedback processes which teachers may make to their classroom practice following their use of such an instrument.

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# **Chapter 1: Background and Context**

## ***Introduction***

I have long been interested in ways of improving the learning outcomes of children in primary classrooms, first as a classroom teacher for many years and then as a teacher educator. Of particular interest to me were the responses of the children themselves to the learning opportunities offered to them. I explored this area first by investigating the views of children regarding the effectiveness of various types of feedback, (Williams, 2010). My earlier study found that the views of children regarding their perceptions of feedback as a means of improving their work are valid and insightful sources of information for educators and teachers. Fielding and Ruddock (2002) agree that one of the benefits of student voice research is that “...researchers demonstrate to a wide audience the capability of young people to comment insightfully on issues affecting their lives and work in school” (p. 1). The study also attempted to explore the extent to which the perceptions of the teacher and of his or her students concerning the type and incidence of feedback given by the teacher actually matched. A close match of the teacher’s expectations with each child’s perceptions of what feedback is and what it does, together with their subsequent ability to implement appropriate changes, should result in better learning outcomes than might be the case in a situation where teacher and students are not in accord with their understandings. I found in my earlier study that while the girls’ perceptions of the feedback they had been given tended to match their teacher’s views, the boys were less in accord with those of their teacher. This finding influenced my decision to work with boys in the current study, because it seemed that more insights of importance to classroom teachers could be obtained by exploring their views.

An additional finding from my 2001 study was that although children agree about the factors involved in “good” feedback, individual children vary considerably as to the types of feedback that include those factors. The variance was disturbing because it was so marked, to the extent of inhibiting some individuals’ reception of feedback that did not match their preferred type. This additional finding was one of the reasons why I decided to continue my investigation of feedback from the learners’ viewpoint in the present study.

### ***Research problem and guiding questions***

The problem I examined in this thesis lies in the field of feedback, and relates specifically to feedback within formative assessment practices. The aim of the study is to explore in further depth differences between individual students in their response to feedback. My thesis is that there are factors that affect individual responses to feedback, that these will vary between individuals, and that this variation can and should be identified and understood. I further expect that identifying and categorising this variation will lead to insights into the learning process that may be used then to improve learning outcomes for children.

In this study I examined closely the response by a small group of seven individuals to the feedback given to them by their primary classroom teacher over a period of one school year, in order to explore the factors which influenced these individuals’ reception of feedback and their consequent effective or ineffective use of it in the period under investigation.

I selected qualitative research approaches for the study because “[they] facilitate study of issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). These procedures were also suitable for exploring the problem I identified for this study because “...qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Janesick, 2003, p. 13).

Another factor involved in the choice of approaches was that I favour qualitative inquiry in research through my background and upbringing. My background, together with the findings of my previous study, also persuaded me to utilise student voice in this study. I explore and explain these influences on my choices in more detail in a later section of this chapter. Within the available qualitative approaches I selected phenomenography and case study to facilitate my investigation.

## **Research Questions**

The main research question I posed in this study is:

*What influences the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary school students?*

The structure of the research question, together with my interest in utilising student voice to generate data and my wish to continue the exploration begun in my earlier study, allowed for the adoption of a research design that would give insight into the research problem. The design included using the research approaches of phenomenography and case study.

As the study progressed, particularly during the phenomenographic data analysis, I found that three lines of inquiry that appeared likely to be fruitful when considering the main research question emerged from the data. These lines of inquiry are listed below:

- to establish the participants' views of the importance of feedback
- to establish the participants' views of the helpfulness of feedback
- to identify the factors likely to affect the participants' responses to feedback.

At appropriate places in the thesis – particularly during the phenomenographic analysis presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 – I phrased these lines of inquiry as the following questions:

- Why is feedback important?
- What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?

- What factors affect individual responses to feedback?

## ***My research orientation and underlying assumptions***

### **The development of my research orientation**

The qualitative paradigm emphasises the subjective nature of the researcher. In any study utilising this approach, a concept which is referred to sometimes as “researcher as instrument” is a useful one to consider (J. Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006; Janesick, 2003; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Patton, 2002). Those persons who argue in favour of this concept assume that the choices made by researchers are influenced by their interests and backgrounds (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For this reason, it is customary for the author of a qualitative study to give a brief autobiography and to identify important and relevant influences on his or her approach to research (Creswell, 2003). I have identified several key episodes in my background which have influenced my research orientation, and I discuss these in this section of Chapter 1.

I am a mature woman of Pākehā ethnicity, from a middle-class family. I am an early “baby boomer” and was therefore a child in the 1950s. We were typical of many other middle-class families of the time, with one major exception: my mother chose to return to the paid workforce as soon as my younger sister began kindergarten. In New Zealand during the 1950s this was not a socially acceptable choice, unless the family circumstances forced the housewife into paid employment for economic reasons. My siblings and I are not aware of suffering in any way from her decision; in fact, we benefitted materially from the addition to the family income. I developed a strong sense that there are ways and means of accommodating individual choice within a seemingly rigid set of conventions, and understood that judgments should be made on the basis of “what is” rather than on assumptions about “what should be”.

Upon reflection I can identify three key incidents which have influenced my development as a qualitative researcher and, in particular, my interest in student voice.

The first occurred when I was two years old and we were living on a Wellington hillside. I had been watching my older brother and his friend walking along the narrow top of a retaining wall, which was situated at the bottom of a grassy slope. The wall was about waist high and divided the slope from a concrete path. I desperately wanted to do what they were doing, but was not allowed. Later that day, I found myself alone at the top of the slope so, naturally, I went down and had a go at walking along the wall. Towards the end of my journey I fell off and broke my arm, which was enough of a traumatic event to fix the circumstances in my memory. The significance of this incident is that my version of what had happened was denied by my family, who all insisted that I must have played “roly poly” down the slope and crashed over the wall. Since that time, I have been very concerned with the validity of an individual’s own expression of his or her experience, and the importance of avoiding assumptions of “what must have happened”.

The second incident took place during my Primer 2 year, when I was about 5 years old. I was asked to return a fountain pen to the Infant Mistress’ classroom, while she chatted with my own teacher. When I arrived at her classroom door, there was something of a riot going on inside because her Primer 4 class of six-year-olds were running round the room screaming and shouting. I was rather scared and got out as soon as I had put the pen on the teacher’s desk. Later that day the Infant Mistress came into my room holding the pen, which was clearly broken. She asked me how I had broken it. When I said that I had left it intact on her desk she told me that her class had assured her that I had taken it in, broken it, and then left it on the desk. I remember feeling utterly helpless and wordless when she did not believe me,

and eventually accepted the punishment I was given. This served only to confirm her opinion that I had broken the pen and had then lied about it. Once again “what must have happened” had been imposed on my reality, but in this case others were concerned clearly to escape the consequences of their own actions. From this experience I learned that it is unwise to accept any one version of “the truth” without exploring alternative possibilities, no matter how unpalatable they may be. I also learned that a child may be unable to express, or maintain, an opinion if that opinion is not accepted by those in positions of authority.

The understandings I gained from these incidents were consolidated and extended by the third incident, which occurred during my teaching career. I was on playground duty, and happened to see from a distance that two children were fighting. I clearly saw one child land a blow on the other. After I had sent all the interested onlookers away I asked why the first child had hit someone else, thinking that there could well be underlying reasons and that I had seen only the final incident. When he replied that he had not hit anyone I was very annoyed because my instinctive reaction was that the evidence of my own eyes was being questioned. I was about to escalate the whole incident into a full-on disciplinary procedure when something made me ask: “What did you do, then, that looked to me like you were hitting?” His reply was “I didn’t hit him, I punched him – with my fist”. We had been discussing the same incident but with different terminology and understanding. I have endeavoured since then not only to listen to children and to explore their viewpoints but also to take into account possible differences in interpretation and vocabulary. For this reason student voice is an important element in my research orientation, and I have used it extensively in this study.

I have described these three incidents in some detail because they serve as examples of the path which has led me to become a qualitative researcher who is interested in social reality, and particularly in the right and ability of children to have a voice in decisions and circumstances which affect them. These beliefs have shaped this study, both in the choice of participants and in the means by which I explored the problem.

### **Underpinning assumptions**

As argued previously, any study is undertaken through the particular personal, social, and theoretical lenses of the researcher. The decisions made by the researcher will be guided and influenced by these assumptions. Three of my personal beliefs about the teaching and learning process have influenced my approach to this study in particular.

First, I believe that learning is constructed by the learner with the support and facilitation of the teacher. The learner and the teacher are both active agents in the process of developing knowledge and understanding, but I believe it is the learner who has perhaps the higher stake in the process because he or she is the ultimate constructor of the knowledge being developed.

Second, I believe that feedback, in order to be effective in raising standards of achievement, must be acted upon by the learner. If this step does not take place then the feedback cannot be regarded as effective (Ramaprasad, 1983).

Third, I believe that children, in their capacity as learners, have the right to be consulted about classroom practices that affect their learning directly. They are more likely to “buy in” to practices such as giving formative feedback, and respond actively to it, if their level of knowledge and understanding has been ascertained prior to implementation. As Susan

Brookhart notes, “...good feedback contains information that a student can use, which means that the student has to be able to hear and understand it. Students can’t hear something that is beyond their comprehension...” (2008, p. 2). Adults as well as children may benefit if their prior knowledge and understanding is ascertained whenever new strategies are implemented, because “...replicating assessment of learning strategies when teaching these teachers requires some assessment of their prior knowledge” (McNaughton, 2011, p. 141).

These three assumptions, together with my research orientation as I outlined it earlier in this chapter, have influenced many aspects of this study, from the choice of research methods to the application of the findings. In the next section of this chapter I begin to position the study in the context of the field and of schooling in New Zealand and show where and how I derived the research problem and questions. I also show where and how I believe this study will further our knowledge of what affects the reception of feedback by primary schoolchildren.

### ***Background to the study***

The problem explored in this study relates to student reception and subsequent use of feedback. We assume that teachers are providing feedback for their students as a means of enhancing learning outcomes for them, but students do not always respond to the feedback in ways that improve their learning outcomes. I hypothesised that this could be, in part, due to underlying factors relating to the students’ understanding of feedback. The study aimed to clarify what “happens” to the feedback received by students, and how they understand and respond to it, in order to gain a greater understanding of the process by which feedback can be given and received in ways that improve learning outcomes.



## ***Purpose of the study***

The interface between theory, as identified through research and practice as it is carried out in classrooms, occurs in what Black and Wiliam described originally as the black box or learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). However, as they pointed out elsewhere: "...how can anyone be sure that a particular set of new inputs will produce better results if we don't at least study what happens inside?" (Black & Wiliam, 1998b, p. 1). This issue lies at the heart of identifying the possible factors involved in how students receive and interpret feedback and how they choose subsequently to act on it or not. Understanding this issue is necessary if teachers (and learners) are to use feedback constructively to improve learning. It is therefore a key issue for this study.

This study is designed to explore the reception of feedback from the point of view of the learner. It builds on my earlier exploration of the extent to which students' perceptions of feedback as a means of improving their work, as expressed by themselves, are valid and insightful (Williams, 2001, 2010). My earlier study found that data derived from students themselves are valid and insightful, although I also found that response to feedback varied from one individual to another, in some cases inhibiting reception and subsequent use of it. One purpose of the current study was to explore this finding in more depth.

## ***Context of the study***

### **Schooling in New Zealand**

The New Zealand compulsory school system caters for children aged from six to sixteen years, enrolled in Years 1 to 13. Many children attend some form of pre-schooling service, although this is not mandatory. There is no set time for a child to start attending primary

school but most start on or shortly after their fifth birthday, usually being classified as Year 0 until the beginning of the school year in which they turn six when they are classified as Year 1. The primary school year runs usually from January to December and is arranged into four school terms, each lasting approximately 10 weeks. Children transition from primary schooling to secondary schooling at Year 9, beginning at the start of the school year. The majority of children are 13 years old at this point, and can remain at secondary school until the January following their 19th birthday. Most, however, would leave sometime between reaching the age when attendance is no longer compulsory (after 16 years of age) and when they have completed Year 13, with the majority completing at least part of Year 13. The present study was carried out with Year 8 participants completing their final year of primary schooling, undertaken when they were enrolled in an intermediate school.

### **Intermediate schools in New Zealand**

The most common form of primary school in New Zealand accepts Year 0 to Year 8 children, and is known as a full primary. There are many variations, though, which cater for specific community needs. For example, a small rural community may be served by a school catering for Year 0 to Year 13 children, known as an area school. This study was conducted in a form of middle school known as an intermediate school.

Intermediate schools are a New Zealand form of middle school, which have been in existence since 1933. From their inception they have catered for the two years of schooling immediately following the first six years of primary schooling which, as noted above, begins usually on the child's fifth birthday. Intermediate schools cater for pupils in the 11 to 13 year age range, designated as being in Year 7 and 8 of their formal schooling. They developed out of the New Zealand Junior High Schools, which had been in existence since the early 1920s for the purpose of allowing children to begin their post-primary education at the age of 11 or

12 rather than at the then common age of 14 years (Beeby, 1938). The new intermediate schools were intended to allow for the identification and development of the special aptitudes of the pupils by means of exploratory courses, so they were more in the tradition of middle schools than were the junior high schools they replaced (Beeby, 1938). Discussion of middle schools had begun briefly in 1878 when New Zealand as a colony (after colonisation by the British) was barely 40 years old. The proposal for establishing middle schools as a bridge between primary and secondary schooling was rather premature because the country had not by then achieved universal primary education, let alone universal secondary education, and nothing came of it (Watson, 1964). Intermediate schools are not universal, being situated mainly in urban areas, but in 2000 they catered for 52% of children in the Year 7 – 8 group (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2000).

Although there are significant differences between New Zealand intermediate schools and middle schools as they are established in the United States of America – most notably that in New Zealand they cater for only a two-year range of pupils – it is clear that they fit with the tradition of the middle school philosophy as it is known in the United States of America and elsewhere (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2000).

One of the common features of intermediate schools is the opportunity they allow for ‘teaming’ (Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Although each class has a home room teacher, who is responsible for teaching many aspects of the curriculum, these schools are organised typically into syndicates or teams of three or more teachers who each work with 25 – 30 children in the home room situation. These teachers also work together to teach subjects such as Physical Education, Science, and Music, with each teacher taking responsibility for one of these subject areas for all three classes. This is often referred to as a semi-specialised programme

(Dinham & Rowe, 2009; Stewart & Nolan, 1992). In addition, intermediate schools have more specialised staff members to teach subjects such as Art, or Technicraft subjects such as Cooking and Metalwork. Not all intermediate schools follow this organisation exactly, but it is the model used in the school selected for this study.

### **The new curriculum for New Zealand schools**

A new curriculum document, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007b), was implemented in New Zealand schools during 2010. This document replaced the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and related documents for each subject area which had been introduced into schools throughout the 1990s. The previous documents had been evaluated in 2002 through the Curriculum Stocktake Report, commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2002). The research team concluded that the previous 1993 curriculum was sound but could be improved upon by ensuring greater clarity and integration in aspects such as the essential skills and in the material supplied to parents and communities. A draft curriculum document was prepared and feedback on it was gathered during July – November 2006. The final document was released in September 2007, and from then until January 2010 state school authorities prepared for full implementation. The Government stated that increased adherence to the new curriculum was expected as the year 2010 progressed.

The curriculum was developed under the auspices of successive Labour-led coalition governments during the later years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century. It included a focus on key competencies as well as on formative assessment as a means of raising educational standards for primary school students, so that they would be better placed to attain the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) during their secondary schooling. A National-led coalition government was elected in November 2008, and

developed a system of national standards which was also introduced into New Zealand schools in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

Alongside the development of these policies, a trend in schooling that has become clear over the last two decades is that of increased active participation by children in their own learning. A policy advice document developed for the NZ Ministry of Education by the Directions for Assessment in New Zealand group includes for instance the expectation that “all young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning” (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, & Reid, 2009, p. 18). The importance of the active role of the student in the learning process was a key factor in the current study.

The school used for this study was ready for the implementation, and the classroom teacher used it to plan her classroom programme. I observed that some of the feedback given by the teacher was related to aspects of the new curriculum such as the key competencies. I have noted this because the implementation of the new curriculum had an impact on the feedback process in the classroom explored in my study.

### **National Standards for New Zealand schools**

Another Government initiative was implemented in 2010 nationwide. The introduction of National Standards for literacy and numeracy had been promoted strongly during the November 2008 General Election campaign by the victorious National Party, which then went on to form a National-led coalition government. The National Standards provide guidelines for student achievement in literacy and numeracy in Years 1 – 8. Students are assessed as being at, above, below, or well below the relevant standard. The Ministry of Education consulted with communities between 25 May and 3 July 2009, and the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) were amended to include the requirement for all schools

to implement the Standards (Ministry of Education, 2009a, 2010). The Standards were introduced in 2010. The teacher in my study reported her students' achievement against the standards during the year. This had implications for the feedback given to the participants in the study, who were aware of the levels that they had achieved or that they might achieve in the future.

### **Assessment in New Zealand schools**

The process of ensuring that students reach levels of achievement that will allow them to participate effectively in their society has been a focus of New Zealand Government education policy since at least the 1990s (Haigh & Dixon, 2007; Ministry of Education, 1993). Assessment is seen as part of the process of raising achievement levels. School authorities have been issued with documents that interpret governmental policies to teachers and boards of trustees, beginning with the need to develop effective assessment policies (Ministry of Education, 1993, 1994, 1998). The starting point is school-based assessment, but the recommendations go far beyond that. Assessment of many kinds and for many purposes is discussed within the general framework of the New Zealand curriculum and supporting documents (Ministry of Education, 1994, 1998, 2007). The main aim, however, is quite clear. For example *The New Zealand Curriculum* states:

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both student and teacher respond to the information that it provides.... Assessment... is best understood as an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39)

It is accepted within this ongoing process and these interactions that students and teachers will be provided with feedback which will enhance learning and teaching, because "effective

pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35). Feedback is a key component of formative assessment, and strategies to help teachers to understand and implement this in the classroom effectively have been identified and interpreted (Absolum, 2006; Brookhart, 2009; Clarke, 2001; Clarke, Hattie, & Timperley, 2003; Davies & Hill, 2009). There is a growing body of research which explores the perceptions and reasons for utilisation or otherwise of feedback as expressed by the learner (G. Brown, 2011; Cowie, 2005; Gipps & Tunstall, 1998; Little, 1985; Torrance & Pryor, 1998; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996a, 1996b). My study is intended to enhance understanding of this facet of assessment.

When I undertook my earlier study (Williams, 2001, 2010) *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* was the principal document for implementation of the curriculum, but it was supplemented by other publications that focused increasingly on formative assessment as a means of raising students’ achievement. For instance, Carr et al.’s (2003) review of the literature on the effects of curricula and assessment on pedagogical approaches and on educational outcomes includes a substantial section on formative assessment. Findings from the review included the powerful effects that formative assessment can have on classroom achievement, the importance of having both the teacher and the student involved actively in the assessment process, and the tension that exists between the formative and summative purposes of assessment.

## ***Overview of the thesis***

In structuring this report I have followed usually a traditional format, in which introductory material is succeeded by a review of the literature, presentation of the theoretical framework

of the study and the research methodology, findings and conclusions drawn from the findings. In addition to the material covered in the review of the literature, I have presented and discussed literature relating to some topics as they arise in the thesis. There is support in the literature for this approach, particularly for its inclusion in qualitative studies (Mutch, 2005; Wisker, 2001). As Wisker puts it: “While the literature review you do is largely written up in the introduction, you continue to refer to key themes, texts, writers and experts as and when their work informs and relates to yours throughout the thesis” (2001, p. 128)

The thesis is organised into ten chapters. In Chapter 1 I introduce the study and myself as a researcher, as well as describing the background and context of the study. In Chapter 2 I discuss the relevant literature in order to place the investigation in the broader framework of the field of study. I follow this in Chapters 3 and 4 with a discussion of the theoretical framework of the study and the research design, in which I include an outline of the two main research approaches used — phenomenography and case study.

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 I present the findings of the phenomenographical component of the study. In these chapters I identify the collective views of feedback identified in the data gained from the participants. These collective views are organised around the three questions identified on page 3 of this chapter. These are: (i) Why is feedback important? (ii) What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals? and (iii) What factors affect individual responses to feedback? The findings for each of the three questions are then arranged in relation to each other to form the model of student perception of feedback referred to earlier.

In Chapter 8 I present the model developed from the results of the phenomenographical analysis. In the following chapter I present case study reports for two of the participants to



show how the views of individuals may relate to one or more of the collective views identified in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 and to ensure that the voices of some of the individual participants are heard in the study.

Finally, in Chapter 10, I show how the model developed from the findings of the phenomenographical analysis may be applied by teachers in the classroom setting, or adapted by individual teachers to suit the requirements of their own class and teaching context. I conclude with suggestions for further research and development.

### ***Summary***

In order to study student receptivity to feedback I have decided to carry out a phenomenographic study, supplemented by case studies of two of the participants. I have provided details of my background and beliefs about teaching and learning, and have outlined some of the steps which led me to become a qualitative researcher interested in investigating student voice. An outline of the schooling system in New Zealand has also been provided, to allow the reader to set the study in context. Finally, I give an outline of the organisation of the thesis. Henceforth I will show how I developed the study and present the findings I obtained. This inquiry begins with a discussion in the following chapter of the body of literature relevant to my study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### ***Introduction***

The literature review in qualitative studies has several purposes: it shares with the reader the results of other studies in the field and relates the study to an ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic (Cresswell, 2003); it both engages with the known literature and adds something else (Wisker, 2001); and it establishes a theoretical framework for the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In order to achieve these purposes I considered that I needed to explore several topics and decided to work from more general to more specific topics relating to my study of what affects children's response to feedback. The overarching concept of formative assessment as a whole was the first of these and was followed by an exploration of several issues more specifically relating to feedback. These included types of feedback, models of feedback and issues relating to the frequency, timing and effectiveness of feedback. I also surveyed the literature relating to the learner in the classroom, or rather, the messages provided for teachers when considering how to prepare meaningful programmes for the learners in their classrooms. It was important to examine what is known currently about student perspectives on feedback, particularly those studies which drew directly on learners themselves as sources of data. Following this I considered issues relating to student voice and how these could inform my own work. The results of these reviews follow.

### ***Formative Assessment***

Formative assessment, as a means of raising classroom achievement outcomes, has been the subject of much debate during the last few years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b; S. Brown, 2004; Clarke, 2001; Clarke et al., 2003). The case for using formative assessment to enhance classroom achievement has been put

persuasively, most notably by Black and Wiliam (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b). It has long been accepted that formative assessment, particularly in the form of feedback, is a very important aspect of the learning process (Clarke, 2001; Clarke et al., 2003; Crooks, 1988; Gipps, 1994a; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989).

Sadler (1989, p. 120) has stated that “Formative assessment is concerned with how judgments about the quality of student responses ... can be used to shape and improve the student’s competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial-and-error learning”.

Sadler declared further (p. 121) that for this kind of assessment

the learner has to (a) possess a concept of the *standard* (or goal, or reference level) being aimed for, (b) compare the *actual* (or current) level of performance with the standard, and (c) engage in appropriate *action* which leads to some closure of the gap”. (Emphasis in original)

This quotation from Sadler is cited often in the literature relating to formative assessment. It provides a framework for teachers to structure the feedback they give to their students as well as emphasising the importance of students being involved in the learning and assessment processes. This process (of structuring feedback) has been discussed in both academic research literature and in the commentary on this research which has been developed for the use of teachers in the classroom (G. Brown, 2008; G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; Cowie, 2009; Hill, 2011; McNaughton, 2011; Torrance & Pryor, 2001).

Black and Wiliam, for their part, have defined assessment as “all those activities undertaken by teachers – and by their students in assessing themselves – that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities”. They then stated that assessment becomes formative assessment when “the evidence is actually used to adapt the

teaching to meet student needs” (1998b, p. 2). Taken together, the work of Sadler and Black and Wiliam have provided the starting point for much of the research relating to formative assessment that has been conducted in the early years of the 21st century.

Black and Wiliam (Assessment Reform Group, 1999) identified five key factors that improve learning through assessment, also known as formative assessment or assessment for learning. These key factors have been summarised in material prepared to support teachers in the classroom as, first, the provision of effective feedback to pupils; second. the active involvement of students in their own learning; third, the adjustment of teaching to take account of the results of assessment; fourth, a recognition of the profound influence that assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial influences on learning, and fifth, the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve (Absolum, 2006, p. 21). The most pertinent of these factors to my study is the provision of effective feedback to pupils, although elements of the active involvement of students in their own learning and the need to be able to assess themselves are also included.

Formative assessment is often understood as being “assessment for learning” or “interactive assessment” in order to differentiate it from summative assessment, also known as “assessment of learning” (Cowie, 2009; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Sangster & Overall, 2006; Tanner & Jones, 2003). It is seen increasingly as being positioned in constructivist approaches to teaching and learning (Clarke, 2003), and therefore incorporates a strong element of student participation in the learning process (G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; Cowie, 2009; Hill, 2011; McNaughton, 2011; Torrance & Pryor, 2001). I have adopted these understandings of formative assessment for the present study.

Black and Wiliam together, separately, and with others, have carried out a research programme in the 21st century, building on and developing their seminal work on formative assessment which appeared in the late 1990s (Black, 2001; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004; Black, Swann, & Wiliam, 2006; Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b, 2003). The initial work (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b) was not grounded in theory because it drew together a wide range of research findings that were relevant to formative assessment. The next phase of their work was concerned with practical applications of the earlier research findings to classroom settings (Black et al., 2003; Black et al., 2004).

Other work conducted during this period discussed the underlying issues of learning about teaching and learning that became apparent, as well as some problems with teachers' implementation of formative assessment in their classrooms (Black, 2007; Black et al., 2003; James et al., 2007). These issues included a lack of teacher knowledge of research associated with learning, such as that relating to the psychology of learning; a need for teachers to take greater care in task and question selection to ensure that prompts such as these actually helped the learning process; and the need for teachers to listen more attentively to students' responses so that learning for their students became an active process in which the students created their own understandings (Black et al., 2003; Black et al., 2004; Black, McCormick, James, & Pedder, 2006; James et al., 2007). Feedback has always been considered to be an integral part of formative assessment practices but there is evidence that not all feedback is effective, and that this lack of effectiveness can occur sometimes because teachers either do not understand the principles of effective feedback or they are constrained by school policies and practices from implementing their understanding of such feedback (Black, 2001, 2007;

Black et al., 2004; Black & Wiliam, 2003). In order to avoid any distorting effects on my investigation by either of these issues I worked with a school which modelled supportive practices and with a teacher who understood and routinely implemented feedback based on what is known of good practice in giving feedback.

Other work on formative assessment has been carried out by a number of researchers, with a variety of aspects forming the focus of attention for different researchers. Aspects that have received attention are teacher practice, including the preparation that teachers may require before they can implement formative assessment practices successfully (Cowie, 2009; Hill, Cowie, Gilmore, & Smith, 2010; McNaughton, 2011; Taras, 2002); the application of theory to the classroom, specifically the issues involved in translating the theory into practice (Brookhart, 2004; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000; Torrance & Pryor, 2001); and the effects of formative assessment on student learning and motivation (Brookhart & DeVoge, 2000; Campos & O'Hern, 2007; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Gijbels & Dochy, 2006; Haigh & Dixon, 2007; MacClellan, 2001). As I noted earlier, the school and the teacher I worked with for this study had developed and implemented good formative assessment practices already, which meant that the last group of studies (relating to student learning and motivation) were of particular relevance to my study. I was particularly interested in the study carried out by Haigh and Dixon (2007), because the aim of their investigation was “for the teacher-researchers to identify and implement a tool that could provide them with greater insight into their students’ conceptions of ... feedback” (p. 359). The study was undertaken in a secondary school setting, and the focus was on the development of the teachers’ expertise, but it did include some comments that indicated that the students were more knowledgeable about assessment and feedback than their teachers had expected. One teacher also commented that talking with her students had made her more aware of their individuality and of the

significance of their input. These points showed that my study, although set in a primary school, could interest teachers in other schooling sectors because I hope to identify what some of the differences between individuals might be. Also I plan to develop a model that may help them to explore further the conceptions of feedback held by their students in order to better understand some of the factors which might lead their students to implement, reject, or ignore the feedback they are given.

Cowie, in reporting on her work with students of a similar age-group to my participants, noted that students with learning-oriented goals desire to understand rather than merely to complete tasks. She revealed that these orientations are not fixed but can be altered by teacher feedback (Cowie, 2000, 2005b). Another study of interest in the feedback domain was undertaken by Gijbels and Dochy (2006). Because the participants were first-year university students I did not feel that this study was especially relevant to my study, but the general finding that “students adopting a deep approach to learning prefer assessment procedures that allow them to demonstrate their understanding” (p. 405) was of interest to me. This observation, together with Cowie’s findings, may prove relevant to my investigation of the ways in which students respond to feedback.

My study is positioned within formative assessment principles, especially in relation to the literature surrounding feedback. Accordingly I shall now explore the literature relating to feedback in more detail.

## ***Feedback***

Feedback is a process that has been studied intensively for many years. Kulhavy, in his 1977 literature review, considered studies that dated back to 1949. He emphasised the point that

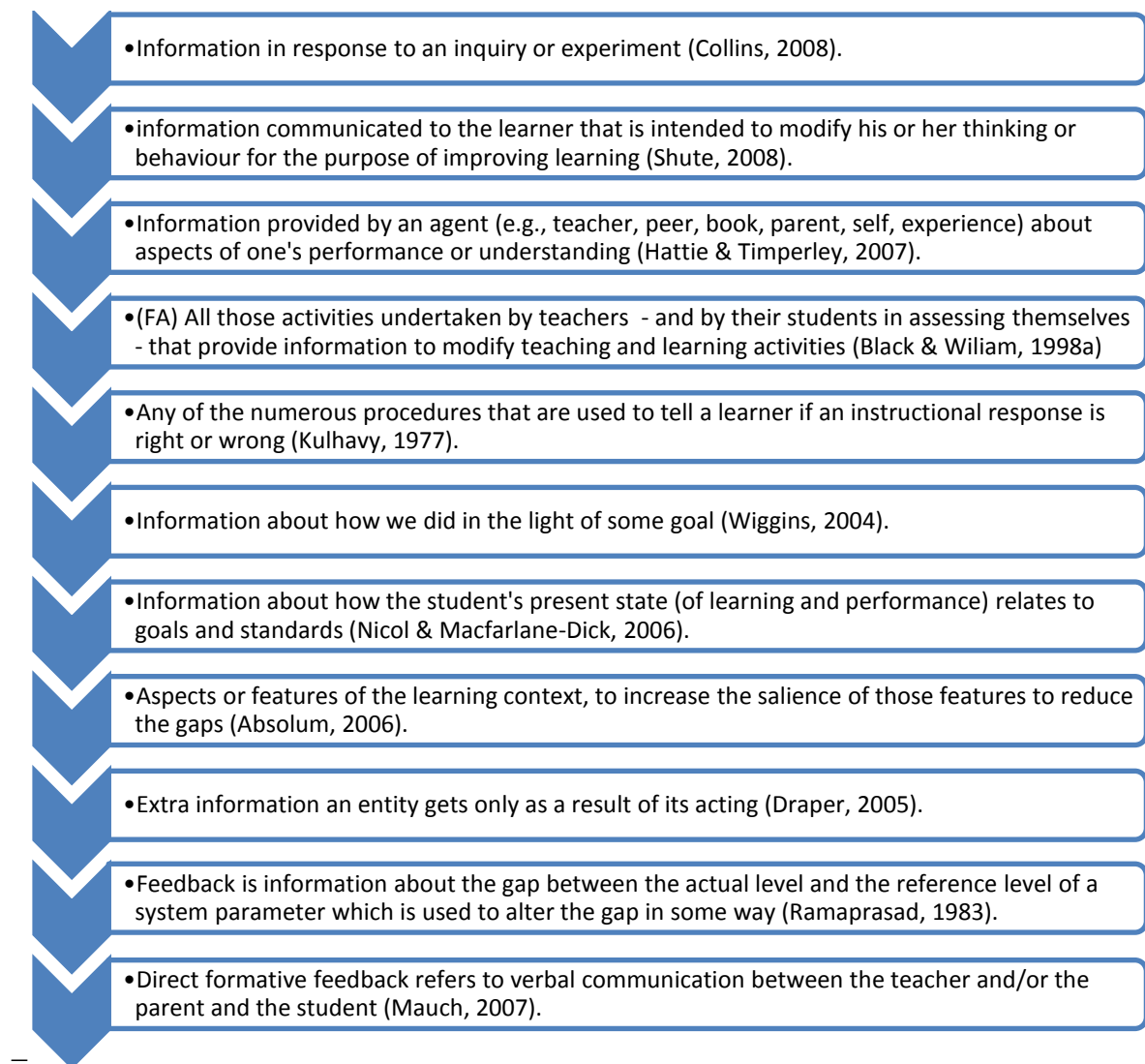
“...we need to grapple with the question of why many studies show that [feedback] does not [increase learning]” (Kulhavy, 1977, p. 216). Researchers have grappled with that question since 1977, culminating in some interesting findings, but there is still no real understanding of why feedback is sometimes not received as expected, and in some cases even with aversion (Donohue & Ratliff, 1976; Gipps, 1994b; Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2006; Sadler, 1989; M. D. Smith & Steffen, 1994; Strang, 1981). If students fail to make use of the feedback they are given, and if as educators we do not understand why, then we must be hampered in our efforts to implement formative assessment in the classroom fully. As Sadler says, “Feedback is never enough” because “...the learner has to ...engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap” (Sadler, 2009, p. 2). The gap he is referring to here is the “gap” between what the child has achieved and what is still required to achieve the learning goal – the third point of his 1989 definition of formative feedback. When students fail to implement the formative feedback they receive, clearly there is a need for greater knowledge to be gathered about students’ responses to the feedback that they are given. My study is designed to identify some of the factors involved.

For the purposes of this study the question of what constitutes feedback, and therefore what will be included in the research, needed to be resolved. There are a number of definitions of feedback as it relates to formative assessment in the literature, and these can be indicated on a continuum from more general to more specific descriptions. The three conditions outlined by Sadler in 1989 which must be satisfied for feedback to be effective have proved seminal in this area, as evidenced in many of the examples given below. The three points are that the learner has to have a concept of the standard being aimed for, be able to compare the actual level of performance with the standard, and to engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap (Sadler, 1989, p. 121).



There is a tendency in some studies to define “formative assessment” first and then, sometimes in the next sentence, to include the phrase “and feedback” without further defining “feedback”. Where this is done I have assumed that the author considers “formative assessment” and “feedback” to be interchangeable terms, and I have taken the definition of “formative assessment” as a definition of “feedback” also. I have indicated instances where this has occurred by inserting “FA” at the beginning of the definition. My own position is that these terms are not interchangeable, with the timely provision of feedback being but one of several factors involved in formative assessment (Assessment Reform Group, 1999).

Working from more general definitions at the top to more specific ones at the bottom, and using a dictionary definition as a starting point, I have presented some conceptions of feedback in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Definitions of feedback arranged from more general (at the top of the figure) to more specific (at the bottom).**

For the purposes of this study, definitions at both ends of the continuum are problematic. In practical terms, on the one hand it would be impossible to record the full range of information indicated in the first five definitions even if, as a researcher, I was present in the classroom at all times. On the other hand Mauch's definition of direct formative feedback, which was the most specific, was equally problematic because it would require capturing all verbal

interactions between the parties concerned, and would exclude any forms of written communication. The definitions used by Absolum, Draper, and Ramaprasad indicate that the recipient of the feedback has taken some action to reduce the gap (between the standard attained and the desired standard). These definitions therefore lie outside the parameters of this study, which aims to investigate how students receive feedback and what effects their interpretations of the feedback have on whether or not they act upon it. Student action and inaction are both relevant to the study, so that reduction of the gaps is not a primary concern. The definition of feedback provided by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006, p. 200) that “feedback is information about how the student’s present state (of learning and performance) relates to ...goals and standards” which situates feedback within the classroom, seemed most likely to advance the aims of the study. In general I have adopted this definition for the current study

Feedback has become accepted as a powerful means of raising classroom achievement, and there is some research that focuses on the ways in which this operates. For example, the timing, amount, and mode of feedback, and audience has been explored and is now available to be transferred from theory to practice (Brookhart, 2009). The effects of formative assessment, which includes formative feedback, on the choices made by students as reported directly by those children is a growing area of interest within the field. However there is still relatively little work available which places a focus on the student alone, rather than as a source of verification or elaboration of teachers’ views (G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; Cowie, 2005a; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005). Issues relating to student voice may have been a factor here. Student voice is another key concept of this study, and is explored further later in this chapter. Both students and teachers are involved in the “black box”, the metaphor for the classroom used by Black and Wiliam in their highly influential 1998 work

“Inside the black box” (Black & Wiliam, 1998b) in order to explain the input and output model which was then the focus of government policy in the United Kingdom. The views of students as one of the two main participants in the black box (the other being the classroom teacher) must be considered so as to develop a greater understanding of the process by which feedback is used to make further learning gains.

It seems that teachers are not always aware of the effect of many of their strategies (Black & Wiliam, 2003; Clarke, 2003; Clarke et al., 2003). Students are positioned uniquely to comment on and interpret what happens in the classroom (Cook-Sather, 2002). Their perspectives will add to what is known about learning, and they will aid teachers in providing high quality learning opportunities. Further to this contribution the current study explores the dislocation between a student receiving and understanding feedback, but failing then to utilise it in ways that translate into academic progress. This is the area which forms the “space” within which this research takes place.

As noted above, feedback has long been seen as one important aspect of the teaching and learning process and – particularly in the form of detailed comments – was considered earlier to be the single most important influence on student learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2006). More recently, however, there are indications that this view of feedback may have led to an over-reliance by teachers on feedback. In particular the need for the recipient to take some action in response to feedback may have been overlooked, although this aspect has been a feature of the literature for a considerable length of time (Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989). In his more recent work Sadler has noted that the focus of feedback has changed from promoting memorisation to producing divergent responses to assessment tasks, with a subsequent

emphasis on how students perceive and interpret feedback (Sadler, 2010). This observation is relevant to the purpose of this study, which aims to develop our understanding of how students receive and respond to feedback.

## **Types of feedback**

Although Black and Wiliam did not include a discussion of feedback types in their review (Black & Wiliam, 1998a) the area is covered elsewhere in the literature, although often incidentally. For example, Sadler has discussed the relative merits of some approaches to feedback and has given examples of the types he is discussing. These, taken together, include 'benign comments', 'typographical errors', 'summary grades', 'standards or reference levels', 'identification of strengths or weaknesses', and 'descriptive statements' (Sadler, 1983, 1989, 1998). These, collectively, provide a useful baseline or reference point for developing a list of types of feedback. In a technical memorandum Draper (2005) took the concept of types of feedback further, by identifying five levels of feedback. He identifies these as follows:

1. A mark or grade or successful / fail classification of outcome.
2. The right answer: A description or specification of the desired outcome.
3. Procedural or surface examination of the right answer.
4. Explanation of what makes the right answer correct: of why it is the right answer.
5. Explanation of what is wrong about the learner's answer (Draper, 2005).

Draper (2005) discussed each of his categories and gave examples of what is meant by each type. His levels, when examined, were found to contain all of the items mentioned by Sadler (1983, 1989, 1998), and did not introduce any 'new' types not identified by him.

In a short article, Latham (1997) expanded on a discussion of the types of feedback to include some issues related to peer- or self- assessment. Again, the types of feedback he mentioned are included in the list derived from Sadler.

The five types of feedback used for the ranking task (see Appendix E) included in Interview 1 of this study were identified after careful consideration of the types identified by Sadler and Draper, cited above. In addition to these sources, the experience of the researcher and her colleagues with the types of feedback given in New Zealand schools commonly was also taken into account. The types of feedback selected for the ranking task undertaken by the participants in the first interview are aligned closely with feedback Types B, C, and D in the typology of feedback developed by Tunstall and Gipps (1996b). This is because the ranking task was developed for my earlier study and was transferred to the current study as a means of linking the data and findings of the two studies. This linking was not carried out, however, because I felt that doing so would add little of value to the findings of the present study. In the meantime the first interview had been completed. I used the students' comments that were generated from this interview, as they carried out the ranking task, in the phenomenographic analysis extensively. I would emphasise, however, that the participants were not limited to the types of feedback produced for the ranking task as they discussed their ideas of feedback. The cards they used were considered as prompts only rather than as restricting their comments.

## **Models of feedback**

There is a growing body of literature that presents models of formative assessment, with some examples being proposed as models of feedback (Beaumont, O'Doherty, & Shannon,

2011; Bommelje, 2012; G. Brown, 2011; Brunk-Chavez & Arrigucci, 2012; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Soobard & Rannikmae, 2011; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996b). Two of these in particular (Tunstall & Gipps, and Hattie & Timperley) were relevant to my study because they dealt specifically with feedback and related to primary school children.

Tunstall and Gipps provided a typology of teacher feedback (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996b). For the purposes of this discussion I will regard this typology as a model, because in its structure and usage it covers similar ground to many of the models noted above (See Appendix I). This typology was related to research carried out in London in 1994 - 1995, which explored children's understanding of formative assessment. The types of feedback identified by Sadler previously could be mapped onto the typology, mostly in Type C (Specifying attainment), and Type D (Constructing achievement). The lack of representation of Sadler's items in Tunstall and Gipps' Types A (Rewarding) and B (Approving) is not surprising because Sadler's items were usually print oriented, whereas Tunstall and Gipps' Types A and B feedback relate to both verbal and non-written forms. Sadler did not state why the types of feedback he mentioned are usually print oriented. However, his discussion involved older students whereas Tunstall and Gipps' research was carried out in junior classes. This may explain why his types were more print oriented, because older children write a greater proportion of their schoolwork than do junior children.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) concluded that the main purpose of feedback is to reduce the gap between current achievement and the desired standard. They produced a model of feedback based on four levels at which feedback may operate. These are task level, process

level, self-regulation level, and self level. Three ideas related to feedback work at any of these four levels. The ideas may be encapsulated by the following questions:

Where am I going?

How am I going?

Where to next?

The diagram produced by Hattie and Timperley shows the four levels situated side by side, rather than being positioned as a hierarchy. This seems to indicate that they do not consider a hierarchy between the levels exists, but elsewhere their discussion makes it clear that in fact Hattie and Timperley do see the four levels as requiring more or less complex modes of thinking, or possibly degrees of intellectual development. Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006) developed an interesting model of the processes of self-regulation and internal feedback, which placed emphasis on the process utilised by the student to support and develop his or her self-regulation. They argue that students must be provided with opportunities to develop their self-regulation capacity if they are to be prepared for learning throughout life. Their model is designed to show how formative assessment and feedback may be organised to support this development, and appears to link to Hattie and Timperley's third and fourth levels.

When discussing their typology, Tunstall and Gipps suggest that "feedback changes in style, purpose, meaning and processes as it moves from evaluation to description" (1996b, p. 342). Hattie and Timperley seem to agree with this remark when they note that "feedback [that is] aimed to move students from task to processing and then from processing to regulation is most effective" (p. 91). Taken together, the studies suggest that there is a discernible difference in feedback for different purposes and that this difference can be expressed as a hierarchy. The notion of moving from one level to another in sequence implies a hierarchy of



some sort. In addition it seems that feedback which allows students to operate at the level of self-regulation is a preferred aim of feedback.

Cowie and Bell (1999) presented a model of formative assessment, which included planned and interactive formative assessment. Various aspects of each of these were discussed in their study, but there was little or no reference to feedback within the assessment process. In addition, the focus of the model appears to be on using the information gained from the students in order to validate the information already held by the teachers, in the sense that suggestions were given for how teachers might include the views of students into their own understandings in order to amend their own teaching practices. The model appears to show that student views are an adjunct to the teachers' views rather than being the primary source of data for developing the model.

G. Brown, individually and in collaboration with others, has reported extensively on student conceptions of assessment (G. Brown, 2008; G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2007; G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; G. Brown, Irving, Peterson, & Hirschfeld, 2009; Hirschfeld & Brown, 2009). Together these studies show that students hold four conceptions of assessment. These are that assessment makes schools accountable, assessment makes students accountable, assessment is irrelevant, and assessment is enjoyable. Brown and Hirschfeld (2007) conclude that some of these conceptions are more helpful than are others in terms of identifying measurable learning outcomes. They also note that students have multiple conceptions of assessment which appear to be internally consistent rather than contradictory. Hirschfeld and Brown (2009) discuss the possibility that younger students may hold different conceptions of assessment from those of the older students who were the participants in their study. While not relevant directly to my study, which is concerned with feedback rather than assessment

and which draws on the views of younger participants, these studies help to place my study in the wider field of assessment as a whole.

Cowie, Tunstall and Gipps, and Brown gathered their data from students directly. Cowie and Tunstall and Gipps interviewed students and their teachers whereas Brown and his colleagues more often used a survey for this purpose. When participant voice is a desired outcome, as is the case in my study, interviews are recognised as being an important source of data (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Bragg, 2007b; Reay, 2006; Rudduck, 2006). This, together with the emphasis placed by phenomenographers on interviewing as a means of gathering data, influenced my decision to rely on interviews with the participants as the main source of data.

### **Issues relating to the frequency, timing, and effectiveness of feedback on learning**

The issues of frequency, timing, and effectiveness of feedback are of importance to the current study, because they represent aspects of assessment which could form the basis of questions put to the children in order to explore their understanding of the concepts involved. The literature was reviewed carefully so as to give me guidance in the area.

It is reasonable to suggest that the frequency of instances of assessment, whether formative or otherwise, will vary according to the situation involved. For instance, the length of a particular course or the type of learning environment will affect how often assessment will be attempted. Most studies report frequency in vague terms such as 'whenever the need arises' (Swain, 1997), 'timely' (Latham, 1997), or 'continuous' (Sadler, 1983). Crooks (1988)

identified one study which seemed to show that two or three tests (or feedback) during a course of study led to some gains in examination performance, but that more frequent testing may be of little extra benefit (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1988; cited in Crooks, 1988). However, for some types of feedback, time is a factor. As Sadler (1989, p. 134) noted, "... the number of comments and their content depends on the willingness of the teacher (and the time available) to actually make the comment". In discussion with the classroom teacher prior to starting the study I established that the students involved in my study received feedback on a regular basis, both in oral and written form. However the frequency of feedback reception was not a major factor in the study, apart from it being frequent enough for the students involved to have had recent episodes of feedback to consider at the times when the three interviews were undertaken.

Frequency of feedback is related to the timing of it, because frequency has to be balanced against timing simply because of the logistics involved. The literature was studied therefore to identify those aspects relating to the timing of feedback. It was found that one aspect of timing has been covered in the literature; the timing of feedback in relation to a completed course of study (for example Crooks, 1988). This and other studies report consistent findings with regard to the timing of feedback, which is that immediate feedback is more beneficial than delayed feedback (Crooks, 1988; Latham, 1997; Sadler, 1989).

Although reports on the timing of feedback are sparse, the success or helpfulness of different types of feedback has received good coverage in the literature. Many studies show that feedback is of most benefit when it identifies the current situation, relates that to a desired outcome, and identifies ways in which students can get to the desired situation (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Draper, 2005; Harlen, 1994; Kulhavy, 1977; Ramaprasad, 1983). As Sadler

put it, "...the learner has to (a) possess a concept of the *standard* (or goal, or reference level) being aimed for, (b) compare the *actual* (or current) *level of performance* with the standard, and (c) engage in appropriate *action* which leads to some closure of the gap" (Sadler, 1989, p 121). One feature of these and other studies is the absence of the learner's voice as an interested party. While the studies relate the benefits of feedback to the learner, all are presented from an adult point of view. Where the words of children are heard, it is either as recipients of feedback from teachers (Torrance & Pryor, 1995) or as informants on their teachers' practices (Little, 1985; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996a). The authority of the learner's voice is a significant matter because it has implications for the validity of the current study, and because the studies considered above demonstrate that children can respond effectively to research situations.

### ***The learner in the classroom***

The topics explored through the literature so far have situated the study in the wider context of formative assessment and feedback. Moreover, they were focussed outside the classroom, largely. I now explore the applications of the body of literature that relates teaching and learning to a classroom setting, including some evidence-based support material written to interpret formative assessment for teachers as they implement it into their own practice. I have undertaken this investigation because these materials indicate the key messages provided for teachers, those which can be expected to impact on the practices of well-informed classroom teachers such as the one involved in this study. However my discussion is centred particularly on the learner's point of view because this is the underlying motivation of my study. In this section I discuss how the findings from the literature have been interpreted for the benefit of the learner in the classroom.

‘The learner in the classroom’ is the focus of much of the work undertaken to help teachers interpret what we know of effective feedback in relation to the students in their classes, particularly the importance of involving the latter in the assessment process (see, for example, Absolum, 2006; Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Brookhart, 2008; Clarke, 2003; Davies & Hill, 2009; Hattie, 2009). The research cited in this literature, among many other studies, shows that involving students in classroom assessment results in significant gains in achievement.

Feedback is an important component in the learning process although, as noted above, research shows that feedback per se is not always effective in improving learning outcomes for students. There is a large body of literature relating to efforts to explore this aspect and to identify the features of effective feedback (see, for example, Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Higgins et al., 2002; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Rucker & Thomson, 2003; E. Smith & Gorard, 2005; Wansbrough, Wright, Thornton, Dixon, & Cubey, 2001; Wiggins, 2004; Wootton, 2002). For this section I have drawn on some of the texts which have been produced specifically to help teachers to incorporate the findings from research into their classroom practice (Absolum, 2006; Brookhart, 2008; Clarke, 1998, 2003; Clarke et al., 2003; Davies & Hill, 2009; Johnston, 2004; McGee & Fraser, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2006; Nuthall, 2007; Timperley & Parr, 2004).

In a handbook intended to serve as a key reference for the ongoing professional development of New Zealand classroom teachers, the Ministry of Education lists six dimensions of effective practice: knowledge of literacy learning; expectations; instructional strategies; engaging learners with texts; partnerships; and knowledge of the learner (Ministry of Education, 2006). The act of giving feedback is discussed under the dimension of

‘instructional strategies’. Advice given to teachers includes a statement that effective feedback motivates students to learn, as well as alerting teachers to the impact – either negative or positive – that a single statement can have on a student’s attitude towards learning. The importance of considering social and cultural appropriateness when giving feedback is also mentioned. The teacher involved in my study was aware of these issues, and endeavoured to incorporate them into her teaching practice and into the feedback she provided for her students. In addition, advice is given in the Ministry document to teachers that they should avoid allowing their feedback to take over ownership of the learning task from the students.

A common theme in the texts I explored, which reflects the findings of Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b), is the need to involve students in their own learning if feedback is to be effective – that is, if the students are to take some action after receiving feedback (Absolum, 2006; Brookhart, 2008; Clarke, 1998; Davies & Hill, 2009; Timperley & Parr, 2004). Strategies to ensure that students become involved in their learning include making sure that they are involved at all stages of the learning and assessment cycle (Davies & Hill, 2009); teaching them strategies for self-assessment (Timperley & Parr, 2004); sharing learning intentions and success criteria (Clarke et al., 2003; Timperley & Parr, 2004); or ensuring that learners are engaged with the texts with which they are provided (Ministry of Education, 2006). All of these strategies are valuable, and are important aspects of engaging students in the learning process, but I wish to argue that they could be more valuable if teachers explored their students’ responses to feedback in order to identify the factors which may be affecting their responses to feedback. This is the area where I hope my study will provide additional insights into what actually happens in the classroom – I wish to add to, rather than replace, much of the excellent work that has been done in this area already.

Students interact in the classroom with their teacher and their peers in a variety of ways.

Nuthall (2007) described these as the three worlds of the classroom: the public world that the teacher sees and manages; the semi-private world of ongoing peer relationships; and the private world of the child's own mind. He argued that individual thinking and learning takes place in the private world, although all three worlds interact to shape each student's experiences. It seems that the answer to my research question would lie more in the workings of the private world, to which the teacher is usually not privy, because it is here where individual differences will have their effects. I needed to select a research approach that would facilitate entry to the private worlds of students in order to explore the factors that might be affecting the choices of individuals when they consider whether or not to accept, reject, or ignore feedback. I also felt that the approach selected needed to reveal some useful insights from a limited number of participants because I would not have the financial and logistical resources necessary to carry out a large-scale study in the time available for the study. These were major considerations in my decision to employ phenomenography and case study approaches to research.

### ***Student Perspectives***

Since the beginning of the 21st century there has been a growing interest in investigating the effects of assessment on the performance of individual children as reported by those individuals directly (G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; Cowie, 2000, 2005a; Gipps, 1994b; Gipps & Tunstall, 1998; Sadler, 2009; Shute, 2008; Torrance & Pryor, 1998). Student perspectives have been used in a number of contexts, most often to illuminate or verify teachers' views in relation to those of the students. Cowie, in her unpublished thesis (Cowie, 2000), explored "...the ways that students perceived and experienced formative assessment and to understand how their experiences shape and are shaped by this" (p. 178). She then

compared the views of students with those of their teachers. Although she gathered the views of students and reported them in some detail, the focus of Cowie's work was on the relationship between teachers and their students in the context of formative assessment in an everyday classroom setting. She was also concerned more with studying formative assessment as a whole than with investigating feedback within formative assessment principles. The latter is the focus of my study. In a later article (2005b) based on the data reported in her thesis, Cowie made a distinction between formative assessment and feedback. The former "... involves judgments about the quality of student responses that are used to shape and improve the student's competence ...", while feedback was seen as being "...information that gives the learner the opportunity to see how well they are doing or have done and what they might do next to enhance their performance and knowledge" (p. 200). She stated further that "...active student self-assessment in line with teacher goals and criteria for success is the ultimate goal of formative assessment" (p. 200). Cowie's work provides a foundation for my study which explores what is occurring when students who have been the recipients of formative feedback given in accordance with what is considered best practice choose not to implement that feedback.

G. Brown, in conjunction with other researchers, has written extensively on student perceptions and conceptions of assessment, albeit with less emphasis on investigating student perceptions and conceptions of feedback (G. Brown, 2008a, 2011; G. Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; G. Brown et al., 2009). A later article explores feedback, but the focus is on teacher beliefs rather than on those of their students (G. Brown, Harris, & Harnett, 2012). Brown and Hirschfeld (2008) note that the research literature on students' conceptions of assessment is not extensive, a consequence perhaps of the relatively recent interest in this area. I would add that the literature relating to students' responses to feedback is even more limited, with a



particular gap being evident in studies which utilise data reported by students directly. The work of Tunstall and Gipps (Gipps & Tunstall, 1998; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996a, 1996b) on children's conceptions of feedback is a notable early contribution to this area, as is the study carried out by Little (1985). Little's conclusion – that the organising system of the child may be of much greater importance than is that of the person carrying out the interview – was particularly relevant to my study. The work of Brown and his colleagues presents studies with more contemporary views of students in this area.

Brown, McInerny, and Liem (2009, p. 5) note that "...the place of student perspectives in assessment *for* learning reform movements is remarkably absent" (emphasis in original). They suggest that this could be because there is mixed evidence about the degree to which these assessment innovations improve learning outcomes for students. It is reasonable to suppose that these statements may apply to formative feedback as well as to the wider field of formative assessment. Brown et al. go on to note (p. 11) that "...while students may be aware of what is happening and have their own reasons for participating, this should not convince us that their consciousness, perspective or conception of assessment automatically makes a difference to the outcomes they experience". These statements provide further justification for the worth of investigating the perspectives of students regarding feedback, particularly as a means of identifying possible perceptions and factors which may be inhibiting students' implementation of the feedback they are given.

## ***Student Voice***

Student voice is the primary source of data for my study, and was therefore a major influence on the research design. Although studies related to student voice have been evident in the literature for many years, including a special edition of *Educational Review* in 1978

(Rudduck & Fielding, 2006) being devoted to the topic, there has been an increasing emphasis in educational research over the past few years on the importance of investigating student (or pupil) voice, both as a means of empowering students (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; McLeod, 2011) and as a means of improving learning outcomes through amendments to teacher practice (Demetriou & Wilson, 2010; Wilhelm, 2011). In some cases, while the concept and practice of including student voice has become more official – through legislative measures such as requiring school authorities to consult with pupils (Bragg, 2007b; Hopkins, 2008) – the inclusion of student voice at the school and classroom level raises some significant issues for researchers. It is much more complex than it may appear at first.

Empowering students through increased use of their voice can alter other, more traditional, aspects of the teacher / pupil relationship. As one author has observed, “Teachers are used to being put in the position of evaluating children; thinking that pupils might evaluate teachers in turn effects shifts in identity and power” (Bragg, 2007a, p. 513). Thus, the act of empowering students may be seen as either disempowering teachers or at least as altering the dynamics of the classroom potentially. Other issues which may occur through the active promotion of student voice include the possibility that the perspectives and views of students may be seen as being more important or valid than are those of teachers or other groups concerned with schooling (Cefai & Cooper, 2010), or that students may see any process they are involved in as lacking authenticity if the topics they are invited to discuss are restricted by their teachers or if changes are not evident as a result of the consultation (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). It is also possible that students may see the process as not inclusive, or that they may lack the confidence and / or ability to express their views (Rudduck & Fielding,

2006). I was very aware of this possibility during my study, because of my background and on account of the issues I discussed earlier in this report.

Cook-Sather (2002, p. 4) has argued that the basic element involved in these issues relating to student voice is trust rather than power: “[it is] whether or not adults trust young people to be good (or not), to have and use relevant knowledge (or not), and to be responsible (or not).”

She contended further that constructivism as a pedagogical practice can help to overcome issues of power, authenticity, and inclusiveness through its relationship to child-centred education. To this end she declared: “Constructivists position students as active creators of their knowledge rather than recipients of other’s knowledge” (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 5).

Cook-Sather discussed other approaches, such as critical pedagogies and postmodern feminist pedagogies, which are also useful for addressing these issues. However, because of my experience that many primary school teachers tend to be at least well-disposed towards constructivism philosophically, it would seem that the approach of enhancing student voice would be very valuable in the classroom, given that changes in basic teaching pedagogies to include student voice would probably not be major. From research literature, however, it appears that this is not always so. Even changes which seem to be superficial or minor can reveal themselves to be very complex. One study found that what appeared on the surface to be a relatively straightforward change to the type of listening asked of teachers, and which appeared to fit well with the school’s child-centred approach to teaching and learning, had in fact much greater significance. Bragg (2007a, p. 510) concluded that “...what [the researcher] was asking involves not only a minor change in pedagogical practice (which might be easily absorbed), but also a ‘paradigm shift’ in teachers’ very identity, which might be highly problematic and disturbing”. This substantial shift occurred because teachers may feel that their existing practice has been judged and found wanting, and because at first no clear new

understanding about the respective roles of teachers and students has emerged to guide their classroom practice. In my case the classroom teacher involved in the study was keen to host me as a researcher in her classroom because she wanted to find ways of helping her students to achieve more, and she saw an exploration of their views on feedback as a powerful way of doing that. Her view of her role in the classroom in relation to that of her students accommodated student voice. This teacher clearly did not feel threatened by it.

The matter of challenges to teacher identity and to current practice has clear links to the second main aspect of student voice which I found was relevant to my study, one which has received some attention in the literature. This aspect is that student voice can be a means of improving learning outcomes through making amendments to teacher practice (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Fielding, 2004; Jones & Stanley, 2008).

Consideration of how student voice can contribute to changes in teaching and to improving learning outcomes involves recognising both the issues and benefits associated with such practices. This consideration could begin with concerns relating to the ‘lost’ voices of students, particularly those who are marginalised through disability, academic shortcomings, or through underprivileged backgrounds. Another issue that interested me related to the ethics of including students as either researchers or as research participants in my study, with all the attendant dilemmas of gaining informed consent from minors. Jones and Stanley (2008) discuss this problem in some depth, including examining the role of the parent or guardian in giving or withholding consent. They note that under some circumstances the principal of the child’s school may act as the child’s “ethical guardian”, with the result that the requirement to gain the consent of the parent or guardian of the child may be waived. Indeed, Jones and Stanley boldly argue that “in stipulating that parental / carer consent is essential, institutional

ethics panels deprive children of their rights to make their own decisions about their participation in research and whether their voices should be heard...” (2008, p. 33). However, the view that “the child may not participate without parental consent and the parent may not volunteer the children without the child’s consent” (Tymchuk, 1992, cited in Jones & Stanley, 2008, p. 33) seems to be more balanced, and is accepted generally in research communities. It is the view that I adopted for this study. Cefai and Cooper (2010) do not discuss the ethics of student participation in their consideration of the need for the voices of children with social, behavioural, and emotional difficulties to be heard. They argue, nonetheless, that the learning outcomes for these students would be improved if their perspectives were sought and acted on by teachers and by other school personnel. This is an important consideration for my study.

The use of student voice as a means of improving teaching and learning has been the subject of academic study for at least twenty years. For instance, a study which used student voice to explore the quality of teaching and learning, particularly through an investigation of students’ involvement with learning, was carried out in 1992 by a group from the Center for Research on the Context for Secondary Schooling within the School of Education at Stanford University (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992). These researchers concluded that students’ perspectives on school and learning were similar to those of their teachers, but stressed that teachers were not aware always of the congruence between their views and those of their students which can lead to an overemphasis on teacher-pupil differences and problems. Such a situation can give rise to behavioural issues on the part of students, which in turn impact adversely on the relationships between themselves and their teachers. I argue that in the case of responses to feedback, similarities may mask differences. As a result, teachers who provide feedback which caters for the similarities they have observed within their students’

responses to feedback may not be aware of the differences which exist. I further argue that these differences may have a greater role to play than is realised currently in the decisions made by some students to reject or ignore the feedback they are given. It may be that for such students the lack of a particular aspect could be important enough to outweigh the benefits of accepting the feedback when they consider whether to implement it, or not.

Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (Bishop et al., 2009) report on Te Kotahitanga, a New Zealand project that seeks to improve the educational achievement of indigenous Māori secondary school students. Student voice was incorporated throughout the project, as a means of establishing what students' experiences actually were and what the meanings assigned to them by the students were, rather than imposing the researchers' own "sense-making and theorizing on the experience and explanations of the interview participants" (2009, p. 735). These researchers comment that beginning a project by talking with students is not a usual practice, but that as researchers they found it very useful. Like Phelan et al., Bishop et al. found that teachers can become embroiled sometimes in a version of "deficit theorizing" in which non achievement is linked to poor parenting or deprived backgrounds. This perception can lead to frustrations between teachers and their students, with consequent negative impacts on learning outcomes.

A further application of student voice considerations to the improvement of teaching and learning was outlined by Demetriou and Wilson (2010), in their report on the effects of student voice in addressing the needs of newly qualified teachers. They concluded that, by utilising student voice in their everyday practice, teachers could strengthen their professional identity through the more positive relationships they found they had developed with their students. Like Bishop et al. and Phelan et al., they maintained that student voice has great

potential ultimately to improve teaching and learning. In addition these studies endorsed Cook-Sather's view implicitly that trust, in the sense of building and enhancing positive relationships, lay at the heart of good teacher / student relationships and that awareness of student voice was a very important factor in developing this trust. I feel that both of the issues related to student voice discussed above (the empowerment of students, and the improvement of teaching and learning) were applicable to my current study, although the degree of relevance varied.

The empowerment of students as a consideration was potentially problematic in the current study, because of the planned involvement of students as participants in research carried out in the classroom. For the purposes of this study it was important to hear from each of the students how and why his perceptions and understandings related to his comprehension and interpretation of feedback. Black and Wiliam, in their seminal review of the literature relating to classroom evaluation, acknowledged that there is a need for greater understanding of this area, having identified "the perceptions and beliefs held by the learners about themselves as learners about their own learning work, and about the aims and methods of their studies as one area in which further research is required" (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 59). More recently, additional issues relating to student voice include speaking about others, speaking on behalf of others, and being heard (Bragg, 2007a; Cowie, 2005b; Fielding, 2004; Fielding & Rudduck, 2002; McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). For instance it has been noted that "...the language of the researcher is often used either to redescribe or reshape the language of the researched" (Fielding, 2004, p. 298). I believe that the use of language is even more problematic when it is the views of students which are being reported. The research design needed to take account of this issue, as well as of empowerment and its effects on teaching and learning.

One planned outcome of the study is to contribute usefully to the literature relating to classroom practice, and in that way to help improve teaching and learning. The use of student voice as a means of improving teaching, as discussed above, is therefore important to the study because I plan to draw on student voice as a main source of data. I hope to show that empowering students in the classroom, by hearing their voices, can be very valuable as a means of enhancing the feedback provided for them and that it can lead to increased implementation of it, which in turn should result in improved teaching.

## ***Summary***

In the literature review I have explored topics which are relevant to my study. These have included topics which placed the study in the context of the field, such as formative assessment, feedback, and how these are interpreted for the learner in the classroom. Other topics related more to the participants I worked with, such as student perspectives and student voice. The review of the literature revealed that although there is a significant body of work which explores formative assessment principles and purposes, and the place and impact of feedback within formative assessment, less information is available on the views of the learners involved. This body of work is growing, but there is still little specifically in the area of exploring the perspectives of students relating to feedback rather than to formative assessment per se. In particular, it is noteworthy that the use of students' views to inform teacher practices as distinct from using student views to augment or validate the views of their teachers has received little attention to date.

It should be noted that in this chapter I have presented the results of my exploration of the literature relating to topics which help to orient the reader to the wider context of the field of



study only. For other topics I have adopted the ‘when and as needed approach’ advocated by Wolcott (2009, p 68) which involves exploring relevant topics as they arise in the course of the study. I begin this process in Chapter 3 as I begin to establish a theoretical framework for the study, and continue it in Chapter 4 where I discuss the methodology associated with the study. In addition, the reader will find extensive references to the literature in each of the chapters devoted to presenting and discussing the results of the phenomenographic analysis (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical framework selected for the study. I identify and discuss qualitative understandings and issues, particularly within the interpretive paradigm. The two research methods used in the study, phenomenography and case study, and the reasoning behind my decision to use them for this study are also discussed. I present the concept of academic rigour and discuss how I provided for this in my study.

### ***Qualitative Paradigm***

In this section I present the steps which show how and why I decided to work within the theoretical framework of interpretive research to explore the research problem concerning why some students do not respond to feedback in ways that improve their learning outcomes.

My underlying assumption when considering a theoretical framework for this study was that, while no one form of research is “better” than another per se, some forms of research are better for exploring and understanding a particular problem than are others. Because the problem under investigation related to the use of feedback rather than the incidence of it, qualitative methods were likely to provide particularly valuable insights. My personal beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, as discussed in Chapter 1, led me to formulate the research problem in the way I did. Because those beliefs are essentially constructive in nature, this study can be placed philosophically within a constructivist worldview, because constructivists are oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Constructivism was (and is) important conceptually and theoretically, and as such the study is positioned within the qualitative paradigm of interpretivism. Given that some implications of adopting the constructivist approach include a focus on identifying and constructing meaning, utilising qualitative theories and methodologies is most likely to give insights into the problem because “qualitative research

methods focus on meanings and interpretations. They provide a sophisticated research strategy to understand how, and why, people act in particular ways” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 3). As a first step to selecting an appropriate methodology, a suitable paradigm was identified. A paradigm can be described as

a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field.... some discussions are organized around the idea that there are two paradigms, quantitative and qualitative, but that is an oversimplification that emphasizes data rather than foundational beliefs and assumptions. (Willis, 2007, pp. 91-93)

Willis, in his discussion of the foundations of qualitative research, goes on to identify at least three “world views” or paradigms. These are Postpositivism, Critical Theory, and Interpretivism. In his examination of two of these paradigms, Critical Theory and Interpretivism, Willis views the analysis of data through the lens of an ideology as a major focus of critical theory, and relates interpretivism to two main ideas: that the experience of the senses is not always the best way to know something, and that the reality we perceive is conditioned always by our experiences and by our culture (Willis, 2007, pp. 44 - 54).

Cresswell made a similar point when he stated that “...often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interactions with others” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Because the problem being explored in this study is contextualised heavily within a classroom, and because the study seeks to understand the views of students in relation to feedback and therefore involved social interactions, my preferred theoretical alignment is to interpretive research. An additional benefit of this approach is that it does not exclude the use of quantitative data, because

interpretivists don't always abandon standards such as the rules of the scientific method; they simply accept that whatever standards are used are subjective ... Interpretivists accept almost all the types of quantitative methods that positivists use, but they differ in how they interpret the results of quantitative research. (Willis, 2007, pp. 109 - 110)

One criticism of interpretive research is that it can be only descriptive rather than explanatory. I felt that description alone would not provide the sorts of insights into the research problem that I was seeking. However Willis, in his discussion of different forms of case studies, identified the difference between descriptive studies and interpretive studies as follows:

Interpretive studies gather and analyse thick data sources, just as descriptive studies do. Interpretive studies go further, however... The focus is on understanding the intricacies of a particular situation, setting, organizations, culture or individual, but that local understanding may be related to prevailing theories or models. (Willis, 2007, p. 243)

I felt that this concept was well suited to the requirements of my study, and that it was feasible to carry out because of the length of time planned for data gathering and subsequent interpretation. I sought to allocate a period of one school year to gathering the data, because I wanted to track evidence of longer term responses to the phenomenon rather than to capture a "snap shot" of views at a particular moment. I could have spent another two years working with the data if necessary, which I felt would allow the sort of in-depth interpretation that is associated normally with this research approach. Qualitative research methodology is evolving constantly (Creswell, 2007; Willis, 2007), and the next step therefore was to identify a suitable research approach within the interpretive paradigm.

Within the broad field of interpretive research, there is good reason to conclude that some methodologies are better suited to an examination of an individual's perception of a phenomenon (in this case, feedback) than are others. While reading about qualitative research approaches I found references to a research approach, phenomenography, which seemed to indicate that this research approach could be well suited to the study (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998, 2000; Hasselgren & Beach, 1997; Stamouli & Huggard, 2007; Trigwell & Prosser, 1997) because "it is a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (Marton, 1986, p. 31). I considered this was a useful approach because the aim of the study was to explore the range of responses of students to feedback rather than the incidence of their reception of it, in order to identify reasons for their use or non-use of it. These reasons (for use or non-use of feedback) were more likely to be revealed through micro-investigation of a limited number of cases rather than through an investigation of the incidence of the phenomenon.

In fact, when investigating the ways in which individuals interact with a particular phenomenon, a study of the incidence of it in the general population may miss relevant information. A good example of this would be the discovery of the link between lung cancer and smoking. As Doll (2000, p. 2) has explained, initially the team of Richard Doll and Bradford Hill considered that "... [the] idea that tobacco was the cause [of the increase in lung cancer] was not very attractive because the increase in the average consumption per person had been quite small". Doll kept a written tabulation of the smoking habits of the participants for his own interest, which soon made it clear that the principal difference between patients with and without lung cancer was their smoking habits. The fact that the initial diagnosis of

lung cancer was wrong for large numbers of patients led to the researchers being able to show that when the suspect diagnosis was disproved (i.e., there was no lung cancer), the patients' smoking habits were similar to the controls and significantly different only when the diagnosis of lung cancer was confirmed. If Doll and Hill had ignored the possibility of smoking habits being connected with the increase in lung cancer because the increase in consumption of tobacco of patients with lung cancer was statistically insignificant, they would have missed the crucial link. The lesson to be learned from this example is that researchers must keep an open mind as to the possible worth of a particular approach or idea. As one researcher has observed, "anomalies can be extremely important in science. If you know which anomaly to pick, you can completely change the direction of your research..." (Ramachandran, 2003, p. 1). Such arguments were most persuasive in my decision to select qualitative research approaches for this study.

### ***Phenomenography as a research method***

My reasons for selecting phenomenography as a basic approach for this study included its emphasis on the response of the participants to a phenomenon rather than focussing on the phenomenon itself (Ornek, 2008). Phenomenography allows us to

... say something about how student learning takes place by looking at the interaction between student conceptions of learning, student learning styles, learning approaches, strategies, the object of study (learning outcome in the subject) and the way it is being taught and assessed. (Wisker, 2001, p. 161)

Thus, phenomenography encompassed most aspects of the research questions and allowed in-depth exploration of the problem I was investigating. Because phenomenography is a relatively recently developed research approach and because readers may not be familiar with

it, in this section of this chapter I outline and discuss the approach in some detail and show how I applied it to my study. I discuss some aspects of the approach, particularly the process of analysing data, in more detail in Chapter 4.

Phenomenography grew out of some observations about learning which occurred in Sweden in the 1970s. The observations related to differences between the responses of students to similar materials, and led to an interest in investigating the varying ways in which students understood or experienced a particular phenomenon. Phenomenography was developed in the 1980s as a means of exploring these possible variations by describing them (Marton & Booth, 1997). An aspect of phenomenography which can be confusing is the particular meaning associated with the word “conception”. A concept is “...an abstract or general idea” (Collins English Dictionary, 2008, p. 156) whereas a conception is, more specifically, “a notion, idea or plan” (Collins English Dictionary, 2008, p. 156). The distinction between them can be expressed in relation to the concept of education. Rational people may agree on the broad contours of a concept of education, but may still reasonably expect to disagree about the precise substance and particular demands of education – that is, a group of individuals may hold a similar concept of education but may each hold a favoured conception of what education is. Further, it is possible to hold different concepts of education itself, so that there may be deeper disagreements about concepts as well as divergent conceptions amongst a group of people.

The philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of phenomenography have been developed and studied extensively since then (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998; Marton & Pong, 2005b; Ornek, 2008; Pang, 2003; Richardson, 1999; Sandbergh, 1997; Svensson, 1997). As a result of this interest in the approach there have been developments in the use of some of the terms

associated with it, and the word conception is one of these. Early articles and studies that focussed on phenomenography referred to “ways of experiencing” in preference to “conceptions”. Indeed, Marton was unequivocal at that time in his rejection of this terminology because:

describing experience and ways of experiencing is entirely different from describing mental representations, short- or long-term memory, retrieval processes and the rest of the apparatus of the cognitivists. According to that, thoughts and conceptions are things that go on or are located in one’s head, things that are hidden or inferred.

(Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 113)

However in later work, Marton has clearly refined his thinking on this point when he states that “phenomenographic research aims to investigate the qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon ...these ‘different ways of understanding’, or conceptions ...” (Marton & Pong, 2005a, p. 335). Later in this article he was even more specific:

A ‘conception’, the basic unit of description in phenomenographic research, has been called various names, such as ‘ways of conceptualizing’, ‘ways of experiencing’, ‘ways of seeing’, ‘ways of apprehending’, ‘ways of understanding’, and so on... The reason for using so many different synonyms is that although none of them correspond completely to what we have in mind, they all do to a certain extent” (p. 336).

One reason for the use of so many synonyms is that phenomenography, as noted above, was developed in Sweden by a group of Swedish academics, and many of the early works were written in Swedish or in English by authors with English as a second language. This situation has given rise to an issue relating to the use of the English words ‘conception’ and



‘experience’ as a translation of the Swedish expression ‘uppfattning’. Saljö (1997) has stated that English does not have a word which corresponds to uppfattning, although the word conception does come quite close. He noted that uppfattning does not have the connotations of personal experience in the same sense as does the word experience, but that the former does signal personal preferences and values which are also problematic when communicating the phenomenographic position (p. 186). This difficulty with translation can lead to some confusion on the part of English-speaking readers, because some terms do not carry their more usual English meaning when used in relation to phenomenography.

Currently these and other terms can be found in articles reporting phenomenographic studies (See, for instance, Akerlind, 2005d; Andretta, 2007; Hallett, 2010; Hella & Wright, 2009; Marton & Pong, 2005; Stefani & Tsapalis, 2009; Trigwell, Prosser, & Ginns, 2005), possibly as a means of making the approach – and therefore the studies – more accessible to readers. As noted earlier, in this report I have opted to use the phenomenographic terms “category of description” and “structural aspects” rather than the alternative terms “conceptions” and “dimensions of variation” in order to avoid the issues surrounding the less satisfactory translation of “uppfattning” as “conception”.

The word “phenomenography” first appeared in print in 1981. Etymologically it is a compound of two roots, “phenomenon” and “graph”. Both are derived from Greek verbs, which mean respectively “to bring to light that which can be made apparent” and “to describe in words an aspect or experience of reality”. Therefore, phenomenography relates to the act of representing an object of study as a set of qualitatively different phenomena (Marton & Booth, 1997). Perhaps the most famous and most frequently quoted definition of phenomenography appeared in 1986: “Phenomenography is a research method for mapping

the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them” (Marton, 1986, p. 31). Marton’s definition also encapsulates the aim of phenomenographic research, which is to describe the variation in ways in which people experience phenomena in their world – in my case, their reception and subsequent use of feedback. The phenomenographic category of description<sup>1</sup> was developed as the primary means of describing the qualitatively different ways in which people experience phenomena in their world. Each category of description is made up of two parts: the referential (or meaning) aspect, and one or more structural aspects. The referential aspect denotes how the category is differentiated from the wider background (in my case, from feedback as a global concept) – it shows what is “meant” by the aspect. The structural aspects of each referential aspect denote the parts of the referential aspect – how it is made up. Each structural aspect is described, to show how these aspects relate to each other and to the referential aspect of the category. Marton and Booth (1997, pp. 86-87) use an extended metaphor of a deer in the woods to illustrate the relationship between the referential and structural aspects of the experience which is drawn on to form the category of description. They pose the question, “What does it take to see a motionless deer amongst the dark trees and bushes of the night woods?” They go on to state that by identifying the animal as a deer, we have already assigned it a meaning – for instance, it is an animal, not a car or a truck. But, in order to identify it as a deer, we also have to identify elements of its structure such as its head, antlers, legs, and so on. Thus the referential aspects (or meaning) and the structural aspects of the animal are intertwined – they cannot be separated. However the structural aspects which contribute to our understanding of the animal as a deer may be broadly similar to the structural aspects of another large quadruped such as a bull. In order to identify the animal positively as a deer we must rely on very small differences in structure,

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<sup>1</sup> “Categories of description are formed from an analysis of data abstracted from interview transcripts ...common meanings are presented as categories that may then be compared and grouped as an expression of meaning” (Barnard, McCosker, & Gerber, 1999, p. 219).

such as the length of the legs or width of the forequarter, or perhaps the shape of the horns. These differences may be small but they have great significance. In the same way, the structural aspects of a category of description in a phenomenographic analysis may be closely related to others and may overlap to an extent, but the differences themselves are still significant. Once identified, the categories of description, or network of these ways of experiencing phenomena, are then arranged logically – and often hierarchically – to form the phenomenographic outcome space<sup>2</sup> (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Phenomenography is distinct from psychology and phenomenology. It is not an empirical branch of psychology, in which different classes of acts such as remembering, learning, solving problems, and so on make up both the system of classification and the object of study. In psychology what is learned or remembered is subordinate to this system of classification. In phenomenography the reverse is true, because what is experienced and how it is experienced are the focus of phenomenographic studies. The particular psychological function in which the experience is embedded is of secondary interest (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 114). Phenomenography is also distinct from phenomenology – although both have the exploration of experience as the object of research – because phenomenology is associated with a distinct set of methods and theories. Unlike phenomenology, phenomenography is not derived from a system of philosophical assumptions (Svensson, 1997). Phenomenography has some shared characteristics with phenomenology, such as a focus on ways of experiencing, seeing, and knowing about different phenomena. The aim of phenomenography differs from that of phenomenology however in that phenomenographic researchers do not set out to discover the singular essence of a phenomenon; rather, they want to find the variation in terms of the different aspects that define the phenomena. This means

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<sup>2</sup> A set of hierarchically organised categories of description relating to a group of participants and to a particular phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

that phenomenography and phenomenology differ as to purpose. “Phenomenology aims to capture the ... fullness of all the ways in which a person experiences and describes the phenomenon of interest” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117), whereas the phenomenographer is concerned more with deriving relatively sparse conceptions and the logical hierarchy of the outcome space analytically. Although both approaches share a common object of research (aiming to reveal the nature of human experience and awareness) and some strategies (such as bracketing)<sup>3</sup>, the underlying differences in aim and purpose mean that they are no more than cousins-by-marriage to each other (Marton & Booth, 1997). When I read about the work that had been undertaken using phenomenography I felt that this was a better approach than phenomenology for my purposes. I found that phenomenography is strongly associated with learning in educational contexts, although the approach is evident also in other branches of the social sciences more recently (Barnard et al., 1999; Hallett, 2010; Trigwell & Prosser, 1997; Trigwell et al., 2005). This observation also made the approach an attractive option for my study, because I was investigating a problem within a social context.

The categories of description which are generated through phenomenographic analysis can never be claimed to form an exhaustive system, because they are derived always from a small number of people chosen from a particular population. Marton and Booth (1997) have stated, however, that they should be complete in the sense that nothing in the collective experience of the selected population should be left unspoken. They then identified the criteria required for ensuring quality in a set of descriptive categories:

The first criterion that can be stated is that the individual categories should each stand in clear relation to the phenomenon of the investigation so that each category tells us something distinct about a particular way of experiencing the phenomenon. The

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<sup>3</sup> Bracketing is a term borrowed from phenomenology to describe the researcher’s suspension of judgment (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 119).

second is that the categories have to stand in a logical relationship with one another, a relationship that is frequently hierarchical. Finally, the third criterion is that the system should be parsimonious, which is to say that as few categories should be explicated as is feasible and reasonable, for capturing the critical variation in the data.” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 125)

However, once I had decided to use phenomenography as my main research approach I had to decide which branch of phenomenography I would follow, because phenomenography today is understood to have at least two branches. The form of phenomenography which was developed originally by researchers such as Marton is now known as “pure” phenomenography. It has as its aim the identification of the outcome space, or set of hierarchically organised categories of description relating to a group of participants and a particular phenomenon. Ascertaining and analysing these categories is the aim of pure phenomenographic research. While “developmental” phenomenography as espoused by Bowden (Bowden, 2000; Bowden & Green, 2005) also seeks to find out and describe how people experience some aspect of their world, it aims to enable them (or others) to then change the way their world operates. The research findings are not the objective per se. The principal reason behind the research is to use the findings to change the world in some way. I wanted to carry out research that could be useful to classroom teachers, and so I decided to follow developmental phenomenography.

Although phenomenography was criticised early in its development for lacking specificity and explicitness in relation to both the data collection methods and analysis and the conceptual underpinnings of these methods, a body of literature addressing these issues in particular has been developed over the years (Marton & Pong, 2005a; Richardson, 1999).

When I was developing the design for the current study I also found phenomenographic data gathering and analysis problematic, because at first it was difficult to establish with any certainty how to go about gathering data in appropriate ways and what steps should be taken during the analysis phase of the study. However, once I began to gather data for the study I found that the body of literature available to me, particularly the writings of Bowden and his team in Melbourne, gave me sufficient guidance to carry out a successful phenomenographic study. This seemed to me to be in line with the constructivist principles which underlie my study – I had to learn through experience in an authentic context, which was an appropriate echo of the situation I was studying. Within the last decade the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenography have been explored comprehensively, and many of the early criticisms have been mitigated as a result (Marton & Pong, 2005; Stamouli & Huggard, 2007). Phenomenography is now well established as a research approach, especially through its later manifestation as Variation Theory (Akerlind, 2005d; Dahlin, 2007).

Phenomenographers, as they seek to describe the differing ways of experiencing a phenomenon, can only partially constitute the phenomenon itself because they are limited to considering the reports offered by the participants. These reports are in themselves related only to the facets of the phenomenon expressed by each participant. In developing their descriptions phenomenographers must put words to the meanings they find in the reports provided by the participants (Marton & Booth, 1997). In his criticism of phenomenography Webb (1997) has discussed the problem of the ability or inability of a researcher to remain neutral or to bracket his or her own understanding successfully. He argued that phenomenographers will tend to report a particular discipline or area of study both as they understand it themselves and as they reconstruct it through the people they interview. Webb

also discussed what he called the “deep/surface” metaphor for learning and argued that phenomenographers, through establishing the hierarchy of the outcome space, routinely promote whatever is regarded currently as “true” or “good” as being deep learning. The result in his view is that whatever is identified as surface learning is placed lower in the hierarchy, and is therefore despised or viewed as being less worthy. In particular, Webb seemed concerned that these combined orientations have led to constrained views of what is “good teaching” and “good learning”. These concerns were addressed in responses from Entwistle and Ekeblad. Ekeblad (1997, p. 220) has argued, for instance, that “...Webb actually does much the same thing as he accuses phenomenographers of doing in relation to their objects of research. That is, he treats phenomenography as an entity pre-existing his investigation”. Entwistle, in his reply to Webb, stated that

Webb’s argument links the deep/surface metaphor altogether too closely to phenomenography. The deep/surface dichotomy, in fact, is atypical of most of the categorisations derived from phenomenography ... most outcome space[s] contain several categories describing students’ conceptions of subject matter: approaches to learning have just two, and they describe intentions and actions. (1997, p. 214)

As I carried out my study I understood more about the concerns that were raised by Webb, but I also found that the arguments put forward by Entwistle and Ekeblad were persuasive and that, together with the detailed description of phenomenographic methods provided by Akerlind (2005c, 2005d) and Bowden (2000, 2005a), they have answered Webb’s main concerns adequately.

Another criticism of phenomenography is that it loses the voice of the individual through categorisation (Bowden, 2000). It is true of course that phenomenography, in its search for the qualitatively different ways in which participants respond to a phenomenon, seeks to

establish a collective rather than an individual view although the first stages of analysis will often present the views of individuals (Akerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005). This first level of analysis is not considered sufficient to allow a valid outcome space to be constructed, however, because phenomenography aims to develop an understanding of the variation in experience related to a particular phenomenon. To do this “a shift from individual awareness that varies as to focus and simultaneous awareness of aspects of a phenomenon to a collective awareness in which all such variation can be spied” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 109) is required. Phenomenographers therefore consider that it is essential for a collective view to be developed from the data, and that analysis should continue until this has been established (Akerlind, 2005a). Once this aspect of phenomenography is understood, Akerlind (2005b) has contended that criticism of phenomenography for not including the voice of the individual reflects a lack of awareness of the purpose of the research approach. Because I want to include student voice in my study as an important aspect of investigating my research questions I did take note of this criticism and I amended my study design to include case studies as a means of ensuring that at least the voices of some of my participants could be heard.

### ***Case Study as a research method***

As noted above, one aspect of the present study that was not well served by phenomenography was the issue of utilising student voice. As discussed earlier, student voice can be understood both as a means of empowering students and of improving teaching and learning. These issues are of considerable importance to me, as explained in the discussion of my personal background in Chapter 1. For this reason, I sought another research approach which would allow the voices of the students themselves to be heard.



I began by considering the issues of speaking for others and of being heard. Many research reports, almost by definition, speak about others and this situation can give rise to ‘shaping persons as research objects’ (Fielding, 2004, p. 296). Alcoff (1991/1992) has argued that, although there are many instances when speaking for others has the effect of disempowering or further oppressing those spoken for, there are also situations when speaking for others can be beneficial:

It is not always the case that when others unlike me speak for me I have ended up worse off, or that when we speak for others they end up worse off. Sometimes, as

Loyce Stewart has argued, we do need a “messenger” (p. 29). (Emphasis in original)

An issue related to the problem of speaking for or about others is that of being heard (Alcoff, 1991/1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Fielding, 2004; Fielding & Rudduck, 2002) Alcoff commented that “how what is said gets heard depends on who says it, and who says it will affect the style and language in which it is stated, which will in turn affect its perceived significance (for specific hearers)” (Alcoff, 1991/1992, p. 13). Fielding agrees with this when he notes that, very often, “who is speaking makes a considerable difference to whether they are taken seriously or not” (2004, p. 300). In this context, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is pivotal to the voice of the participant being heard. In order for student voice to be heard in a wider context the young participant must first believe that the researcher has a genuine intention to publish his or her authentic voice. Only if this condition is satisfied can the researcher feel assured that authentic data are being gathered (Grover, 2004). Having considered the issues related to accessing and reporting student voice, I turned my attention to the best means of gathering data and then to the issue of how best to report the results. In this developing field some research approaches seem better suited to accessing student voice than are others. These include Ethnography, Participatory Action Research, Narrative Enquiry, and Case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In ethnographic research, voice may be accessed through prolonged engagement with the participants' practices as well as with the collection and analysis of a range of types of data (Paxton, 2012). For Paxton, this included a focus on written texts because she was interested in exploring academic literacies. However, most studies that utilize student voice as an area of research tend to rely on gathering data through interviews (Flutter, 2006; Mitsoni, 2006; Reay, 2006), through including students in consultation (Bragg, 2007a, 2007b; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000), or through analysing stories and narratives produced by students (Bishop et al., 2009; Macbeath, 2006). My preferred option for gathering data for the purpose of presenting student voice was to use semi-structured individual interviews, supplemented with limited field observations and consideration of some written texts generated within the classroom. The main source of data relating to student voice was the series of interviews I carried out with each participant.

I next considered which research approach to use when focussing on presenting student voice in this report. I gave careful consideration to Participatory Action Research (PAR) for this purpose, because the active involvement of the participants seemed to me to be crucial if I was to access the information that would allow me to explore the problem of what makes feedback work for students. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 387) put it, PAR "...is built upon the notion that knowledge generation is a collaborative process in which each participant's diverse experience and skills are critical to the outcome of the work". However, Denzin and Lincoln then go on to comment that "the question of who owns and controls that knowledge are also central concerns in PAR" (p.395). They conclude that PAR is clearly aimed at the involvement of communities in researching and providing solutions to their own

issues. This orientation did not seem to me to fit well with what I was intending to do with my participants in the current study.

I also considered utilising a narrative research perspective for the purpose of presenting the voices of my participants, but decided against it eventually because at least one researcher has maintained that “in the end, the narrative combines views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life into a narrative chronology” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). This focus seemed unlikely to add insight into the research question, which has the responses of the participants as the main focus. Instead, I decided to incorporate case studies into my argument because in so doing “the researcher explores in depth ... one or more individuals. The cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). This approach seemed more likely to help me answer my research question, while allowing individual voices to be heard. A bonus of using this method was that in many respects the data collection process overlapped with what was planned already for the phenomenographic aspect of the study.

In comparison with phenomenography, case study research is well established within the Qualitative / Interpretive paradigm although, as Simons points out, it “has different meanings for different people and in different disciplines” (2009, p. 19). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) discuss case study as not so much a methodological choice as a choice of what is to be studied. They give what they call a “commonsense definition”, whereby case study is seen to involve “...an intensive analysis of an individual unit...stressing developmental factors in relation to environment” (p. 301). They contrast this to an earlier but still common definition, that asserts that case study involves

the detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena. A case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases (p. 301).

Denzin and Lincoln consider that “...the many academic attempts to clarify what ‘case study’ means has resulted in a definitional morass, and each time someone tries to clear up the mess ... it just gets worse” (2011, p. 302). They conclude that it is better to stay with the more commonsense definition given above, than to adhere to more loaded academic definitions such as the one given second.

Possibly as a consequence of the differing definitions available the literature describes a range of types of case study, as well as differences in the terms used to indicate the general method (see, for instance, Creswell, 2003; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994). The case study method has been applied very widely to educational research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Keeves, 1997; Simons, 2009; Wisker, 2001). Case study research involves fieldwork, in which a researcher observes participants in their own natural settings (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). It “[does not] seek to find universals ... [it] seek[s] instead a full, rich understanding of the context they are studying” (Willis, 2007, p. 240). As an approach it is also well suited to bringing voice to the fore, both the voice of the researcher and that of the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). My study seemed well suited to this form of research because it was carried out in a classroom setting, and because the length of time I allocated to data gathering allowed me to collect sufficient data to provide thick description of each of the cases. Importantly for me, I could see that utilising parts of the interview transcripts from two of my participants would

allow me to include their voices which would add to my presentation of their experience as individuals rather than adopting the collective view I hoped to reveal through the phenomenographic analysis.

I agree with Willis (2007) when he stated that the advantages of the approach include allowing the researcher to gather rich, detailed, data in an authentic setting, that it is holistic and therefore fits well with the idea that much of what we can know is best understood as lived experience, and that it can be done without predetermined hypotheses and goals. As Willis goes on to emphasise, “...all these advantages are pluses only if you accept a different purpose for research than the predict and control goals of postpositivism”. There is an implication here that case study research can be criticised from a postpositivist perspective for lacking generalisability, for not being open to cross-checking, and for being prone to problems of observer bias (Cohen et al., 2000). Although these issues, of course, are not unique to case study research all of them can be addressed by attending to the rigour of the study, as I discuss next in this chapter.

### ***Rigour of the research design in qualitative studies***

In this section I discuss the concept of academic rigour as it is understood in qualitative studies and show how I applied it in my study, both in the design of the study and in the implementation of it.

Researchers who work within the interpretive paradigm, who look for understanding of a particular context rather than for universals, use terms such as believability (Willis, 2007), trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility (Creswell, 2003), and rigour (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) to establish the worth of the study. These descriptors replace terms used in quantitative

studies. For example, in quantitative studies the term “reliability” refers to the extent to which similar results would be obtained if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context (Cohen et al., 2000). Because qualitative studies are carried out in the natural setting rather than in a laboratory setting they are very difficult to replicate (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Consequently the term “reliability” has little meaning for such studies.

Liamputtong and Ezzy’s (2005, p. 32) statement that “...the ultimate test of a study’s worth is that the findings ring true to people and let them see things in new ways” is accepted widely among qualitative researchers. Liamputtong and Ezzy proceed to discuss the concept of theoretical rigour, and argue that a study has theoretical rigour if “...the theory and concepts are appropriately chosen so that the research strategy is consistent with the goals.... it ensures that a study integrates the research problem with the method it utilises and the concepts it employs” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 38). As can be seen from the discussion earlier in this chapter, my decisions regarding a suitable theoretical framework and methodology were based on this concept of integrating the problem, methods, and concepts.

There are well-established ways of developing rigour in qualitative studies, although not all will apply to every research approach. Cresswell (2003, p. 196) gave a list of strategies which can be used to check the accuracy of findings in qualitative studies. I found that some of these were more applicable than were others to my study, which has its own requirements imposed by the research approaches selected. For example, Cresswell listed member-checking as a means of determining the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions back to the participants in order to determine whether they feel that the data have been represented accurately. However, member-checking is not a viable option in phenomenographic data analysis because “... it would not make much sense to ask an

individual interviewee whether one or more categories fit their perspective since the categories were derived from a range of transcripts and not just their own” (Bowden, 2005, p. 30). Similarly, Cresswell included triangulation of different data sources of information as one of the more important and easier to implement of the strategies he was discussing. On the one hand triangulation of data for the phenomenographic analysis was not possible because the phenomenographic interview was the primary source of data. On the other hand for the case studies I drew on a variety of data sources such as interviews with the classroom teacher, school records, and work samples as well as on the interview transcripts, which made triangulation of this part of the study a viable option.

The case study approach is also suited to the use of thick, rich, description which is another of Cresswell’s strategies. I applied some of the other strategies to both aspects of the study (i.e., the phenomenographic analysis and the case studies). The strategies I used in this way included clarifying the bias and assumptions I brought to the study, spending prolonged time in the field, and presenting negative or discrepant information. I did not employ Cresswell’s two final strategies, peer-debriefing and using an external auditor, during the writing of the study. Nonetheless, because this research has gone through the processes of supervision and examination as required by The University of Canterbury for a PhD, my supervisors and examiners have in part fulfilled these roles.

Rigour is established in phenomenography in several ways. The interview questions, both pre-selected and those arising during the interview itself, must be open ended so that participants are free to choose the aspects they wish to answer. Given that bracketing (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998b) is essential, any interviews where the interviewer fails to do this are discarded. Bracketing is often seen as being of primary importance during phenomenographic data analysis, but it is essential at all stages of the phenomenographic

process (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998b). First, it must be adhered to during the development of questions for the interviews. For instance, a pair of questions such as “What are the advantages of feedback?” and “Are there any disadvantages?” would not bracket the researcher’s own attitudes sufficiently because there is an implication that whereas there are advantages to feedback, there may not be any disadvantages. A better option might be to ask “Has your class had any feedback that did or did not work for you?” Bracketing is also crucial during the actual interview, where the researcher must not influence the course of the interview beyond presenting the original questions, except by following up new material introduced by the participant (P. Green, 2005). This strategy can lead to a perception that phenomenographic interviewing is somehow bland and cold, but this is not so. It is most unlikely that such an interview would elicit the full range of the participant’s attitudes and understandings of the phenomenon, because there would be no “give and take”. What has to be avoided more is the introduction of the researcher’s own attitudes by the researcher. In other interviewing situations the introduction of the researcher’s own opinions can be used sometimes as a means of eliciting further information from the interviewee, but in phenomenography this would be enough to invalidate the remainder of the transcript (Akerlind, 2005c). This was a problem potentially for me in my study because I would be working with children aged between eleven and thirteen years of age. In the event it was sometimes necessary for me to rephrase a participant’s response and reflect back to him my interpretation of what was said. Often the participant’s actual response would be a series such as “yeah”, “That’s right”, or (occasionally) “No”. This is shown in the following excerpt from the second interview with Awesome, a participant who had English as a second language:

R:               Right. Talk about it to ...?

Awesome:      Teachers.



R: To the teachers. So you really like talking to your teachers?

Awesome: Not really.

R: But ... if you're going to get feedback to work for you, rather than write it?

Awesome: Yeah.

R: Yeah. And what ... why is that, do you know? Can you tell me?

Awesome: Um ... because it's easier.

R: Easier to talk to somebody?

Awesome: Yeah.

R: Than to read?

Awesome: Yeah.

R: What makes it hard to read it?

Awesome: I don't read (laughs).

R: You don't read?

Awesome: So ... not read so much. (Aw2.003 – Aw2.018)<sup>4</sup>

So, for me, the issue of whether or not I introduced myself too far into the interview came back to the purpose of the interview – the researcher is there to elicit the participant's responses, with as far as possible nothing being left unsaid. Obviously, perfect bracketing is impossible – body language, for instance, may be influencing the interview – but it has to be an aim. In the event I did not discard any interviews because, after a discussion of the transcripts with a colleague who is also using phenomenography in her study, we agreed that I had not introduced any extra ideas or material during the interviews. My research assistant,

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<sup>4</sup> The citation is in the format used for labelling the interview transcripts: Aw indicates that the participant is Awesome; 2 indicates it is the second interview; 003 – 018 indicate that the excerpt is from the third utterance to the eighteenth. Utterances are labelled rather than lines, so each speaker generates a new number.

who read the transcripts and listened to the original tapes, also agreed that I had not done more than elaborate or reflect back the participants' views to them.

Researchers are agreed that claims made on the basis of a phenomenographic study should be limited to the data gathered for that study, although possible implications for a wider context can be discussed. I have adhered to this principle.

## *Summary*

In this chapter I have presented the reasoning behind my selection of a qualitative and interpretive theoretical framework for my study, and have given an overview of the research approaches (phenomenography and case study) which I used to carry out the study. I also discussed academic rigour, particularly in relation to phenomenography, and showed how I built this component into my study. In the next chapter I present my research design and discuss some key implementation topics. These include the setting of the study in which I describe the school, teacher, and the student participants; the means by which I both gained access to the school and developed rapport with the teacher and her students; and a range of ethical issues such as my role as a researcher in a classroom and working with child participants.

## **Chapter 4: Research Design**

In this chapter I intend to show how the influences, theories, and methods I have discussed previously were applied to this study. To do this I shall first give an overview of the study design, explaining the steps I took and the decisions I made. Following this I shall discuss several key topics which were, or became, relevant during the implementation of the study.

### ***Outline of the study***

#### **The problem and the research questions**

The study was a small-scale one in which I explored the views of seven participants over a period of one school year through a series of interviews with each participant, supplemented by regular and frequent observations of the classroom. The timeframe allowed each child's views to be explored and possible changes over time to be identified.

As discussed more fully in Chapter 1 the problem lies in the area of formative assessment, particularly with feedback. We now know a great deal about giving effective feedback to children, and many teachers are very skilled at applying this knowledge. These teachers understand that children need to know how they are doing in relation to a desired standard, and what they still have to do to achieve that standard. Children also need to be given some strategy to bridge the gap between their current standard and the desired level. Until they have engaged in some action to bridge this gap the feedback given by the teacher will not have been implemented successfully, provided of course that the feedback given was suitable for leading to the desired outcomes which is not always the case. It is in this area that the problem investigated in this study lies because some children do not engage in appropriate action as a response to feedback, even when it is insightful and worthwhile. I was interested to see if there was something in their response to feedback that would explain this situation.

To facilitate an in-depth study I chose to focus on a group of seven learners over a period of one school year. In this study I therefore examined closely a small number of individuals over a period of time, in order to explore the ways in which individuals understand and respond to feedback, and, consequently, to determine whether they make effective or ineffective use of it. Not surprisingly, then, my study is titled “What makes feedback work for primary school students?”

Once the problem was identified, the questions which would guide the study were selected. In order to explore “what makes feedback work for primary school students” I developed the following broad research question for my study: *What influences the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary school students?* Consistent with my philosophical stance outlined in Chapter 1, I structured the question in this manner, putting the students at the centre of the investigation because I believe that only they – as the agents of acceptance or non acceptance of the feedback offered to them by their classroom teacher – would be able to explain what was at work in the feedback process. I understand “reception” to be an active process in which the children accept or reject consciously and therefore respond to the feedback they were given (by choosing to change or not to change something), rather than it being a passive process, in which they saw the feedback but did not act on it. I also felt that children’s understanding of feedback, in the sense of comprehending its meaning and intended use, might be a factor in their acceptance or non acceptance of it. To further distinguish the various components of the question I developed the following three sub-questions from the lines of inquiry which emerged from the data (see page 3):

Why is feedback important?

What makes feedback helpful or not .helpful for individuals?

What factors affect individual responses to feedback?

In order to explore these questions I decided to use phenomenography and case study approaches to research (as described in Chapter 3).

### **Brief overview of the study procedures and timeline**

The study was designed in 2009 and carried out in stages during 2009 and 2010. The first stage was to obtain ethical and academic approval from The University of Canterbury. Once this had been achieved I was able to gain access to a school and a teacher in it who was interested in facilitating my study. I met with the teacher towards the end of the 2009 school year and the beginning of the 2010 school year to begin the process of establishing rapport and to explain the purpose of the study and the processes involved. I began observations in the classroom early in the first term of 2010, taking care to develop a good rapport with my prospective participants. At that time I sought informed consent from all class members and their parents or caregivers, and obtained it for all but four of them. The class teacher and I compiled a list of code names, and each class member, including the teacher, drew one from a hat. I administered a survey to all class members on 10 March 2010, with the intention of using it to identify links to my earlier study (Williams, 2001). I then selected the small group of nine Year 8 boys in the class to be the population for the next stage of the study. All but one of the boys agreed to take part in the research. At this point the participants were offered the option of changing the code name they had drawn to one of their own choosing as a way of involving them further in the study, and two of the boys elected to do this. I continued regular observations in the classroom, focussing my attention on the small group rather than on the whole class. I interviewed the boys in May, August, and November 2010. During the break between the third and fourth terms of the 2010 school year I obtained samples from the work they had carried out during the year. Throughout 2010 the class teacher provided me

with copies of the records she had compiled for each of the boys, including their end of year reports. Finally, I interviewed the class teacher near the end of 2010 in order to gain information about each of the participants that would add to the picture I had developed through my own observations and interviews.

## ***Gaining access***

The intermediate school in which this study was conducted is situated in one of the main cities in New Zealand. It has been assigned the codename Rangatahi Intermediate School<sup>5</sup>. As stated in the discussion of my background within Chapter 1, I have been involved in education for most of my adult life, primarily in two New Zealand cities. In my role as a teacher-educator I met principals of local schools frequently, including one from a local intermediate school. After I had begun the preparation for this research project we met on successive days for different aspects of my responsibilities at the time. On the first day he enquired what I was up to, expressed great interest in my proposed study, and asked eagerly whether or not I had selected a school. When told that as yet I had not approached a school, this principal offered his school for the project. When we met the next day, he told me that he had discussed the project with one of his staff and that she was keen for her class to take part. This was not the end of the process of gaining access, however – because I still required approval from the Board of Trustees as well as the informed consent of the principal, the teacher, and the class members – but the matter of gaining access to a suitable school and the co-operation of a teacher was resolved for me almost before it had become an issue.

The selection of Rangatahi was a form of convenience sampling, which is seldom considered to be the most desirable form of sampling because it is unlikely to elicit a broad range of

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<sup>5</sup> “Rangatahi” is a Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) word meaning “Youth” or “Young People”, and is applied often to children in the 12 – 16 year old age group.

experience among the participants, and because the nature of the sample limits its representativeness (Mertens, 2010; K. F. Punch, 2009). Access to a school can be quite difficult to arrange, though, and therefore convenience sampling is common in educational research (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). However, in my case, I accepted the principal's offer only because his school happened to cater for the age group in which I was interested, which is the 12 -13 year old age group found usually in Year 8 of the New Zealand education system. Using this form of convenience sampling had the advantages of reducing barriers to access and consent, and facilitating the inclusion of an identifiable sub-group within the class.

## ***The setting***

### **The School**

In 2010, when the data for the study were gathered, Rangatahi had a roll of over 700 students, arranged into 24 classes with approximately 30 students in each. Twenty four of the students in the school were international students, paying full fees. Many of the classes included both Year 7 and Year 8 children, and these boys and girls remained with the same Home Room<sup>6</sup> teacher for two years typically. Some classes were adjusted at the end of the year to allow for fluctuations in the roll or to provide a better match between teacher and pupil, but these changes were kept to a minimum. Approximately 90 of the highest achieving pupils in the school were grouped into three so-called accelerate classes<sup>7</sup>, and there were also two inquiry-based classes<sup>8</sup> and one immersion<sup>9</sup> class. A further bilingual class<sup>10</sup> had just been started for

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<sup>6</sup> A "Home Room" teacher in an intermediate school is responsible for teaching subjects such as Literacy and Social Studies. He or she may also take more specialised subjects according to the specific format adopted by the school. At Rangatahi classes were split for Mathematics between all teachers at a Year Level, and specialist teachers took each class for subjects such as Art and Technicraft.

<sup>7</sup> Accelerate classes are designed to cater for high-achieving students. The students assigned to them do not represent the full range of achievement levels in the school.

<sup>8</sup> Students assigned to this class followed a programme of work based on inquiry learning, which is a constructivist approach to learning based on child-centred techniques.

2010. With the exception of the accelerate classes, children could opt into any of these specialist classes at the start of each school year. Rangatahi also has a Special Needs Unit for children with more significant learning difficulties, which was not the class assigned to the teacher who volunteered to be in this study. This – taken in conjunction with the Accelerate classes mentioned above, which were also not taken by the teacher involved in the study – meant that the pool of participants available for my study did not represent either the highest achieving or the lowest achieving students in the school. In addition, the participants were selected from one class only, the home room class of the volunteer teacher. This meant that the selection of participants for my study was not random across the school. As it happened, it also meant that several of the participants in my study were considered to have a learning disorder or behavioural issues. I found this useful for my study, however, because the views of these children were therefore more diverse than I might expect to obtain from a more traditional class. This diversity could provide potentially a wider range of qualitatively different views of feedback when analysed phenomenographically.

### **The teacher**

Once access to the school had been arranged and informed consent was gained from the Principal and the Board of Trustees, I met with the classroom teacher who had volunteered to participate in my study in order to discuss the study with her, so that she had a clear understanding about what I would expect of her and of her class. We had three meetings for this purpose over the school holiday break in December 2009 / January 2010. This arrangement provided an opportunity for us to discuss our respective philosophies of teaching, our teaching backgrounds, and helped us in other ways to establish rapport and a

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<sup>9</sup> Children enrolled in an immersion class are taught primarily using Te Reo Māori, (the Māori language), utilising a curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education for this purpose.

<sup>10</sup> Children enrolled in a bilingual class are taught using a mixture of English and Te Reo Māori using the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*.



trusting relationship. This is an important part of a qualitative study, particularly one that involves access to children. It was also important in this instance because the classroom teacher was required to give informed consent to her allowing me access to her class, even though she was not a research participant. As the classroom teacher she needed to feel that she could trust me with her class as she retained overall responsibility for their progress.

At that time I was able to interview the class teacher about her teaching and learning beliefs and ascertained that she endeavoured to provide feedback based on letting the student know what standard he or she had reached, the desired standard to be attained (including the next step of learning), and information about how to bridge the gap. She based this on Sadler's three steps for effective learning (Sadler, 1989). I was confident therefore that the feedback she provided during the period in which I was working with her and her class, and which was the object of the study, followed what is known currently about good practice in giving feedback and that her class would be a suitable one for my study. I could discount the possibility that the feedback she was used to providing was in itself ineffective in helping students to improve their learning outcomes. By the time the new school year began, in late January 2010, we had developed a friendly yet professional relationship. She asked me not to visit during the first two weeks of the new school year because she would be settling new pupils into the class, and wanted that time to set routines and get to know her new pupils herself. After this time I visited the classroom two or three times a week during school term time, unless I was absent from the city.

When codenames were assigned the teacher drew the codename "Perfect" and will be known in this report from now on therefore as "Mrs Perfect" or (more usually) as "Mrs P". During our discussions I learned that Mrs P has a constructivist approach to teaching and learning,

but favours a more behaviourist approach to day-to-day behaviour management. She is familiar with the work of Black and Wiliam, and with the subsequent emphasis on assessment for learning in New Zealand schools. Consequently she gives feedback usually in accordance with formative assessment principles, including comments on what the child knows and has achieved and on what his or her next learning step might be. As a result Mrs P's pupils could be expected to provide information during the study which could be linked to formative assessment learning principles.

### **The participants**

At the beginning of 2010 there were 27 children in the class: 14 boys and 13 girls. Of these 9 boys and 8 girls were classified as Year 8, with the remaining 5 boys and 5 girls classified as Year 7. Informed consent was sought from all class members to participate in the first part of the study, which involved responding to a questionnaire. This consent was obtained from 23 students. At Mrs P's suggestion a list of "motivational" words such as Terrific, Amazing, and Awesome was drawn up to provide codenames to be used in the study. Because Mrs P was concerned about inclusion issues and did not wish to single out those few children who were not participating in the study, I agreed that each class member (including the few who were not participating in the study) should draw a codename. I was introduced to the class on my first visit, and explained the general purpose and gave an outline of the study. Consent forms and information sheets were given out, both for the children in the class and for their parents or caregivers. Mrs P offered to collect these as they were returned, and also followed up on any which were not returned initially. Three parents did not return the forms, and a fourth indicated that her child did not wish to take part in the study.

I administered the questionnaire to the 23 students who had returned consent forms, and then spent the next few weeks observing in the classroom and building rapport. I worked in a

variety of ways to establish a trusting but respectful relationship with all the class members. The Year 8 boys, in particular, demonstrated their acceptance of me as an adult who was not a teacher after an incident one morning early in the year. As I entered the room before school began and at a time when Mrs P was not present, I heard snatches of a lively and reasonably ripe conversation, of the sort typical of pre-adolescent boys. As the boys became aware of my presence the conversation came to an abrupt halt. After a few seconds one of the boys drawled to no-one in particular, “the talking has just stopped. I wonder why that is?” I responded by saying that of course it was because an adult had entered the room and they had been discussing something that was not for adult ears. I then said “It was lucky I didn’t hear what you were talking about, because if I had heard it, I might have had to take some sort of action”. There was general laughter from the boys at the realisation that I had in fact heard their conversation but was choosing to ignore the less desirable aspects of it, and that I was also retaining the authority to reprimand them if I felt it was appropriate. From this point on I felt that they maintained an interesting mix of freedom and circumspection in their speech, but accepted me in my chosen role.

Because of the positivity the Year 8 boys demonstrated towards me after the conversation outlined above I selected them as the population for the next stage of the study. I prepared and gave out a new set of information sheets and consent forms for themselves and for their parents or caregivers. I felt that further consent was required because this stage of the study was more intensive and prolonged, with multiple observations and three phenomenographic interviews planned for the year. One boy indicated in class that he did not wish to take part in the study. I felt that the way in which he felt able to indicate this to me showed that the measures taken to ensure that consent was given freely, and that a rapport had been established, were effective. The eight remaining boys were very enthusiastic about

participation but before the first interview could take place one of them was placed in another class because of his extremely poor behaviour towards Mrs P and other class members, thereby leaving seven participants. The participants in this study were enthusiastic about having their voices heard. They were aware that their responses and views would be published and discussed with a wider audience, and they reacted with enthusiasm to this information. In fact, several of them stated that this was an important factor in their decision to participate in the study. I feel that these considerations show the power of the aspects of student voice which I have discussed above and that they support my decision to make student voice a key component of the research design.

Once selected as interviewees, I gave the boys the option of selecting their own code name to replace the one they had drawn from the hat as a means of reinforcing the ownership that they had over the whole process. Only two of them elected to change codenames, although all indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to do so. Of the two who opted to change, the child referred to in this thesis as Nelson had his original choice of a new codename disallowed because the unusual spelling could have identified him as an individual. Nelson responded to the problem positively and selected another codename from the options I presented to him. I feel that this is one of the ways in which I established an ethical, trusting, and positive relationship with the boys. A brief biography of each of the seven boys who participated in the project follows, in alphabetic order by codename. Each biography includes limited academic data. At the end of Year 7 students are expected to meet the demands of Level 3 of the New Zealand Curriculum and be working towards Level 4, so that by the end of Year 8 they will satisfy the requirements of the New Zealand Curriculum at Level 4. For instance, Amazing was identified as being at standard by the end of 2010 because he was assessed as having completed Level 4 of the curriculum.

## **Amazing**

Amazing elected to keep the codename he drew at the beginning of the study. Mrs P commented that while he has dyslexia he has very good interpersonal skills, and is a great communicator. Amazing's school records show that his writing and reading are at standard, but Mrs P noted that it takes him a long time to "get the ideas down". Mrs P feels that having access to a computer is the route to success for him, and that without the computer much of his work would never have been marked or given feedback because it takes a very long time to decode it. Amazing will be in an average class at High School. Amazing's academic records show that by the end of 2010 he was achieving at the expected standard.

## **Awesome**

Awesome also elected to keep the codename that he drew at the beginning of the study. Mrs P told me that Amazing was born in Asia and is one of several Asian students in the class, but has lived in New Zealand from a young age and has undertaken most of his primary schooling here. He is not fully conversant with his first language, which is the language spoken in his home. Mrs P feels that as a result he lacks sufficient English vocabulary to draw on when decoding and understanding text in the classroom. Awesome's academic records show that he made no achievement gains between June and November and at that time was achieving well below the expected standard.

## **Nelson**

As noted above, Nelson elected to change his codename. From Mrs P I learned that he has pronounced behavioural issues. Mrs P commented that Nelson is not reaching his potential, because he has set his sights low. She feels his attitude is "Why bother with this if I don't have to?" She also commented that Nelson has very supportive parents, who seem to believe that he is gifted and/or talented, but that his general work does not qualify him for enrolment

in accelerated learning programmes. During the year of the study I observed that he was able to stay in the classroom, and was moved from being seated in isolation to sitting with his peer group by the end of the year. Mrs P informed me that this was a marked improvement on his situation last year. Following my feedback to her from the first round of interviews for the study, which was that the boys appeared to be looking for more praise, Mrs P made a conscious effort to “catch him being good”. Nelson responded very well to this intervention. Mrs P feels that he developed a taste for success and that this is what changed for him. Nelson made good progress academically between June and November and was achieving at the expected level.

## **On The Ball**

On The Ball kept the codename he drew at the beginning of the study. Mrs P informed me that On The Ball is from a Pacific Island culture. She found from his history that he had many hearing difficulties as a pre-schooler and feels these may have affected his attention span previously and currently. He is a bright, personable, being for whom sport is a passion. On The Ball sees himself as a professional rugby player, playing for The Blues rugby team in the Super competition, and he does not really value academic achievement. He is the oldest of five siblings. Mrs P suspects he compares himself with his next youngest sibling who is very able and who is working already at a higher level than On The Ball in Mathematics. She commented that there is little happening at home to support him and to try to bring him up to standard, but that it is possibly a situation where there is neither time nor resources for him. On The Ball’s academic achievement data show that he made a small amount of progress in reading from June to November and was achieving well below the expected standard.

## **Ryder**

Ryder elected to change his codename. Mrs P noted that Ryder has made significant progress during the two years he has been in her class, which she believes is due to a greater belief in himself and his elevated self-esteem. Ryder has dyslexia, one of several students in the class to be diagnosed with this condition, and has extremely supportive parents who fully acknowledge this. Mrs P noticed that at the start of his time at Rangatahi he had a “hang-up” about his older brother who was a top stream student at Rangatahi and who has carried that level of achievement on to high school. She felt that Ryder did not believe he could do anything, and he became a very reluctant reader despite much effort from home. Mrs P commented that Ryder has been very proactive in striving to improve. He has received tutoring outside of school and claims that this is responsible for his progress. While Mrs P has no doubt that it has, she considers that one of the biggest contributions to his achievement is that he has found an author whose books he enjoys reading. He is ploughing through this set of chronicles one by one, and sometimes now is caught reading when he should not be! Ryder’s test results for high school did not indicate an average class placing for him, but Mrs P requested it for him and the school he will attend has agreed to this. The end-of-year data from Rangatahi have validated that decision, and indicate that he will handle that level more than comfortably. Ryder’s academic records show that he was achieving just below the expected standard at this time.

## **Tino Pai**

Tino Pai did not change his codename. Mrs P claims that Tino Pai ‘has his own style’ about everything. I learned from her that Tino Pai demonstrates considerable muscle rigidity when trying to co-ordinate things physically, possibly because he suffers from a form of autism, but that he has a great visual memory. He is able to go away and reproduce, almost to scale, an

internal plan of a supermarket after standing inside it for a while and observing the layout.

Mrs P commented that Tino Pai does not have many social interaction difficulties. He dislikes working in a noisy or busy moving environment because he prefers to have some space around him, and will sometimes remove himself to that space without being prompted. Tino Pai was in Mrs P's class last year, and she observed that he has gained confidence in his own beliefs and in his own abilities. Tino Pai's academic achievement data shows progress in reading from June to November and that he was achieving at the expected standard.

## **Tremendous**

Tremendous chose to keep his codename. From my interview with Mrs P I learned that Tremendous has dyslexia, which is evident particularly in his writing. He is reading to an extent, but Mrs P has no evidence that he will be able to read successfully the more complex texts that will be required to take him through high school; he is therefore significantly below the standard. Tremendous is a very likeable, friendly, conversant, boy, and Mrs P says he is probably a much deeper thinker than he is given credit for usually, because his attitude is "enough is enough – why do more when you can have fun and still get by?" She feels that perhaps that attitude has wavered a bit now, towards the end of the Year 8 year, when "getting by" is not quite enough. The academic records for Tremendous show no progress in reading from June to November. Tremendous was achieving below the expected standard.

In the next section of this chapter I shall give a more detailed account of the data gathering and analysis techniques I employed.



## ***Data collection***

In order to explore students' receptivity to and understanding of feedback I employed several interrelated research strategies. In the next section of this chapter I discuss each of these briefly, and the procedures involved in them when undertaking the study.

### **Interviews**

I used interviews as the main means of gathering data for this study, because this is the method used most often in phenomenography. Phenomenographic interviews

[try] to elicit underlying meanings and intentional attitudes towards the phenomenon being investigated. Typically [they] do this through exploring concrete examples of the phenomenon provided by the interviewee. However, [they] are not interested in the details of the example per se, but in using them as a medium for exploring the way in which the interviewee is thinking about or experiencing the phenomenon, that is, those aspects of the phenomenon that they show awareness of (Akerlind, 2005b, p. 65).

Because interviews are also common in Case Study Research, interviews seemed likely to be the richest source of data for both parts of the study. They would also allow the voices of the participants selected as cases to be heard. I carried out the interviews on three occasions during the year with the seven Year 8 boys selected as interviewees. This activity allowed me to gather more in-depth data than if all 27 members of the class had been included in this part of the study, which would have resulted in less time being allocated to each participant.

Interviewing the same participants on three occasions constitutes a development of the use of phenomenography to explore the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon is experienced. Phenomenographic interviewers carry out, more commonly, one interview only with each participant. In the case of this study, the boys' own experience of feedback developed over the year, and interviewing them three times allowed me to investigate the effects of feedback on their attitudes and understandings. I used the interview transcripts for the phenomenographic analysis and to construct the case reports. I drew on observation field notes and work samples for the case reports, in addition to the interview data.

### **The questionnaire**

I had developed a questionnaire for my previous study, and planned to use it again in order to establish links between the current study and my previous one (Williams, 2001, 2010).

Consequently the questionnaire was delivered to the entire class involved in the study at Rangatahi School during the third week of the academic year. The questionnaire was a general survey of feedback. It comprised four questions, which were:

1. How often has your teacher given you different kinds of feedback so far this year?
2. How helpful is each kind of feedback?
3. Which type of feedback is most helpful?
4. Is there anything else you want to tell me about feedback?

As the study progressed, however, I decided that the data gathered from the questionnaire regarding the incidence of feedback were not helpful in exploring the students' receptivity and understanding of feedback because the questionnaire had been administered very early in the school year, before the class teacher had had the opportunity to give feedback on more than one or two occasions. For similar reasons I decided that the data would not be suitable to establish the links between my two studies because data for the earlier study had been

gathered at a later stage of the year, during Term 3 (in August). I found also that the information obtained from the questionnaire was not relevant to my phenomenographic analysis, because the questions did not relate to my sub-questions and the responses consequently fell outside the parameters set for the analysis. I therefore decided in this thesis not to use the information obtained from the questionnaire, except where I found that the information given in Questions 2-4 was useful for triangulating the data I used when developing the case reports for two of the participants. Because I made such limited use of the questionnaire in this study it should be considered as a prompt rather than as a research instrument. However, because I did use this information, although in a very limited form, the questionnaire has been included in Appendix F.

### **Observations and field notes**

Observations are used often in qualitative research to supplement interviews (G. Brown, 2008; Cowie, 2000). As stated above, I carried out observations in the classroom two or three times a week as often as possible during the school year. However, the data gathered from this research approach were not as extensive or as rich as I had envisaged. There were several reasons for this outcome. The first was that the class (initially) and the Year 8 boys (after they had been selected as the interview population) were together in the classroom with their classroom teacher only at certain times. Tuesday, for example, was Mrs P's release time and I could not observe the class then. A second reason that restricted me in this form of data gathering was that some weeks were unavailable because of school-wide events such as school camps, standardised testing, or school sports days. A third reason related to my own work commitments. All of these factors restricted both the times I could observe the class and the range of lessons available, so that most of my observations were carried out in the morning during reading or literacy lessons. The data gathered through observations were,

however, sufficient to inform the development of the cases for the case study research component of the study.

### **Work samples**

At the end of Term 3 of the school year I was given access to the school books of the boys for whom Mrs P had given written feedback. Again, the range of these samples was limited because of the factors noted previously in the section relating to observations and field notes of the present chapter. Most of the samples available relate to areas of literacy or homework tasks. However, I did obtain a good representation of the classroom teacher's written feedback.

### **Academic records and interview with the classroom teacher**

I gained limited data from the official school records available which showed that the boys were generally at or below the required standard for their age group, and that one or two of them were significantly below standard.

I interviewed the classroom teacher at the end of the school year, after the final round of interviews, so that I could collate the knowledge I had gained about each of the participants with her own more in-depth understanding of each of them. I have synthesised the information from all of my sources and presented it in the brief biographies of each participant given earlier in this chapter.

### ***Data Analysis***

The steps taken to analyse the data varied according to the different components of the study. Some of the data were explored for more than one section of the study, so the method of

analysis used varied. For example, the interview transcripts were analysed in order to find the phenomenographic categories and were analysed then through interpretation to develop the cases for the case study report section of this thesis. Data collection in the field as required by the case study approach to research poses its own problem, because of the amount of data that is generated typically. Yin (1994) outlined three principles of data collection: use of multiple sources of evidence, creation of a case study database, and maintenance of a chain of evidence. He argued that if these principles are followed then the trustworthiness of the case report will be enhanced. Soy (1997) used the same three principles in her discussion of this step, but added that the researcher will require access to the data for sorting and examination over the course of the study. Willis (2007) agrees with this point, particularly because carrying out ongoing analysis of the data may identify emerging issues that could require extra interviews or data analysis. I was unable to carry out the suggestions given by these authors as fully as I would have wished, however, because of other commitments on my time throughout 2010, but could see that this is an excellent strategy for managing the data. Nevertheless, I was able to include a range of emerging issues in my data collection because I interviewed the participants on three occasions through the year.

Once I began to evaluate and analyse the data for the case reports, I found Soy's (1997, pp. 5-6) comment that "[researchers] will deliberately sort the data in many different ways to expose or create new insights and will deliberately look for conflicting data to disconfirm the analysis" to be very useful. It reinforced Cresswell's (2003) point that presenting negative or discrepant information adds to the rigour of a qualitative study. Where more than one case is involved in a particular study, as in my investigation, it may be possible to carry out both inter-case and cross-case analysis in order to identify patterns (Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002). This approach can increase the trustworthiness of the report.

In the following sections I discuss the use that was made, and the subsequent analysis, of each source of data.

## **The interviews**

The interviews were analysed phenomenographically. Categories were identified, and an outcome space was formed for each of the three subsidiary questions. These were:

1. Why is feedback important?
2. What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?
3. What factors affect individual responses to feedback?

Phenomenographic data analysis is a highly iterative process, by definition the aim is to identify all of the qualitatively different ways in which students relate to the phenomenon (in my case, feedback). It is understood that “all” in this context relates only to the snapshot of opinions gained through the interviews (Bowden, 2000b). The first step is to read through each transcript to identify “utterances” (or quotations) which relate to the area of interest. In my case any utterances which did not relate to response to feedback, no matter how interesting they may have been in and of themselves, were discarded from the phenomenographic analysis – although they were used to add richness to the case studies. This part of the phenomenographic analysis should be guided by questions such as “How does the respondent construe the phenomenon?” and “What concepts are used to explain it?” (Saljo, 1988, p. 41). This process yielded 87 utterances from 20 transcripts for Question 1 (“Why is feedback important?”); 126 utterances from 20 transcripts for Question 2 (“What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?”); and 122 utterances from 20 transcripts for Question 3 (“What factors affect individual responses to feedback?”).

Once I had identified all of the utterances relating to feedback I wrote each one on a separate piece of paper to form the pool of meanings for the next stage of the analysis, which involves discussing possible groupings or categories as a preliminary step to establishing the categories and structural aspects in their final form. Bowden (2005, p. 16) recommends that this be done by a team of researchers, but this process is not essential to the method. It is useful, however, to have at least one other person with whom to discuss ideas (Akerlind, 2005c). I have used a research assistant and a colleague who was also using phenomenographic research methods to achieve this, but have ensured that I retain “ownership” of the data and of the categories. It is my judgment which is final, therefore.

Phenomenographers do not attempt to describe the world as it is but, rather, describe it as it appears to the individual. Therefore they aim to describe the phenomenon being studied as it appears to the person concerned which is a “second-order” perspective – as distinct from a “first-order” perspective which aims to show the world as it is actually (Marton, 1986). In order to achieve this aim phenomenographers seek to identify the range of ways of experiencing a phenomenon held within a set of data (in my case the interview transcripts), and then to describe each of these as a category. For example, in my study I identified in the data three qualitatively different responses to the question “Why is feedback important?”, which resulted in three categories being described for that question. They were that feedback is important because it supports progress towards achieving immediate learning goals; because it affects personal attitudes towards learning; and because it supports personal dispositions and long-term goals.

In the example given above the three categories described for question 1 are qualitatively different from each other, although each is a view found in the transcripts and is held

therefore by one or more of the participants. The structural aspects of each category show how the meaning is constructed – they show the range of ways in which the participants expressed each idea. In my study the structural aspects of Category A (“Feedback supports progress towards achieving immediate learning goals”) are that, for these participants, feedback does this when it refines knowledge; when it enhances achievement; when it gives information on progress; and when it corrects misapprehensions.

As the next step of the analysis I revisited and refined the categories as often as necessary, to get a relatively small number which could accommodate all the utterances, and which expressed the collective view sought in a phenomenographic analysis. This part of the process can become more difficult as the definitions of the categories are changed, but there is often a “breakthrough” moment when an overlying concept which accommodates all the utterances is identified (Akerlind, 2005a). An example of this occurred for me when I realised that the seven aspects I was considering for the importance of feedback related to three perceptions only. I have included as Appendix G pages from my work book which illustrate the steps I went through to reach this point. The breakthrough moment came between versions 3 and 4, and I was able then to express these as the three categories I outlined earlier in this section. The interview transcripts are consulted often during this process of identifying the categories, because the utterances must be considered in the wider context of the interview in order to retain the meaning intended by the participant. If this is not done then there is a possibility that a particular utterance may be misinterpreted and assigned incorrectly to a category. As a researcher I must interpret the meaning intended by the participant rather than considering only the words used to express that meaning.



Once I had established the categories I consulted the transcripts again and coded them according to the categories, following the process outlined by Akerlind (2005d). Essentially this is a two-step process: the interviews are used to identify the categories, and the categories are used then to code the interviews. I found that I studied each transcript 15 to 20 times during the analysis and coding process. Three or four categories were identified for each question, each of which was broken down into three or four structural aspects.

After I had identified and described the categories and the transcripts had been coded against them I organised the former into a possible hierarchy, which then formed the outcome space of phenomenography. This is the term used in phenomenography to refer to the set of categories and structural aspects derived from the data analysis after they have been defined and arranged in some sort of logical relationship to each other. This relationship was hierarchical, originally, but more recent developments of the research approach reveal that researchers seem willing to forgo this aspect. The aim of phenomenography is for the researcher to identify and describe the complete set of qualitatively different ways of experiencing a particular phenomenon by a specific (small) group of people at a certain point in time (i.e., to identify the outcome space of that particular situation). Because of this approach researcher bias has been one of the main criticisms levelled at phenomenography, and it is why bracketing is so important.

The outcome space describes the collective views of the interviewees. A particular transcript may have contributed utterances to all or none of the categories. Some categories may relate to utterances from only one individual because “the objective of a study is to reveal the variation captured in qualitatively different categories, of ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question, regardless of whether the differences are differences between

individuals or within individuals” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 124). It is important to note that the categories do not represent individual responses to feedback, although they can be illustrated by quotations from one or more of the transcripts (Akerlind, 2005c).

If a hierarchy cannot be established, as was the case for the outcome space I developed for my third question, then the categories are left as a less-organised outcome space (Akerlind, 2005d; Marton & Booth, 1997). This is the point at which pure phenomenography stops. Developmental phenomenographers, by comparison, would use the outcome space to identify implications for teaching and learning, to “change the world” in some way (Bowden, 2000b, pp. 3-4). I did this when I developed a model based on the outcome spaces. In order to provide the case study reports for two of the participants I used excerpts from the interview transcripts for all three rounds of interviews with them.

### **The questionnaire**

Because I made such limited use of the questionnaire in this study, it should be considered more as a prompt than as a research instrument. Once I decided to use the questionnaire for the case studies only I did not undertake an analysis of the data gained from it. This was because the usefulness of data from the questionnaire was limited in this study to including some comments made by the two boys who were the subjects of the case reports that I have included in Chapter 9.

### **Observations, academic records, and work samples**

These three sources of data were analysed in more or less detail according to the use made of them in the study. The case studies warranted the adoption of an interpretive approach to the

data gathered, and my observations and academic records were analysed for this purpose. The main technique I employed was to code these sources of data using the results of the phenomenographic analysis (i.e., I listed each category and its structural aspects and then recorded how often each participant contributed to each of these). I then interpreted the results as I developed a case report for each boy. I also used these sources of data to prepare the brief biographies of each participant which were included earlier in the present chapter. I carried out minimal analysis for this purpose because the biographies provided background information about each participant only, and they were not a component of the study findings.

### ***Key Ethical Topics***

Because “...research ethics is about taking the principles and guides by which we should live and applying them to ... problems” (Denholm & Evans, 2006, p. 104), ethical issues are likely to arise at all stages of the research process (see, for example, Cohen et al., 2000; Gall et al., 1996; Mertens, 2010; Wester, 2011). This is particularly so if the research is to be conducted in educational settings, or with minors (Gall et al., 1996; Mertens, 2010; Mutch, 2005). The process of researching with child participants, as in my study, raises particular issues, ethical and otherwise.

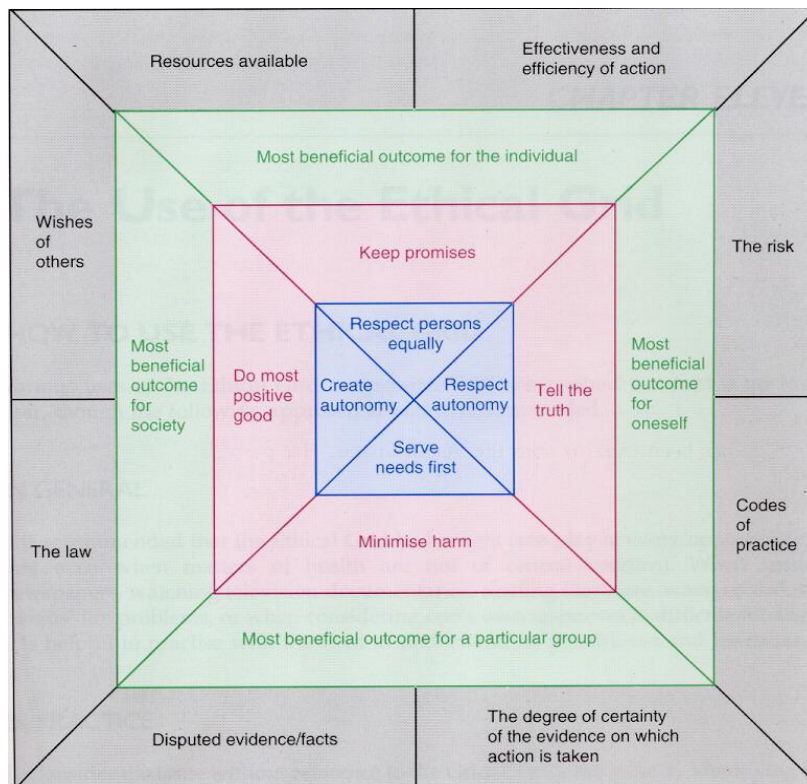
### **Behaving ethically**

Some protection against unethical practices is supplied by the requirement from all institutions that ethical approval is sought and obtained prior to the commencement of the study. However, because ethical issues are likely to arise in all aspects of the research process and are likely also to change as the study progresses, acting ethically involves much more than “...a series of forms the [researcher] has to fill in before they are allowed to start their project” (Denholm & Evans, 2006, p. 104). In other words, I believe that ethics is not a

consideration or an element that could be laid aside once ethical approval from my institution had been granted.

While writing the proposal for this study I endeavoured to anticipate ethical issues that may have arisen during the investigation. I began by considering the extent to which I would need to work with children in order to answer my main research question. Once it was clear that I was most likely to find answers to the problem by talking directly to children in a classroom environment I consulted various documents to identify potential issues. These included the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) Code of Ethics, which governs the behaviour of teachers and other adults working in primary schools, and the Principles and Guidelines issued by The University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC). These documents emphasise that working with children in a school poses its own ethical issues, which must be considered at all times. I obtained ethical clearance for this study from ERHEC before approaching the school or the teacher, and followed the NZEI Code when gaining access to the school, class, and teacher involved. A selection of the forms I developed for this purpose are included in this report as Appendix C. As stated earlier in this chapter, although I was offered access to both a school and a teacher I still went through the steps of obtaining informed consent from all the stakeholders: parents, school governing bodies, the teacher, and the children. Legally, of course, children may be able to give only assent rather than consent to a study but the definition of exactly what the difference is or the age and conditions under which children may give the more formal consent is unclear. For convenience I have used the term consent to signify the agreement of both the children and the adults involved to take part in the study.

I also used Seedhouse's Ethical Grid as a guide for my actions. I found this grid (See Figure 2), and the questions related to it that were developed by Stutchbury and Fox (2009), very useful as a guide to my decision-making. It also helped to ensure that I was indeed carrying out ethical research.



**Figure 2. Seedhouse's Ethical Grid (Seedhouse, 1998)**

The grid is presented in layers, each of which represents four ethical aspects of a situation. The layers are labelled, reading from the outside in, as 1) external layer; 2) consequential layer; 3) deontological (or rule-based) considerations; and 4) core rationale. Each aspect (or side) of the grid allows the researcher to approach the situation from a different perspective. Within each layer there are boxes that identify issues within that aspect. The grid did not provide solutions; rather, it supported me to think systematically about how best to conduct my study in an ethical manner. It also provided me with a means of checking the likely impact of issues arising as the study progressed. For instance, I found that the deontological

(third) layer and the consequential (second) layer were very useful when I decided to incorporate case study research into my study because this involved considering how the reports might compromise the anonymity of the participants and their parents. I concur with Stutchbury and Fox when they declared that “...the researcher is then more likely to act ethically and can present the decisions in such a way that the decision-making process is transparent and can be discussed” (2009, pp. 490 - 491).

I did not discover Seedhouse’s grid before developing the proposal for the study, but when I did read it I was pleased to find that I had considered all of the aspects. In particular, I had covered the innermost (fourth) layer which is concerned with individuals. This was because I planned to work with children, who are members of a vulnerable population.

### **Establishing myself in the classroom**

Earlier in this chapter I referred briefly to the selection of a classroom teacher and participants for this study. In this section I shall detail the steps I took to establish my preferred position as a researcher in a classroom setting in order to gain rapport with the class as a whole and with the boys in particular.

My preferred position in the classroom was as a regular and expected visitor, without the authority of a teacher for the classroom programme and without the expectation that I would carry out the teacher’s plans for the programme. I wanted to be seen as independent from the teacher, but did not want to usurp her authority with the class. This deliberate positioning of myself was intended to encourage the boys to be open in expressing their views to me while at the same time recognising me as an adult skilled in my own field. I began this process on my first visit, during which Mrs P introduced me and explained very briefly what my purpose

was in coming into the classroom. This arrangement allowed her to remain in the role of teacher with authority to allow others into her classroom, but it also showed the class that she trusted my presence and my purpose. After her introduction I explained in more detail what I would be doing with the students and handed out the information sheets and consent forms for themselves and for their parents. Following this process the codenames were drawn. I spent the rest of this session wandering round the class and talking informally with class members as the opportunity arose. During this time at least one of the boys tested me by asking if I knew what his name was and then how to spell it. He seemed amazed when I answered both questions correctly, and more amazed when I could discuss the book he was reading with him because I had read it and others in the series. These sorts of interactions were carried out with other class members and culminated in the conversation recorded earlier in the present chapter which, I consider, won the boys' trust in me finally.

Once I had selected the boys as potential interview subjects I held a meeting with them to explain the next stage of the study. They were very interested in the notion that an adult genuinely wanted to hear their views and that they could express their opinions freely. Several of them questioned me closely on this aspect, and I detailed the steps that would be taken to keep our conversations confidential. These were the usual processes carried out in qualitative research, such as keeping transcripts and other data in a locked filing cabinet in a room accessible by myself only. The boys were interested in how this aspect of research is carried out. As I planned the study originally only one or at most two participants would be followed throughout the year, but I found it impossible to keep to this intention given that all of the boys returned their signed slips within two days. I did not wish to select only one or two and to then tell the remainder that they could not participate. Their enthusiasm was one of the first indications I had that they were taking this project seriously and that they were

more than willing to make the commitment required. In order to check this impression I asked each boy individually before each of the next two interviews if he was still willing to participate. All seven of them responded that they were.

During the first round of interviews in particular, I reminded the boys that the interview transcripts would be kept confidential. Privacy was difficult to ensure within the classroom because the other class members were able to see the boys coming and going to be interviewed, but I explained that confidentiality could be ensured in any wider forum – for example, in this study. All of the boys answered all of my questions in the interviews frankly, and I judged from their body language and their responses that they felt comfortable expressing less popular views or correcting me if I made an incorrect assumption about their meaning.

I held two more meetings with the boys during the year. The first time was to tell them that I would be presenting some of my findings to an international audience who would be very interested in what the boys had to say and that their voices would be heard. I held this meeting after the first two sets of interviews had been completed, but when only the first set had been analysed. The second meeting was held on my return from presenting a paper on the research at a conference in England, and they were very keen to hear how the presentation had gone. At this point I gave them small gifts (pencils and erasers) that I had bought for them from the British Museum, presenting them as gifts from a tourist and not in any way to be connected with the views they expressed. Because they did not know that they would be getting anything from me and because the third round of interviews was still several weeks off from being conducted, I do not think that these gifts acted as external rewards for their co-operation.



During the last week of the school year I provided a pizza lunch for all the class members. Once again, this decision was not discussed beforehand (except to check with Mrs P which day would be suitable). I intended this lunch to act as a form of closure for the students and to signal that they would not be seeing me again, as well as to express my appreciation for the time and trouble they had taken to help me in my research.

During the interviews my role was to provide some general questions in order to provide the boys with similar prompts rather than to access similar information. This lack of emphasis on eliciting similar information from each participant is essential for phenomenographic interviewing. It is one way in which this form of interviewing differs from semi-structured interviewing, in some forms of which “great emphasis is placed on administering questions in the same way every time because it is assumed that a continuous stimulus behaviour is required for reliable responses” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 56). I then probed the boys’ responses to ensure that their views were expressed fully. To do this, I had to divert from standard phenomenographic practice because often I had to reflect back to the boys what I thought they meant by their response. I tried to do this without introducing new ideas while at the same time giving options from which they could select. At other times, I had to encourage them to expand on a monosyllabic “yeah”. I did this by reading their body language and their tone of voice, and then by asking if they meant a certain point. Often they would agree with me, but sometimes they disagreed with my reading. They corrected me often enough for me to feel confident that they were expressing independent opinions, and not just trying to tell me what I wanted to hear. This can be a problem when working with child participants, but I feel that the relationship I built with them facilitated a more honest expression of views.

As mentioned above, I worked very deliberately to establish a positive and trusting relationship with all parties involved in the research because this is another aspect of proceeding in an ethical manner. The participants must have trust in my integrity, and have to believe that I will deal with them openly and honestly. I was not intending to deceive the participants in any way, although this can be a factor in the exploration of a different type of problem. Because of this commitment I had no issues relating to my intentions, and was able to answer all questions put to me by the various stakeholders and the participants and could respond to their comments in a respectful and trustworthy manner. For example, when Ryder told me rather shyly that he had just received good news about his reading progress I was able to respond in a natural way without being concerned about my role as “the researcher”.

Reflective practice is another strategy I used to ensure that my study was carried out ethically. I have embedded the results of my reflections throughout this report, beginning with the statement about my personal background and assumptions in Chapter 1. Reflection is very much part of my day-to-day thinking and practice, and has been used constantly throughout my teaching career. It was an automatic response to my study to consider not just my own practice and how to improve it but also the effects of my research on all personnel involved. For instance, whenever I was in the classroom I made sure that I spoke to the one Year 8 boy who had not wanted to participate in the study to show as much interest in him as in any of the other Year 8 boys. Although he never changed his decision not to participate he did take an active interest in what I was doing. I believe that this situation demonstrated my ability to consider the needs of others rather than just focussing on my own interests.

## ***Researching with child participants***

Many researchers view children as a particularly vulnerable population in research (Gall et al., 1996; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Mertens, 2010), and are therefore subject to special considerations. These include issues of access, ethics, power, and voice. My own view is that the steps I took to behave ethically and to establish rapport with my participants acknowledge that they may be vulnerable but that the same steps, together with their age and stage of schooling at the time the study was carried out, reduces this vulnerability. I felt it was advisable nevertheless to consider the work of previous authors and researchers in order to avoid any potentially harmful situations.

Access to children within a school or other educational setting cannot be taken for granted and can often become a barrier to conducting research (Cohen et al., 2000; Mutch, 2005). The role of the “gatekeeper” raises issues, most notably in relation to the changing perceptions of childhood itself. As Greene and Hogan (2005, p. 2) have suggested:

Children have not always been seen as active constructors of social meaning. The shift from the ...view that children are developmentally immature and incomplete ... to one that seeks and values their viewpoints has occurred over many decades and across many disciplines.

I am more inclined to accept the later view because the earlier view implies that children are potentially unreliable participants, with a further implication that access to their views should be screened by gatekeepers. The later view, that of children having valid and informative perceptions and perspectives, also implies that access to children should be conducted via a hierarchy of gatekeepers (Harwood, 2010). This assumption underpins the practices of many

institutions, including my own, through their Human Ethics Committees or their equivalent. However, the filtering of access through adults in positions of responsibility raises questions for some authors about the child's rights and about whether or not children as a population are being marginalised and disempowered further (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Harwood, 2010; Jones & Stanley, 2008; Mertens, 2010). In a practical sense, whatever the views of the gatekeepers are in a particular situation, it will be necessary to negotiate with them in order to gain access to the desired research population. In spite of the potential difficulties involved in this process, access can sometimes be surprisingly easy to obtain – as was the case in this study.

I have considered the ethical issues discussed earlier in this chapter, such as gaining informed consent, through the lens of working with children. Fortunately my institution was involved extensively in teacher education and therefore had well-rehearsed procedures for ensuring that research carried out within educational settings, and particularly any study that involved children, was conducted in an ethical manner. These procedures included the provision of suitable sample information sheets and consent forms for use with children. In my case, because I was working with young adolescents, the issue of who was required to give consent and the extent to which the children could give their own informed consent was resolved by gaining informed consent from both the children and their parents or caregivers for all class members to take part in the questionnaire, as well as from the classroom teacher, the Principal, and the Board of Trustees. In addition, separate consent was sought from the proposed participants for the interviews and their parents / caregivers.

Another consideration when working with child participants is that of the relationship between the child and the researcher. In most aspects of their lives children are restrained by

the decisions of adults, and there is “...an inherent power differential between the adult and the child participant” (Harwood, 2010, p. 7). This reality may result in children giving answers that they believe are expected of them by the researcher or those that will please the researcher. One aim of the researcher should be to reduce this natural inclination on the part of children as much as possible (Greene & Hogan, 2005; S. Punch, 2002). Therefore, the matter of how the child perceives the researcher becomes especially important. To put the point another way, the positioning of the researcher can have an effect on the nature of the child participant’s responses. Some researchers have tried to address this situation by positioning themselves as “least-adults” (Greene & Hogan, 2005, p. 11), or in other ways such as attempting to enter the child’s “world” (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Harwood, 2010; S. Punch, 2002).

In my case, again because I was working with young adolescents, I preferred to position myself as an adult within the classroom, but not as a teacher, because the issue that affects the current study most directly was that of finding ways to empower the students. It was important not only that they felt able to speak freely to me as the researcher but also that a suitable, positive, relationship was maintained. I wanted to be positioned as an adult in the classroom, but neither as a teacher nor yet as a teacher-aide. The aim was to achieve a position below the teacher in the hierarchy but above that occupied by other adults in the room, such as the teacher aide. This location was desirable because of the existing views of the students towards these two entities. On the one hand the teacher needed to remain as the person in charge of the general classroom programme, with all the authority required for that position. On the other hand I wanted to be seen as semi-independent from the general day-to-day running of the classroom and particularly not as someone who reported to the teacher and

who worked under her direction. I wanted the children to see me as occupying an independent position, subject to the overall authority of the teacher.

Rather than trying to enter their world I wanted to invite them into an aspect of the adult world where they could feel that their voices were valued and were being heard. This was not an easy relationship to establish, although it was made easier by the presence in the classroom at any one time of a number of adults. With a teacher-aide, a student teacher, the teacher herself, myself, and various other support staff, there could be five or more adults present in the room during observations. The children were very comfortable and familiar with having a large number of adults in the room, the personnel of whom varied according to circumstance, and they accepted me freely in that context. However, this acceptance was not on the same level as the trust that would be needed when the time came for me to interview the students. I have outlined the steps I took to establish this trusting relationship earlier in this chapter. I believe these steps were successful and that my study has captured the frank and honest views of the participants.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter I presented the design for my study, together with the reasoning underlying the decisions I made. I then provided brief descriptions of the school, the classroom teacher, and of the participants. Next, I discussed the data gathering and analysis techniques I employed, with particular reference to phenomenographic analysis because not all readers will be familiar with this approach. I ended the chapter with a discussion of the ethical issues I faced in this study, and explained how I approached each of these in turn.

In the next three chapters I present and discuss the phenomenographic analysis of my three lines of inquiry.

## **Chapter 5: Phenomenographic analysis and discussion of the importance of feedback.**

### ***Introduction***

It will be recalled that in Chapter 2 I discussed phenomenography both generally and in relation to the present study. In the next three chapters I show how I used phenomenographic principles and analysis methods to explore the three lines of inquiry that I identified in the data and that I expressed subsequently as questions. These were “Why is feedback important?”; “What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?”; and “How do the participants respond to feedback?” The answers to these three questions contribute to the exploration of my overall research question: “What influences the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary schoolchildren?” I was not seeking to identify the individual views of the participants in the study through this analysis. Rather, I was aiming to use the data gathered from interviews with them to identify the range of perceptions held within the data. In other words, my aim was to establish the range of categories inherent in the data from a collective rather than from an individual viewpoint.

In accordance with phenomenographic techniques I have identified in the data a range of categories for each question. I noted in Chapter 2 that the terms “conception” and “category of description” are often used interchangeably in the literature, but emphasised that there are differences between them about which the reader should be aware. A phenomenographic category of description aims to express as faithfully as possible the individuals’ conceptions of some sort of reality (Sandbergh, 1997). The use of the phrase “as faithfully as possible” “...indicates a distinction between the categories and the conceptions” (Bowden, 2000b, pp.



15 - 16), and technically therefore the two terms should not be used interchangeably. However in practice this is often done. “Structural aspects” and “dimensions of variation” form another instance where the terms are distinct technically but are often used interchangeably. I remind the reader that, in general, I have preferred to use the term “category of description” to “conception” within the text, and I have also referred to “structural aspects” instead of “dimensions of variation” here.

I was working with boys who, although generally very articulate and confident, would at times revert to monosyllabic responses to my questions. In these cases I would probe further to elicit each participant’s elaborated response. If he responded with a firm “yep!” or enthusiastic “yeah” to my probing statements then I accepted the response as being an indication of his thoughts. I have tried as far as possible to indicate on the transcripts where agreement of this sort was evident, most commonly by using the word “yep”. The degree of agreement is evident on the audio tapes of the interviews and, moreover, my research assistant has verified my interpretation. An issue arises, however, when I wish to use these sorts of instances as evidence for particular statements because I am reporting the words I used to probe these responses rather than words uttered by the participant. Where I have used my own words in a quotation from a transcript I have indicated this by placing square brackets [ ] around the relevant words – this use of square brackets is an addition to the convention required by the APA Sixth Edition to indicate where words have been inserted or altered within a quotation. All the utterances in the transcripts were labelled, so it is evident from the labelling which interview the quotation is taken from and which boy was being interviewed at the time. Because all the utterances were labelled, all of my encouraging utterances — such as “right” or “yeah”, or my repetitions of a participant’s utterance to ensure that I had understood the meaning correctly — were also labelled. Sometimes, too, a

participant would respond to one of my questions without repeating the actual question. This means that at times the participant's response was split and recorded as two utterances when in fact only one thought was being expressed. In order to include such utterances in the report I used a format which indicated that one or more utterance has been excluded. For instance, OTB2.060 - 062 indicates that an utterance, OTB2.061, has not been included. The actual transcript reads:

OTB2.060 OTB: Like, you might get encouragement.

OTB2.061 R (Researcher) Mmmm....

OTB2.062 Like, for rugby, you get, like, 'Oh good kick' or 'Good tackle' or something like that.

This series of utterances was used and cited as follows: "Like, you might get encouragement ... like, for rugby, you get, like, 'Oh good kick' or 'Good tackle' or something like that" (OTB2.060 – 062).

After identifying and describing each category of a question I developed an outcome space for that question. Following the description of the categories and the presentation of the outcome space, I have discussed each question comprehensively and in relation to the relevant literature.

### ***Why is feedback important?***

I found that within this group of students three qualitatively different understandings of the importance of feedback could be identified. These are represented in Table 1, which shows the structural and referential aspects of each of the categories. The categories identified were that feedback is important because it supports progress towards immediate learning goals (Category A), feedback is important because it affects personal attitudes towards learning

(Category B), and feedback is important because it supports personal dispositions and long-term goals (Category C). The categories are described in the next section, and utterances from the interview transcript have been selected to show the meaning inherent within each category of description through the words of the participants. The excerpts have also been selected to show the contextual relationships between the structural and the referential aspects of each of category.

Table 1. Categories of description for the question “Why is feedback important?”, showing the referential and structural aspects of each category

Category	Referential aspect (the meaning of each category) Feedback is important because it...	Structural aspects (the aspects which contribute to and make up the category)			
A	supports progress towards achieving immediate learning goals ...	1. when it refines knowledge	2. when it enhances achievement	3. when it gives information on progress	4. when it corrects misapprehensions.
B	affects personal attitudes towards learning...	1. when it affects motivation	2. when it changes behaviour	3. when it develops persistence	4. when it affects an individual's feelings of wellbeing
C	supports deep learning and progress towards achieving long-term goals...	1. when it develops the ability to self-assess	2. when it supports attainment of future goals	3. when it encourages reflection	

For each category and structural aspect, utterances from the interview transcripts have been selected to show the meaning inherent within each one through using the words of the participants. These utterances may also serve as examples of the types of expressions associated with these understandings of feedback.

## **Feedback is important because it supports progress towards achieving immediate learning goals (Category A)**

This category relates to the achievement of short-term learning goals, and includes individual perceptions of the learning required as well as information related to the standard required to be reached (Sadler, 1989). Feedback is seen as important because it contributes directly to improved achievement on specific pieces of work. In this category the feedback provides information to individuals on how they could improve specific pieces of work, and includes comments on where their work has attained a suitable standard or where they have misinterpreted what was required. Participants who expressed ideas related to this category viewed feedback as associated with a very short timeframe, and they considered very clearly that improvement on a particular piece of work was the goal of receiving and using feedback. Issues such as the timeliness of feedback and its role in improving achievement were to the forefront. Four means by which this goal could be attained were identified in the data provided by the participants, and these four means form the structural aspects of the category. They are that feedback refines knowledge, enhances achievement, corrects misapprehensions, and gives information on progress.

### **Structural aspects of Category A**

#### **1. It refines knowledge**

Some participants saw feedback as refining knowledge, in the sense that they felt the feedback helped them to understand more precisely what they were supposed to be doing. Two said for instance, that “It narrows it down to what I’m supposed to be doing...” (Ry1.042); and “Tells me what I need to do next time” (Am1.004). Participants who expressed these and similar views appeared to believe that the feedback they received

contributed as much to their success in the particular piece of work as did the initial teaching session. A quotation such as “[feedback] tells me what I need to do and how I need to do it” (Aw3.008) illustrates this point. If the word “teaching” is substituted for the word “feedback”, the sentence still makes perfect sense in the context of why teaching itself is important. Awesome, however, seems to feel that without feedback he would not know exactly what he was supposed to be doing, although he participated in the original teaching sessions. This aspect of the category also includes comments that indicate an awareness that the original work may need improvement, and that the means of doing this are both particular to each individual and also beyond the capability of the individual to identify. As two participants commented: “[Feedback] tells me ... what to change” (Am1.004); “...sometimes you don’t know...what you need to improve on” (OTB1.002). These quotes are taken from the first round of interviews and so represent views held at the beginning of the year. The same views were still held by Awesome and Amazing at the end of the year, however, and were expressed during the third round of interviews: [“so that you knew what to do”] (Aw3.081); “...it makes me think about what I’m doing, and then I change what I’m doing” (Am3.011). The implication is that this view is embedded deeply in these participants’ thinking about the role of feedback in their learning, because it did not shift during the school year.

## **2. It enhances achievement**

In this aspect, feedback is seen as being important to the achievement of short-term goals. Statements were identified as belonging to this category if they were qualified in terms which made it clear that the speaker was thinking of the classroom programme underway currently, or about skills being developed currently. This is shown in comments such as: “A thing that is going to help you ... students ... whoever... that’s getting the feedback become better in

what they're doing" (Tr3.058); and "...if you get, like, feedback you know where you're moving on and what you can do to improve on, and ... you just get better at it" (OTB2.138). Mrs P's feedback could contribute to the thinking of the boys about this aspect because, as is evident in the work sample data I analysed, she commented frequently on what they had achieved in the current piece of work. At times she also identified the "next step" of learning, but these too were focussed more on the immediate future. The following are typical examples of this kind of focus in her feedback:

Very pleasing to have a clear interesting start and end to this paragraph. Take care not to muddle tense e.g. I am now – Once I was. Try to write – show not tell – rather than recount as you tell the story aloud. (Mrs P, feedback on writing dash sample created by Amazing on 2 September 2010)

A second such example is "Well done! Although your answers are brief, it is obvious you thought that things would move fast – hence sale – ideas for Task 1. Next step is to give examples" (Mrs P, feedback on homework completed by Tremendous on 27 March 2010).

### **3. It corrects misapprehensions**

Several of the boys felt that feedback was important in order to avoid getting their work "wrong", by which they seemed to mean two things: getting down on paper what the teacher required; and ensuring that the work itself was correct grammatically and that it followed appropriate formats. The first meaning is expressed in the following quotations from On The Ball and Nelson: "Sometimes you don't know what you're doing ..." (OTB1.002); and "Feedback stops me from being confused" (N3.082). The second meaning was expressed by Ryder and Awesome: "When I forget (punctuation) and [the feedback] tells me to put it in, I agree with it. Little things" (Ry1.018); and "...if they ... don't show you that, you keep writing wrong sentence every time like every day" (Aw1.104). These views were expressed

throughout the year, with at least one example being found in each round of interviews. Both Nelson and On The Ball contributed comments to this aspect on more than occasion. On The Ball – in particular in Interviews 1 and 3 – referred to his sense of not knowing what he was doing wrong, which suggests that this was an ongoing concern for him. He also clearly wished to improve his work, and expected that feedback would help him to achieve this by clarifying and correcting his misunderstandings. For Nelson the issue seemed to become more important as the year progressed, with comments recorded in Interviews 2 and 3. This situation could be a reflection of his increasing willingness to engage with his work and with his teacher, which is discussed in Case 2 in Chapter 5. It may also reflect his awareness that transition to high school would be a major change in his education, something that was noted by all the boys.

#### **4. It gives information on progress**

This aspect relates to knowing where one stands in relation to a particular standard or goal and generated comments from all seven boys, indicating that it is one of the more general and universal aspects found in the study. The comments related to the importance of knowing one's position in relation to a particular standard or goal. They were among the first utterances each boy gave in Interview 1, showing the importance they attached to it: "...to know what's happening with whatever it is" (Tr1.004); and "[...information on whether it's already good or whether you need to work on it]" (Aw1.010). Utterances relating to this aspect were also identified frequently from Interview 3, which shows that boys' feelings about the importance of getting feedback on progress did not wane over the year. Typical comments were "...know that you're doing well or bad" (TP3.111); and "...you could do this better, do that better, to improve it." (N3.072). I felt during the interviews that although the boys were not concerned particularly with how they were performing in relation to other class

members, they were interested in how their achievements and academic standing related to their own previous performance. This interest indicates that they sought to make progress, and wanted to feel that they were reaching higher standards. To them, an important purpose of feedback was to be provided with this information.

## **Feedback is important because it affects personal attitudes towards learning (Category B)**

Category B differs from Category A because the former deals with attitudes rather than goals. Utterances were identified as belonging to Category B on the basis of their relevance to personal attitudes towards learning, such as motivation or persistence. Utterances from participants that included language such as “...improve and keep doing what I’m doing right” (N3.016) or “The most important aspect of feedback is what I do” (TP.090 – 093) were placed into this category.

Of the four structural aspects associated with this category three clearly depict attitudes towards short-term goals or are associated with a particular piece of work. The fourth (“develops persistence”) could be expected to be sustained over a longer period of time, but in the context of the utterances it seems still to be associated with a relatively short timeframe.

## **Structural aspects of Category B**

### **1. It affects motivation**

The meaning implicit in this aspect is that a student’s motivation to make alterations to a piece of work or to try again is related to his feelings of being encouraged or not. In this aspect feedback is seen as encouraging if it is positive, but discouraging if it is negative. On



The Ball was the one participant for whom this view of feedback was important. He mentioned it several times, particularly during Interview 2. The idea that feedback might both encourage and discourage learning is reflected in the literature (Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2012; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Weaver, 2006).

I also considered the possibility that this aspect of Category B – that feedback affects motivation – and the aspect that feedback affects an individual's feelings of wellbeing, also of Category B, were actually differing manifestations of the same dimension. I discarded this possibility and kept the two dimensions differentiated, however, because I felt that On The Ball appeared to be expressing something distinctly different from his perception of his own self-esteem. The utterances which were included in the aspect that feedback affects motivation typically mentioned “feeling good” or “being negative”, or in some other way indicated an individual's self-awareness, whereas On The Ball appeared to be referring to feelings which depended on another person's input. So, for On The Ball, the importance of feedback seemed to lie in the effect of other people's comments on his motivation, for example when he said “...you try to get better and you try to do more things better ‘cos you’re encouraged” (OTB2.020-023); “You might get encouragement ... like for rugby you get, like, ‘Oh good kick’ or ‘Good Tackle’ or something like that” (OTB2.060-062). He put this idea particularly plainly when he said “Feedback is just, like, encouragement” (OTB2.068).

## **2. It changes behaviour**

This aspect refers to the changes made by the participants to their work in response to the feedback they were given. As Tino Pai put it, “The most important aspect of feedback is what I do [in response to it]” (TP3.090-093). Usually there was an indication on the part of participants who contributed to this aspect that the feedback they received had an immediate

impact on how they behaved in relation to the piece of work involved: “[when I get feedback] between the start and the middle ...[it] actually helps me write” (N1.018); and “I’d think, like, just work more, listen more ... and, um, try to get a higher or lower score” (Ry2.030 – 032). Some of the utterances might not have referred to a short-term timeframe, such as Amazing’s comment that feedback “...made us work harder” (Am1.008). In such cases I followed the phenomenographic process of considering the relevant transcript as a whole in order to establish the student’s meaning. As John Bowden (2000a, p. 52) has observed, “The focus was on the student’s meaning, taking the transcript as a whole, rather than on the occurrence of particular statements corresponding to a specific category of description”. In this way, I established that the comments selected for this category referred to a shorter timeframe than those selected for Category C. If I felt they referred to a longer timeframe then they were included in Category C, which covers the importance of feedback in achieving long-term goals.

Some utterances from this aspect seemed to refer to a desire to change behaviour, or to try new things, in order to keep moving ahead in one’s understanding and continuing to improve. As two of the participants observed: “I wouldn’t do it [implement the feedback] every time because it would all just be the same then – I want to try different ways” (Am2.048); and “...[in response to feedback you’d] do some more ideas or different ideas or something that you haven’t done before to move on to the next level” (OTB1.065). These utterances and others in this aspect link the importance of feedback to an individual’s willingness to change his or her behaviour in order to improve on the current standard of achievement.

### **3. It develops persistence**

This aspect includes utterances which refer to letting the recipient know that he or she has achieved well on a particular piece of work, or has demonstrated good understanding of a particular aspect of learning and in this way encouraging persistence. The utterances which were included under this aspect were differentiated from those included in the aspect that feedback is important because it gives information on progress for the reason that, in this aspect of Category B, the participants added comments to the effect that this meant they should keep doing whatever it was that had elicited this form of comment: for example, “...telling you ... you’ve done some good work. As in it’s provoking you to do more good work” (N1.042); and “...the good stuff, I need to carry that on...” (Am2.012). Tremendous did mention using his feedback to advance his learning, but because he only mentioned the apparently short timeframe of “the next thing” (Tr2.002) his comment was placed in this category even though it also showed limited persistence.

The utterances identified for this aspect were also differentiated from those selected for Category C because the former are concerned with a shallower approach to learning than with the deep learning which is a focus of that category. The utterances identified for this aspect of Category B referred to continuing what was working already, but there is no indication of a wish to explore particular ideas and skills in more depth. The participants who made these comments appeared satisfied with the standard they had achieved. They felt that the feedback they had received that assured them of this level of performance permitted them either to continue with the same strategies and skills or to put them aside and continue to improve through employing a different set of strategies and skills.

#### **4. It affects an individuals' feelings of wellbeing**

This aspect refers to an individual's feelings of wellbeing in general, rather than to his or her motivation. I am focussing on how the feedback is received rather than on how it is interpreted, and the comments relating to wellbeing and to motivation should be read with this in mind. Wellbeing and motivation are linked to each other because they are both aspects of self-concept and self-efficacy, but they are distinct in themselves (Hattie, 2009). The utterances for this aspect fall into two groups; those that show how positive feedback can increase an individual's feelings of wellbeing, and those which show how critical feedback can decrease them. Tino Pai, while identifying the time when getting feedback might be most effective during a piece of work, commented that "...at the end helps you 'cos you know how you've done on the whole unit in one hit – makes you feel better" (TP1.033). Nelson also felt that positive feedback was desirable: "it makes me feel good, knowing I've done good work" (N.1.002). An alternative view was expressed by On The Ball: "It's good to know that you're getting feedback (but) if it's, like, negative, you don't want to do it" (OTB2.138). This latter aspect of feedback is important because the influence of feedback on an individual's self-image affects academic achievement, as well as motivation and engagement (Young, 2000).

#### **Feedback is important because it supports deep learning and progress towards achieving long-term goals (Category C)**

Category C shows the importance of feedback with reference to a much longer timeframe than that identified in Categories A and B. For example, Category A is concerned with the importance of feedback in relation to a current piece of work while Category C is concerned with the participants' expectations of their achievement at the end point of their learning, either when they were ready to leave secondary schooling or when they were settled into their

adult career or job options. This view (that feedback can help a person with his or her future aspirations and goals) contrasts with the concept of a relatively short-term timeframe which has been discussed previously under Categories A and B. Category C by comparison includes some of the aspects identified for Category A and Category B, but places them in a longer timeframe or associates them with aspects of deep learning such as the ability to self-assess or to reflect on one's own learning (Atherton, 2011). Category C also includes a focus on using feedback to make progress towards achieving long-term goals such as ensuring suitable preparation for adult careers. Three structural aspects were identified for Category C.

### **1. It develops the ability to self-assess**

Because self-assessment is usually an indicator that deep learning is taking place (Atherton, 2011) utterances which showed that the participant was capable of giving himself feedback were included in this aspect. Not all of the boys commented on this aspect, but those who did were very clear about their ability to give themselves feedback: "...just to better yourself, to correct yourself and know that you're doing well or bad" (TP3.113); and "...asking for feedback on that, basically you can just decide whether it's good or bad yourself" (N2.182). These utterances indicate that the speakers were engaged currently in assessing their work for themselves, although for the most part they did this in the context of the comments and other forms of feedback which their teacher provided to them. Amazing, On The Ball, Ryder, and Awesome did not comment on this aspect, and it is unclear from their transcripts whether or not they held similar views.

### **2. It supports the attainment of future goals**

This aspect refers to goals which lie outside the immediate timeframe of the primary school programme which was running during 2010 when the data for this study were gathered. It refers to the importance of feedback in maximising educational achievement so that an

individual may achieve his or her life goals: “Improve your resumé to get a career – very, very important” (TP1.008); and “So you can do better in the future for jobs and careers and stuff” (TP1.004). There is also a recognition that feedback can continue through life and that all duties in paid employment will be performed better if feedback is provided:

...it is a thing that’s going to help you ... students ... whoever ... that’s getting the feedback, become better in what they’re doing, and make, pretty much the world a better place, because it’s more productive and it’s just getting everything ... to work properly and in the most economic and effective way. (Tr3.058)

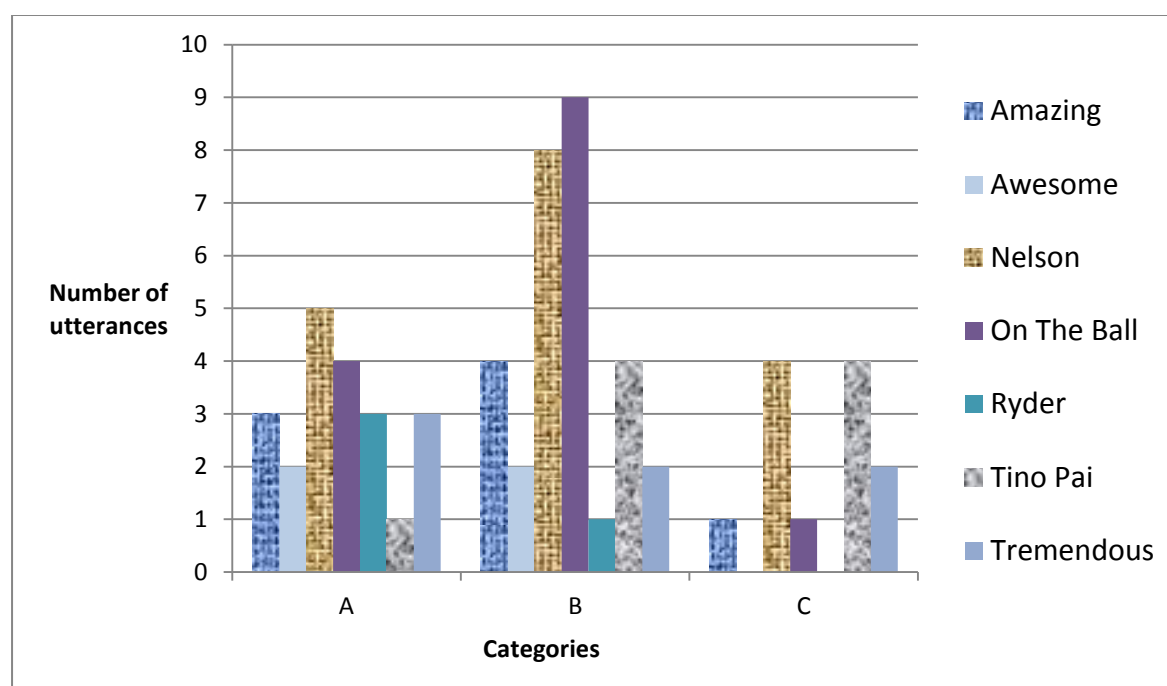
From these utterances it is clear that a much longer timeframe was envisaged by these boys, and that they were aware that their schooling, including the feedback they received, was preparing them for their future lives.

### **3. It encourages reflection**

This aspect is another feature of deep learning (Atherton, 2011). Utterances were included in this aspect on the basis of indicating that either the participant would not accept all feedback or that the participant was reflecting on his learning: The following extracts highlight this feature: “...I wouldn’t follow [a teacher’s] feedback after knowing they won’t give you good advice” (OTB2.108); “...for me [my work] might be really good; for the teacher it might be totally wrong” (N2.052). At times the boys were not able to articulate fully the process they were employing, but it is evident from the wider context that they are reflecting on their own learning and are developing the ability to identify good from bad work. The boys seemed to be indicating that they were considering a range of strategies they had employed in their work, rather than just deciding that a piece of work had been completed well or poorly.

### ***Discussion of findings for Question 1***

Within the data, three categories relating to this question were found and described. These data show that the participants see feedback as important because it affects their short- and long-term educational goals, and because it affects their personal attitudes towards learning. The data also reveal that some aspects of deep learning were supported through feedback, but it is possible that either the boys were not fully aware of these or that they were unable to fully articulate the processes they were using. Utterances for this question were identified from each of the participants, although not all of the boys contributed to all of the categories. This is shown in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3. Number of utterances contributed by each participant to the three categories identified for Question 1.**

In Figure 3 each labelled utterance has been included once only for each category, regardless of how many aspects it appeared in for that category. For this reason it is not possible to use Figure 3 to identify variations between the utterances for each participant, although it is clear that in some cases a participant's utterances were identified more strongly with one category than the others. This is the case for On The Ball, who contributed nine utterances to Category B but only one to Category C. Similarly Ryder did not contribute many utterances overall

(four in total), but three of these related to Category A. This situation might indicate that Ryder relates feedback more to his short-term goals than to long-term goals or to his personal attitudes, but it could also mean that he happened to elaborate on one idea more fully than on some of his other ideas during the interviews. This is one reason why phenomenography is useful for identifying a range of qualitatively different ways of viewing an aspect of a phenomenon, but it does not lend itself to identifying definitively an individual's response to the phenomenon. However, because I carried out three rounds of interviews using a range of questions, each boy had three opportunities to elaborate his views. I also probed quite deeply to ensure that I elicited as wide a range as possible of each boy's views. Because of this strategy I am inclined to favour the theory that Ryder and On The Ball (and other participants with similar patterns in other questions) relate more to one of the categories than to others. At the same time, it does not appear that any one individual student relates solely to one view about the importance of feedback. This is an important finding, because it implies that within a typical classroom the students may hold a range of perceptions relating to the importance of feedback overall, but that individual students within the class may relate more to one perception than to others.

A range of qualitatively different ways of acknowledging the importance of feedback was found, establishing that there is variation in the perceptions of feedback held by the participants. There was also variation in the number of utterances relating to each category (21 for Category A; 27 for Category B; and 13 for Category C). This does not mean that a category with fewer utterances from this sample of participants is less important than one with more utterances, because each category identified contributes to the range as a whole regardless of the number of utterances involved. The same observation applies to the number of structural aspects identified for each category. The words in the transcripts are expressions

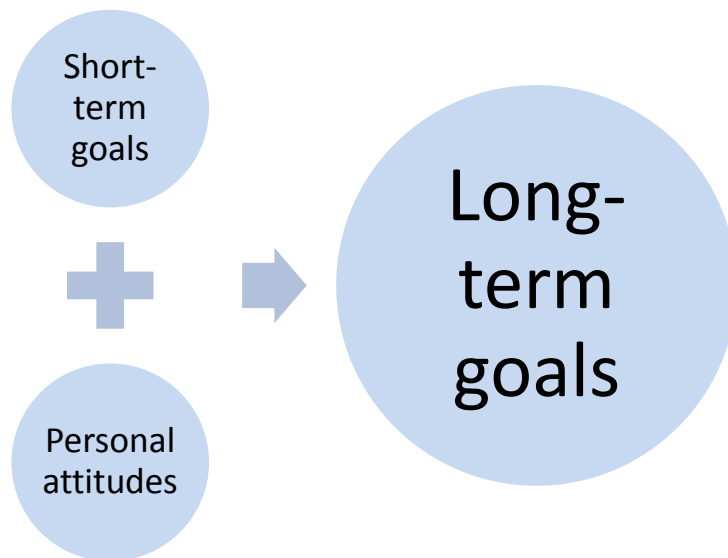


of meaning, not the meaning itself, because the meaning is to be derived from the expressions. Phenomenographers, although constrained to consider only the words included in the transcripts, are concerned more with the meaning being expressed:

The emphasis when reading transcripts is to discern the fundamental meaning of the phenomenon as expressed in the transcript. The categories of description should be faithful to the meaning of the transcripts. This may mean using in the categories particular words from the transcripts, but that would be a consequence and not a goal of searching for meaning. (Akerlind et al., 2005, p. 87)

### ***Outcome space for Question 1***

An outcome space in phenomenographic research provides a structural framework to show how the categories of description relate to each other (Marton & Booth, 1997). Figure 4 depicts the outcome space for the phenomenon of the importance of feedback, showing the relationship between the three categories. The categories have been placed to represent the difference in timeframe identified for each category, as well as the hierarchy of learning outcomes involved. Categories A and B seem to be closely related to each other – utterances for these categories were found in close proximity in the transcripts, sometimes at different parts of the same utterance. This closeness of expression may indicate that the underlying meaning of the two categories was connected closely in the participants' thinking.



**Figure 4. Outcome space for question 1: Why is feedback important? depicting the relationship between categories identified through the phenomenographic analysis**

The category that feedback is important because it supports personal dispositions and long-term goals is positioned as occurring after Categories A and B for two reasons. The first is that all the aspects of this category are linked to a longer timeframe and therefore encompass all the aspects of the categories that feedback supports progress towards immediate learning goals and affects personal attitudes towards learning. This is because a longer timeframe cannot exist in isolation from a shorter timeframe. The second reason is to signify that deep learning is seen as a more desirable learning goal than is short term or surface learning (Borredon, Deffayet, Baker, & Kolb, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Marton & Booth, 1997). Deep learning involves the attainment of short-term goals as well as long-term ones. Some personal attitudes towards learning are evident in students likely to use deep learning strategies, but the characteristics of Categories A and B are more likely to precede the development of deep learning strategies and progress towards long-term goals than to be developed from such strategies (Atherton, 2011; Borredon et al., 2011).

### ***Discussion of the literature relating to Question 1***

I reviewed the literature relating to the importance of feedback in order to place the findings derived from my study into the context of the field as a whole. A common theme found across the literature is that feedback is important because it is a key mechanism in the development and enhancement of learning (see, for example, Adcroft, 2011; Gipps, 1994a; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Latham, 1997).

All the aspects of the category that feedback is important because it supports progress towards immediate learning goals (Category A) were well covered in the literature, particularly the second structural aspect – that feedback enhances achievement. Feedback is seen as important for promoting learning achievement in general, and especially in relation to a current piece of work. Hattie, for example, located over 1200 studies concerning the substantial power of feedback in influencing achievement (Hattie, 2009, p. 173). In an earlier article Hattie and Timperley (2007) found that “feedback is effective when it consists of information about progress, and/or about how to proceed” (p. 89). This fits well with Category A, because it seems to imply that feedback is concerned with a particular piece of work or with short-term goals. The importance of feedback in correcting misconceptions is also highlighted in the literature (Brookhart, 2008; Gagné et al., 1987; Higgins et al., 2002). For example, Higgins et al. suggested that “...misconceptions need to be *explained* [emphasis in original] and improvements for future work suggested” (p. 62). This was very much the view of the boys in my study, one that is reflected in the range of utterances relating to structural aspects two and four of Category A as shown in Figure 4.

An additional feature of this aspect is how feedback to correct misapprehensions and to refine knowledge is applied. Orsmond, Merry, and Reiling (2005) found that a majority of the students interviewed for their study preferred to have comments put in the margin relating to

specific issues. These students found that comments placed at the end of their work were less useful. Ryder appeared to agree with this conclusion when he commented that “I find it easy, sometimes ... ‘cos in my writing I normally do ... miss a line ... write the next thing. And so teachers can just correct in between that line I’ve left. So I find it easier to understand” (Ry1.063). Orsmond et al. offer a word of caution, however, in their comment that they also found that some students could not benefit from feedback if it related only to a specific piece of work. At first sight these two statements may seem contradictory, but in fact they serve to strengthen my argument that the importance of feedback is seen as variable by a particular population according to context. What suits one individual may not suit another. This finding is likely to be of great importance to teachers and to others who are concerned with enhancing learning opportunities for students.

While all aspects of the category that feedback affects personal attitudes towards learning (Category B) were covered in the literature, not all of the structural aspects were covered in equal numbers. Many more studies referred to the effect of feedback on feelings of wellbeing than to any of the other three aspects (Clarke et al., 2003; Gipps, 1994a; Hattie, 2009; Preston & Todd-Mancillas, 1985; Wansbrough et al., 2001; Young, 2000). These studies concluded that feedback can have either a positive or a negative effect on the students’ feelings of wellbeing. Young’s (2000) study dealt specifically with the effects of feedback on individual students’ levels of self-esteem and hence on his or her sense of wellbeing. She found that in many instances the feedback decreased the student’s sense of wellbeing, although in other cases very similar feedback was reported as increasing self-esteem. Another study (Preston & Todd-Mancillas, 1985) discussed the same point in the context of giving feedback to students about their ability to give oral speeches. This finding – that feedback affects students in very different ways – ties in with Hattie’s (2009, p. 238) caution that:

Teachers need to be aware of what each and every student is thinking and knowing... and have proficient knowledge and understanding of ... content to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback such that every student moves progressively through the levels.

I would add that in order to do this, teachers also need to have a good understanding of the range of possible perceptions of their students regarding the aspects of feedback that are important to the latter. This is one area that I hope will benefit from my current research.

The first aspect of Category B – that feedback affects motivation – is linked closely to another aspect of Category B, that feedback affects feelings of wellbeing, because both are likely to affect the degree of engagement by students with their learning. However, the literature makes it clear that they are considered as separate terms. For instance Mauch (2007) describes feedback as being the number one motivator for students, and is using the term “motivator” clearly in relation to something that inspires someone to undertake a course of action (i.e., it serves as an external stimulus). Young (2000) commented that for some students, feedback placed their whole sense of self at risk. This clearly refers to an intrinsic factor, one which affects an individual’s sense of contentment and his or her subsequent health. Orsmond et al. (2005) found, for their part, that feedback motivates students to achieve a higher level of understanding of the topic by acting more independently, whereas Simonsen (1998) has suggested that feedback is essential in order to motivate employees by valuing the effort they have put in. Mauch (2007), by comparison, accepts that feedback is a motivator in her discussion of ways of providing students with direct formative feedback from their teachers. All of these features can be found in the data gathered for this study, and are included in the utterances for this aspect of Category B.

Some studies show that feedback can be of importance in changing behaviours (Honey, 2003; Leach & Conto, 1999). Honey commented that feedback on its own will not change behaviour, although it can raise an individual's awareness of the behaviour being exhibited. The individual must act on the feedback to actually make a change. Leach and Conto referred to the use of performance feedback to stimulate workplace behaviour change, which was an aspect that did not appear so clearly in the data for the present study. However, the points raised by Honey and Leach and Conto are significant because the boys did comment about the effects of feedback on their personal attitudes to learning. This effect was demonstrated by Nelson's comment that he had changed in his response to feedback over the year. He had said several times in the course of Interviews 1 and 2 that he would just ignore feedback that he viewed as negative, but by Interview 3 Nelson commented that he would respond to it because he had decided it would be helpful to him (N3.47-48-49).

A number of studies have shown that feedback is important because it can develop persistence, which in this context is seen as an aspect of student engagement (Absolum, 2006; Gagné et al., 1987; Huntly & Donovan, 2009; Latham, 1997; Ryan, 2005). Absolum has suggested that the quality of work will improve as students persevere at a task for longer, while Gagné et al (1987) and Latham (1997) have included the development of persistence in lists of the important effects of feedback on learning. Ryan (2005) considered that persistence is an element of both time on task and of student engagement. Huntly and Donovan (2009), by comparison, discuss "...signs of change, a willingness to struggle with a task and then find another way, and evidence of learning from their struggles" as constructing evidence of a deeper understanding of persistence than simply "sticking to it and not giving up". All of these authors agree that feedback can be a powerful element in the development of persistence, in whatever way they have defined or described it. The boys in my study seem

to view their willingness to carry on in response to feedback in a different light. To them, if they received positive feedback then it was an indication that they were doing things the right way and should persevere. Conversely, they saw negative feedback as an indication that they had not been carrying out the task or item correctly and regarded it as a signal that they should give up. For some of them, especially for On The Ball, this lack of persistence was linked strongly to their motivation and their feeling of general wellbeing. To this end persistence is connected to other aspects of Category B.

Category C differs from both Category A and Category B because not all of the aspects related to Category C that I identified through the phenomenographic analysis of the interview transcripts are identified in the literature. The importance of feedback for motivating attainment of future goals is not a perception that appears evident in the literature on feedback that I reviewed. Because it was of importance to the participants, however, I read more widely and found that some of the ideas that seem to be implicit in this aspect are covered in the literature on self-regulation, which is an important field in its own right with significant overlaps with the field of formative assessment. For example, motivation is seen as an integral component of self-regulation, which in turn is seen as an important feature of lifelong learners (Butler & Winne, 1995; Chung & Yuen, 2011; Orsmond, Maw, Park, Gomez & Crook, 2013; Zimmerman & Shunk, 2011). Feedback is also seen as having an important role in the development of self-regulated learners, with many authors further differentiating feedback into external feedback (which arises from teacher and classroom actors) and internal feedback (which is generated by the learners themselves as they work through a task (see, for example, Butler & Winne, 1995; Chung & Yuen, 2011; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Orsmond et al., 2013). It should be noted, however, that many of these studies are based on students enrolled in higher education contexts such as universities.

It seems that some of my participants are more actively engaged in generating internal feedback than are others, and that this could lead to their becoming more effective learners later in life. However, the particular connotation of this aspect of Category C (that feedback is important because it supports the attainment of future goals) expressed by the participants is their awareness that feedback given now will improve their long-term educational and employment success because it maximises their understanding at the time that the feedback is given. The participants who contributed to this aspect seem to be implying that this enhanced understanding will have a sort of snowball effect, by which all their future goals will be achieved to a higher standard than would be possible if they did not receive feedback in the present time. Again, even in the literature on self-regulation, this was not an understanding that appeared to be well covered. This is an important finding because it indicates that the understanding that feedback can affect future academic success more directly than through its effects in such areas as motivation and correcting misapprehensions may be less well understood in the context of learning and achievement in the classroom. This aspect was mentioned by four of the boys, which makes this the most highly supported aspect of Category C. This aspect is also well supported when the number of utterances and participants contributing to it is compared with the number of utterances and participants contributing to the other categories. This level of support also contributes to the importance of this finding.

The perception that feedback is important because it supports deep learning and progress towards attaining long-term goals when it develops the ability of learners to self-assess is well covered in the literature, usually as a feature of either deep learning processes and procedures or of formative assessment principles (Absolum, 2006; Brookhart, 2008, 2009;



Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Reason, Cox, McIntosh, & Terenzini, 2010; Weaver, 2006). When discussing the need for the learner to perceive that a gap exists between a desired goal and his or her learning, Black and Wiliam stated that “... the prime responsibility for generating the information may lie with the student in self-assessment...” (1998a, p. 68). The importance of feedback in developing self-assessment strategies is mentioned often in the literature. Brookhart, for example, comments that

Self- and peer-assessment skills ... are best taught in context, in lessons that use a self or peer assessment strategy to provide students with information about their own work that they can see is useful and helps them improve. This approach teaches them where feedback comes from. They will learn the strategy at the same time as they learn how to improve their project, writing assignment, math problem-solving, or whatever they are working on. (2008, p. 60)

The utterances cited earlier in the description of the first aspect of variation – that feedback supports deep learning and progress towards attaining long-term goals when it develops the ability to self-assess – show clearly that the boys who commented on this aspect of the importance of feedback were able to self-assess, and that as they did so they were engaging in aspects of deep learning. The boys were not asking themselves merely whether they had their work right or wrong; they were concerned with using the information to judge for themselves what they would need to do next in order to progress in their learning.

This desire by some of the boys (to use the feedback they received to help with their own self-assessment) also demonstrates an ability to reflect on their learning. This aspect is well covered in the literature, and is seen as being very important to the effectiveness of the learning taking place:

Both teaching and learning are more effective when teacher and student take time to think about, review and enhance the learning process, and when the learner reviews and rehearses the understanding of what was to be learnt. (Absolum, 2006, p. 21)

Clarke (1998, p. 62) has included a period of quiet reflection in her directions for encouraging self-evaluation in children. This is one of many instances in the literature (see, for example, Borredon et al., 2011; Higgins et al., 2002; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2002; Orsmond et al., 2005) that show that while self-assessment and reflection are linked closely they are separate processes. Hattie (2009, p. 192) describes self-questioning as a form of self-regulation, which he had included as one aspect of meta-cognition previously. He found that the effect of self-questioning and self-verbalisation falls within what he calls “the zone of desired effects” and that it has a medium influence on achievement. He concludes that this shows that these strategies have a significantly beneficial effect on learning achievement. In my study, I found that the boys were using reflection more as a means of deciding what use (if any) they could make of the feedback they were given. It could be that the development of reflection skills through building on the predispositions of some, but perhaps not all, of their students positively is an area which teachers could consider usefully as a means of raising the achievement of the students in their classes.

### ***Summary***

I discovered that there is a range of qualitatively different perceptions about the importance of feedback expressed by the participants in my study. These are that feedback supports progress towards achieving short-term goals, that it affects personal attitudes towards learning, and that feedback supports deep learning and progress towards attaining long-term goals, which I have then shown as categories of description. Each of these categories has

three or four structural aspects, each of which has been described and illustrated with selected utterances from the interview transcripts. I then consulted the literature to place these findings in the research field, and found support for all the categories and for most of the aspects of variation. The only aspect which could not be identified within the literature was that feedback is important because it supports personal dispositions and long term goals when it supports the attainment of future goals. This is an important finding because four of the seven participants in my study emphasised this point, and made several references to it. I suggest that this is an aspect of the importance of feedback which may be underestimated in classrooms.

## Chapter 6: Phenomenographic analysis and discussion of the helpfulness of feedback

### *What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?*

Within the interview transcripts, I found four qualitatively different perceptions of what affects the helpfulness of feedback. These are the relationship between the student and the teacher (Category A), its relevance and accessibility (Category B), the type of feedback (Category C), and the timing of the feedback (Category D). The categories and the structural aspects of each of them are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories of Description for the question ‘What makes feedback helpful or unhelpful for individuals?’, showing the referential and structural aspects for each category

Category	Referential aspect (the meaning of each category). The helpfulness of feedback is affected by...	Structural aspects (the aspects which contribute to and make up the category)			
A	the relationship between the teacher and the student ...	1. according to the degree of trust between them	2. because of the student's expectations of the teacher	3. because of the student's perception of the teacher's expectations	
B	its relevance and accessibility ...	1. according to the ease of understanding	2. when the “full story” is given or not given	3. because of the helpful or unhelpful language used	
C	the type of feedback ...	1. when it is one specific type	2. when more than one type of feedback is combined	3. according to whether the feedback is oral or written	4. according to whether it is child nominated or teacher nominated
D	the timing of it...	1. when it is given at the start of a piece of work	2. when it is given during a piece of work	3. when it is given at the end of a piece of work	

I followed the process outlined previously for Question 1 in my exploration of this question.

Each category, and its structural aspects, has been described using quotations from the

interviews to highlight certain points. I then present and discuss the phenomenographic outcome space before reviewing the literature related to each category. This section of the chapter is followed by a brief summary of the findings related to this question.

### **The helpfulness of feedback is affected by the relationship between the student and the teacher (Category A)**

This perception of feedback refers to part of the complex and dynamic situation which exists within a classroom. There are two main groups represented in every classroom, the teacher and the students; there may well be others such as teacher aides and specialist teachers. The relationship between the teacher and the learner is at the very heart of learning: “Learning itself is rooted in the student-teacher relationship” (Tollefson & Osborn, 2008, p. 19). Black and Wiliam (1998b) showed that effective learning takes place when children are actively involved, are motivated, and when they have good self-esteem. They also noted that enhancing feedback between teacher and learner so that effective learning does take place requires particular modes of pedagogy. I argue that one of these modes of pedagogy relates to the particular relationship that exists between the teacher and the learner. I found that there are four structural aspects associated with this category.

#### **Structural aspects of Category A**

##### **1. The degree of trust that exists between the teacher and the student**

The relationship between the teacher and the student, particularly the trust established (or not) between them, has a significant impact on the participant’s perception of the importance of the feedback given. Six of the boys contributed utterances to this aspect. The importance they

attached to this aspect was stated well by Tremendous, when he agreed with enthusiasm to my comment that “...being able to trust is really quite important in whether or not you’d accept feedback” (Tr2.109-110-111-112). The utterances selected for this aspect covered a range of issues. For instance, there was a sense that trusting someone means that a pupil expects he or she would give correct information: “You trust in whoever’s giving the feedback and you know they’re going to tell you the right things” (OTB2.076). “You lose trust when they tell you something’s not – something you already know” (OTB2.100). There was also an implication that feedback from someone the person did not trust lacked value: “If I lost trust in the person, I wouldn’t really read the feedback – everything in my work I’d probably make a self-based decision” (N2.176). In spite of this belief, there was a realisation by some boys that it would still be worthwhile reading the feedback in the hope of finding something useful: “Once you’d lost trust, next time you got feedback from that person you might or you might not accept it ... because it might change and say something that I need to improve on” (Am2.098 – 099). The way in which the teacher interacts with the student was also a factor in the development of trust: “[you trust the teacher] ... ‘cos most of the time, she’s like, really nice to me ... and seems quite friendly ... and seems honest ... so ...” (Ry2.153); “... feedback would be true depending on what they say and how they say it” (Tr2.092). Overall, the utterances show that the degree to which students trust their teacher is an important factor in shaping this perception of the helpfulness of feedback.

## **2. The student’s expectations of the teacher**

This aspect refers to the expectations the participants had of their teacher in relation to the feedback she would give them. The boys indicated that they had clear expectations of their teacher. These expectations included the following: that the teacher would know what the boys as students were supposed to do, and that he or she would put time into providing them

with feedback. To this end the boys stated: “I know that feedback’s accurate ‘cos it’s written in red pen. I know that she’s telling the truth because she’s the teacher” (Aw2.060 – 062); and “that kind of makes you feel like the teacher’s, um, just ... just, that’s how she does it. She just quickly goes through it and yeah I wouldn’t really like that one...” (N1.042). They also felt that the teacher ought to give them information about their work: “Teacher’s job to tell [students] how to improve their work for next time or help them keep going on the same track that they’re on” (Ry3.006); “”if you never ever got told that anything was not done right you’d want to know what’s going on and how you’re improving and what you need to improve on” (OTB2.082). Overall, the boys expected that their teacher would give them good quality information on their progress and about how they might improve.

### **3. The student’s perception of the teacher’s expectations**

This aspect does not refer to the teacher’s expectations of the boys per se. Instead, it refers to the expectations that the boys imagined their teacher had of them. The utterances relating to this aspect emphasised mostly that the teacher would expect the student to use the feedback he or she had been given. The utterances included the following: “Take that feedback in and use it” (Am3.015); and “My job would be to take what the feedback is, and, um, try and work on what the feedback was about” (Ry3.029). There was also a sense that the teacher might be expecting the student to be a more capable student than the student feels is possible for himself: “(The teacher’s) been quite demanding, expecting me to be the best writer” (N1.084). Overall, this aspect gives an impression that the student expects the feedback he is given will be helpful for improving his or her work, and that the teacher will expect him to implement the suggestions.

## **The helpfulness of feedback is affected by its relevance and accessibility**

### **(Category B)**

In this category feedback is seen as helpful if the student sees it as meaningful and if he can access that meaning. In other words the student must be able to make sense of the feedback relatively easily, rather than having to struggle with the feedback because of some learning or physical issue. The students seemed to be interested in general in how easily they understood their feedback and in the relevance of it. Utterances relating to this perception were spread among the boys and across the interviews. What is especially revealing about this category is the examples the boys gave of feedback which they considered either easy to understand or meaningful. Sometimes the same type of feedback was considered helpful by one boy because it was easy to understand, and not helpful by another boy because it was not deemed meaningful. An example of this was Ryder's preference for a grade (B+) as he considered the five types of feedback presented to him during interview 1 (see Appendix E), because "[I think] (B+ is) the easiest, 'cos I know B is good and + is even better" (Ry1.057), a remark which contrasts with Tremendous' comment about the same item: "[I'd put] B+ last – all it shows is B+ – doesn't tell you any feedback, doesn't show you what to do next" (Tr1.033). Both views are valid responses to feedback, however. The fact that the two boys were referring to the same type of feedback does not affect adversely the range of ways in which this group of participants viewed feedback.

### **Structural aspects for Category B**

#### **1. Ease of understanding**

There are two issues relating to this aspect that are interlinked. One is that helpful feedback will be easy to understand, and the other is that helpful feedback will be meaningful for the student. The first is expressed through utterances which indicate that the participant has a



clear understanding of the intent of the feedback. Examples of this include: “A rating out of 10 would work for me ‘cos it’s easier not having to read it” (Ry2.021); and “You’re getting taught to do certain things within the story ... but if you get feedback it can be a lot easier to remember” (Tr2.018). The second issue, that of the meaningfulness of the feedback, was expressed usually as a negative. In other words, many of the utterances selected for this aspect related to feedback not being helpful because the student did not find it meaningful. This point is shown in the following comments, made as the boys expressed their reasons for placing five types of feedback in order from most helpful to least helpful: “[the one with the levels on it is the] least helpful, because it doesn’t really matter about my levels. All I need to know is that I’ve done good work” (N1.044); and “[the short comment] doesn’t even tell you about that piece of writing – it’s not helping ... anything” (Tr1.035). In spite of the preponderance of utterances that expressed this aspect negatively there were some that indicated the same idea positively: “Oh right – [the feedback shows me that] this is what I need to improve on” (N1.008); “[Feedback] helps because whoever’s reading it understands more about their work” (Tr1.004).

Utterances included in this aspect indicate a strong link between the perceived helpfulness of feedback and the accessibility and the depth of meaning of it. This is an important finding for classroom teachers because it points to the need for them to understand what individual students require from their feedback in order to find it helpful.

## **2. The “full story” is given or not given**

The phrase “full story” was used by Tino Pai when he was discussing whether or not he believed he had been told about all aspects of his work by the teacher. I have adopted it to

indicate the same issue in other utterances. I wish to make it clear that Tino Pai was the only participant to use this phrase in this way, and that any other references to it are my own.

This aspect includes utterances that indicate the participants did not always feel that they were being given the “full story” about their work. They indicated clearly that they did not find feedback which focussed on the positive aspects of their work to be very helpful: “If you never got told that anything was not done right, you wouldn’t really learn from it” (OTB2.082). There was a recognition that solely positive feedback could be helpful in a limited way, but that a more complete picture would be more helpful: “If I constantly got positive feedback, never told anything to improve on, that would be sort of useful, telling me I’m doing good but some things I wouldn’t get better on” (N2.162). However, a situation in which the young learner was just told what he had ‘not got right’ was not seen as helpful either: “When you’re told that you haven’t done something well you don’t find that helpful” (TP1.057 – TP1.058). Taken together, the utterances selected for this aspect indicate that helpful feedback should include information on what has not been done correctly – as well as about what has been done correctly.

### **3. The helpful or unhelpful language used**

This aspect refers to the wording of the feedback, which can be seen as either helpful or not helpful. The positive utterances selected for this aspect are linked to the issue of depth of meaning noted with the previous aspect, because there is a sense that some language is helpful since it expresses the meaning of the feedback in more detail. One utterance clearly demonstrates this idea: “[The most helpful feedback is] the longer one I’ve just talked about .... you’re using all that language again, helpful language” (TP1.077 – 079). The language being referred to are the phrases “good analysis”, “relevant areas”, and “valuable habit” (see

Appendix C for the ‘Long Comment’ item referred to here). It is clearly the words being used that make the feedback helpful. Another utterance demonstrates the power of language in contrast with symbols: “There is a bit of feedback at University but serious stuff – real good proper words. Not like Smiley Face” (TP2.236).

The opposite view was also apparent in the utterances selected for this aspect – that the language used can make feedback unhelpful. One participant objected to “...that demanding form of words – usually “Do this” or “You need to do this”...” (N2.093), and observed that the remarks were “All demanding – you need to do this right – you’re not doing that right – you need to do this. All demanding and negative” (N2.078. Emphasis in original). The way feedback is given, or the tone of voice used, was also seen as unhelpful: “A lot of people don’t actually say things in a nice way – just makes it harder to deal with” (N3.012).

The inclusion of the words “you need to ...” as one example of unhelpful language is interesting, because it refers to a common tactic used by teachers to identify the next step of learning for their students. Almost certainly a teacher who used this form of wording in giving feedback would feel that he or she was offering helpful advice as a means of showing the student how to close the gap between the standard he or she had reached currently and the standard the person was aiming for, in accordance with Sadler’s (1989) points. It is evident from these utterances that the student may not receive the feedback in this spirit, and may not make use of it consequently. A mismatch between the teacher’s intention and the student’s perception may well account for the lack of response some students make to the feedback they receive.

## **The helpfulness of feedback is affected by the type of feedback (Category C)**

The type of feedback being referred to in this category encompasses both written and oral kinds. Although the boys were shown five types of feedback during interview one, their utterances were not restricted to these. A phenomenographic interview requires that any comments are accepted as relevant no matter in what context they occur. However, many of the utterances for this category came from Interview 1 because, during this interview, the boys were asked to rank five types of feedback in order from ‘most helpful’ to ‘least helpful’ and to say out loud the reasoning behind their choices (see Appendix E for the materials used). The types acted as prompts to elicit the boys’ thinking, and were not intended to be restrictive, or comprehensive. Although Interview 1 contained the most direct expressions of the helpfulness or otherwise of different types of feedback, utterances from all three interviews were selected for this category.

Category C includes utterances related to the type of feedback given, such as a grade or a comment, but it also includes utterances relating to whether the feedback is given in oral and/or written form. The fourth structural aspect for this category relates to the helpfulness of feedback when feedback on a particular topic or issue is asked for by the student rather than being identified by the teacher. From the number and range of the utterances relating to Category C, it is clear that the type of feedback is of great importance in relation to its perceived helpfulness.

### **Structural aspects of Category C**

#### **1. One specific type**

To be included in this aspect, the utterance had to include a sense that a single type of feedback given at one time was more or less helpful than when multiple types were

combined. The participants were free to discuss anything they wished to about feedback but were given some prompts, especially during the first interview when the relationship between us was not established as fully as it became later in the year. Utterances which referred to this aspect contributed to this aspect positively and negatively. As with Aspect 1 of Category B, some types were referred to as being both helpful and not helpful by different participants. As an example, the short comment type of feedback (see Appendix E) was seen as being both helpful in some utterances and unhelpful in others: “The short comment is better than the long comment ‘cos it’s all positive” (N1.064); “The short comment is not helpful – don’t say what level or what you achieved or how good you have been” (Aw1.100). Most of the positive utterances showed either an awareness of the benefits associated with a particular type of feedback or revealed that the participant was looking for positives in his feedback. For instance, the following comments, given as the participants considered the helpfulness or otherwise of each of the five types of feedback they were shown during Interview 1, show an awareness of the benefits they associated with some forms of feedback: “[Punctuation is better than the levels] ‘cos they might not know that so it’s helping with their mistakes” (OTB1.073); and “I find it better when it ... marks my work so that sometimes I get to spell it correctly next time ...” (Ry1.070). Two other comments indicated that a particular type of feedback was valued because of its positive nature: “Short comment – quite good; telling you that you’ve done good work, provoking you to do more good work” (N1.042); “I always get the good marks like “Well done” – find these comments helpful” (TP1.014 – 016). Many of the utterances included in this aspect made it clear that a single type of feedback was not helpful because it was too limited. It was usually the B+ grade that was the subject of these utterances: “You know B+ is good but it doesn’t really help you. It just tells you you’ve done good work” (N1.076); and “Grade – only a grade, doesn’t tell you what it is to improve on or what have you done well – just got a grade” (OTB1.075).

## **2. More than one type of feedback is combined**

Utterances which commented on the helpfulness when more than one type of feedback was combined on one piece of work were included in this dimension. Most, but not all, of these comments were made during the ranking task included in Interview 1 (see Appendix D).

Often the participants were remarking on how a single type of feedback could be improved:

“[Punctuation] – kind of helpful but they could have written something at the bottom just to make it more useful” (Tr1.037); and “...just spelling, punctuation, grammar ... but the thing is if she ... wrote some comments: “You did good work but ... please try to improve your spelling next time” then I could’ve probably put that second” (N1.072).

Other utterances showed the boys were aware that some types of feedback included more than one piece of information. They were able to state the type of feedback they preferred: “I like getting told, like, saying that I did something well and having it commented – saying what level I’m achieving” (Am1.055); or “[A long comment is] best because it’s showing, like, positive feedback and it’s telling [the pupil that] you’ve developed more skills ... and at the bottom it’s got like some suggestions to make it better” (OTB1.047).

Taken together, the utterances for this aspect show an awareness by the boys that feedback can be made more or less helpful according to the type selected. This awareness is at first glance similar to Category B, because the boys appear to be looking for a greater depth of meaning than is apparent in some types of teacher feedback. I feel that these utterances represent a qualitatively different perception of feedback, because the depth of meaning is not the prime focus of the utterances. The boys are commenting primarily on the helpfulness or otherwise of different types of feedback rather than on the depth of meaning associated with each.

### 3. Whether it is oral or written

Although the boys were not asked directly if they preferred oral or written feedback I probed this dimension if it was mentioned. The “long comment” example had the words “Please see me to discuss this” recorded at the bottom of a fairly long paragraph. During my previous study (Williams, 2001, 2010) many of the boys, but not the girls, who carried out this task commented that this phrase made that form of feedback more desirable. This experience meant that I was not surprised when the participants in the current study also commented during the ranking task on the possibility of talking to the teacher “[Long comment] ...you can also discuss it with your teacher, saying that ‘Oh, um, I think I’m doing quite well in this. Am I actually doing well?’” (N1.052). Other comments included: “I haven’t had much verbal feedback, but I would like to have some ... just to ... know how you’re doing, ‘cos it gives you more of an understanding with verbal feedback rather than written feedback” (TP2.032); and “Kid got like ‘OK, Good work’ written down, then the teacher said [uses animated voice] “OK! Great work! Yeah!” ... sometimes they explain more, ‘cos you can’t write all of it on paper” (TP2.032).

Utterances from all three interviews pointed to being able to talk to the teacher as a valued form of feedback. These utterances, together with the findings from my earlier study (Williams, 2001; 2010), indicates that oral feedback may be seen as being more helpful than written feedback by a significant proportion of the learners in a teacher’s class. This premise would need more research to be established formally, but the indications from these two studies suggest that teachers may find it beneficial to give more oral feedback to their students. However, three utterances referred specifically to the helpfulness of written feedback: “All feedback’s helpful, but I like written stuff ‘cos then you can think”

(Am1.034); “...if it’s just in my book, I can just open it and look” (N2.114); and “...having it so I can read it and take it in, try it again and make sure it works” (Am1.010).

Underlying all these utterances is a sense that the meaningfulness and accessibility of the feedback are factors in why either oral or written feedback may be seen as more helpful by individuals. I considered the possibility that a preference for oral or written feedback may not be a separate aspect of the helpfulness of feedback. I remain convinced that the type of feedback and its content are aspects of the students’ perceptions of the helpfulness of feedback, but that the perceived helpfulness of written or oral feedback is a separate aspect. This situation suggests that separate perceptions (by the students) relating to oral or written feedback, the depth of meaning of the feedback, and the ease of understanding it, are inherent in the data.

#### **4. Child nominated or teacher nominated**

During Interview 3 the boys were asked specifically if they would like to be able to nominate areas for feedback, rather than leave it to the teacher to decide what feedback to give them. The data show that while this was a valid conception of feedback, no clear preference for one or the other (i.e., child or teacher nominated) was expressed. Some participants felt that nominating the areas they wanted to receive feedback on would be helpful for them: “[I would feel good] ...I want to improve on something and I don’t know how to, I just write it down and then ... the teacher gives me feedback” (Aw2.103); and “I would like to be able to ask for feedback on bits I’m not sure about” (TP2.149 – 150). However, others felt it would not be helpful for them: “asking for feedback wouldn’t work ‘cos you wouldn’t know what to write ...” (Ry2.181); and “you really want to get feedback on everything that you do...and if you pick certain things then it won’t help you in other things that you don’t pick” (Tr2.124). This finding – that there is no clear preference for one or the other – is particularly interesting



because there are indications in the literature that allowing the students to select their own areas for feedback could be empowering for them (S. Brown, 2004; Orsmond et al., 2002)

### **The helpfulness of feedback is affected by the timing of the feedback (Category D)**

This perception of feedback relates to the time when a piece of feedback is given concerning a particular piece of work. In the early stages of the first interview the boys were asked when they found feedback most useful. At this stage I found it was necessary to scaffold my questions more fully because the participants were still not fully at ease in the situation and required more intensive prompting than they did during later interviews. For this reason I asked them specifically about the timing of feedback during a piece of work rather than about the timing of feedback in general. The boys were not limited to commenting on this area, but the heavy scaffolding I gave meant that other aspects such as delayed feedback were not explored (see Appendix H for the transcripts of Interview 1 with Ryder and Nelson for examples of this scaffolding). As a consequence the utterances for this category are limited to the timing of feedback in relation to its provision at the start, during, and at the end of a task. It is one of the factors which has limited the phenomenographic outcomes of the study. I was aware that this would be a result of my scaffolding, but felt that the long-term benefits to the study of having the boys relaxed and at ease needed to be considered alongside contemplating the limitation of their responses at this point.

## **Structural aspects of Category D**

### **1. It is given at the start of a piece of work**

Feedback provided during the early stages of a piece of work (also known as ‘feedforward’ (Bjorkman, 1972; Hattie & Timperley, 2007) was seen as helpful, usually, because knowing that the work is on the right track helps to build the learner’s confidence: “At the beginning you don’t really feel confident about what you’re doing and then you get a little boost of confidence” (OTB1. 016); and “At the very start you might think: Oh this is good so I’ll keep on doing this” (N1.024). One participant remarked that it was “...not good to get it all at the beginning – you need help on the harder bit as well as the easier” (Aw1.032). The comments related to confidence are interesting, because of the implication that some of these boys are not very sure when they begin a piece of work that they have understood exactly what they are supposed to do. They find some acknowledgement that they are doing the work correctly to be very helpful, not surprisingly.

### **2. It is given during a piece of work**

When feedback is given during a piece of work (that is, it is given ‘on the spot’ as the work is in progress) it is seen as helpful because it may provide information that can be incorporated into the work before it is finished. Two examples follow: “In the middle might be good because I might get stuck on something and then they might give me something more to think about and then I might get more ideas from that” (OTB1.020); “[getting feedback in the] middle helps you ‘cos when you are writing you can do the corrections” (Aw1.024). Other reasons why feedback given at this stage of the work is useful are similar to those given for

the helpfulness of feedback given at the beginning of the work: “between the very start and the middle ... when I’m actually writing the work it helps me, like “Good work” so [I think] Oh, I’ve done some good work, probably write some more good work. So it actually helps me write” (N1.020). There were no utterances indicating that feedback at this stage of the work would not be helpful.

### **3. It is given at the end of a piece of work**

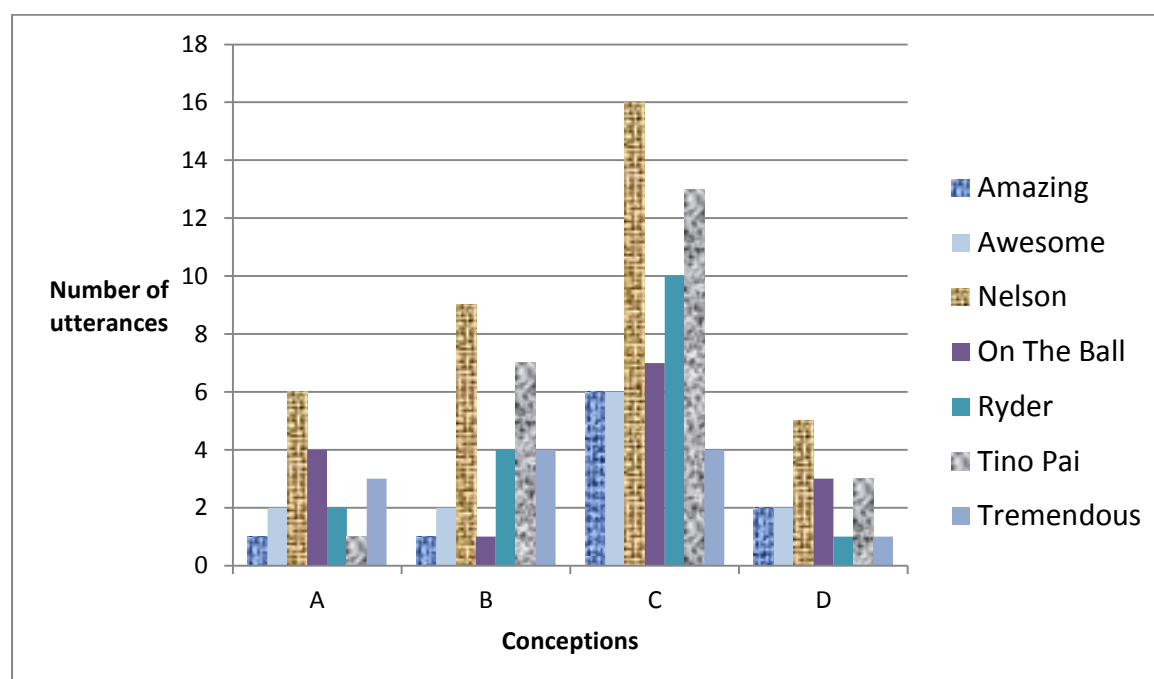
The utterances for this aspect show that feedback given at the end of a piece of work is helpful, generally. Many of the comments indicate that feedback provided at this stage of the work is helpful because it is the time when a learner finds out how he or she has performed on the whole piece of work, and how that person can improve next time: “at the end – you’ve got comments saying what you did well and what you can change” (Am1.018); “they might prefer it at the end to know ‘Oh, I’ve actually done good’. They [the teacher’s comments] said what they need to improve on and what they’ve done good” (N1.024). One participant indicated that getting all the feedback at one time is helpful: “at the end really helps because you know how you’ve gone in the whole unit in one hit and that makes it easier” (TP1.031). Another comment, however, sounded a note of caution: “but if you did get it at the end you couldn’t really change it” (Am1.022. Emphasis in original).

The utterances selected for Category D indicate not only that feedback is helpful no matter at what stage of a piece of work it is given but also that the reasons for this differ. Gaining confidence through being assured that the work is being done correctly is a key factor when feedback is given at the beginning of a piece of work, although confidence is also seen as important when feedback is given during a piece of work. The helpfulness of feedback when it is given at the end of a piece of work seems to relate more to knowing how to improve the work next time. These findings are interesting because the research literature indicates that

feedback is most useful when it is given during a piece of work (Brookhart, 2009; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004).

### ***Discussion of findings for Question 2***

The four categories identified for this question, and the related aspects derived from the data and described above, show that there is variation within and between individuals concerning the phenomenon labelled “helpfulness of feedback”. Figure 5 shows that all of the boys contributed to all of the categories, although some contributed more often than others. As with Figure 3, it is not possible to identify variations between the utterances for each participant but it is possible to identify that the boys contributed many more utterances to Category C. This could be because the boys spent some time commenting on the types of feedback during Interview 1 when they were carrying out the ranking task, or because four structural aspects were identified for this category. It may also indicate that the boys viewed this category as being more important than the other categories related to the helpfulness of feedback.



**Figure 5. Number of utterances contributed by each participant to the four categories identified for Question 2**

However, it is clear that all seven participants perceive that feedback should be helpful, so the variation lies in their reasons for why it is helpful. Associated with this are the reasons expressed for why feedback is either not helpful at all or less helpful than it could be. These comments about why feedback is not helpful often revealed the reasons why feedback is helpful. For example, many participants commented that a particular type of feedback was not helpful because it did not say what was to be done next. The inference is that knowing what to do next is one of the factors that enhance the helpfulness of feedback.

Category A, which refers to the relationship between the student and the teacher, appears to be the underlying factor which has the most impact on the helpfulness of feedback, based on the foregoing extracts from the students' interviews. If the student does not trust the teacher to give accurate feedback or to "tell the full story" (as Tino Pai put it several times), then it is evident that he will take less notice of the feedback given. This trusting relationship is a key factor in what Absolum (2006, p. 27) calls a "learning-focused relationship". Without it, Absolum suggests that high-quality learning will not take place. I apply this idea of a trusting relationship to the likelihood that a student will or will not act on the feedback he is given (depending on the presence or absence of that relationship), and argue that this aspect of trust may be a key factor in understanding why students do or do not respond to feedback in ways that improve their learning outcomes.

The other dimensions of Category A – which refer to the expectations that students have of their teachers and what they perceive the teacher's expectations of them to be – also affect the helpfulness of feedback. The participants expected that their teacher would give them useful feedback, but their perceptions of their teacher's expectations of them varied. Nelson, for

example, stated several times that his teacher was very demanding of him and that this annoyed him. For most of the year this meant that he just ignored any feedback from her. In contrast, many of the other participants accepted that they should take the feedback provided by their teacher and apply it to their work. The participants also expected that their teacher would provide accurate feedback which should prove helpful if applied. If they suspected that their teacher was not giving useful, accurate, feedback then it was clear that the feedback would either be ignored or would be given a cursory check at best. In either case it seems likely that the feedback would not be seen as helpful, and that it would not improve learning outcomes.

I have not discussed aspects of what the teacher might expect from the students because the data I gathered did not cover this facet. However, because most teachers would not spend time on an activity (the provision of feedback) from which they did not expect their students to benefit (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Orsmond et al., 2005) I suggest that there would be a broad fit between the students' perceptions of what their teacher expected and the teacher's own expectations.

Category B, which refers to the relevance and accessibility of feedback, is another major perception of the perceived helpfulness of feedback. There is a significant overlap between Category A (the helpfulness of feedback is affected by the relationship between the teacher and the student) and Category B (the helpfulness of feedback is affected by its relevance and accessibility) because a positive learning relationship between the student and the teacher will allow the feedback which is given to be accepted by the student as relevant, even if he or she has not foreseen the areas of difficulty identified by the teacher. The relationship between the two parties, particularly in the area of trust, also affects the "full story" aspect of helpful

feedback. Information on what is not right with the work is just as important to the boys as is information on what has been done correctly, but their willingness to accept this form of feedback in a positive rather than a negative light will depend on the degree to which they trust their teacher. The remaining dimensions of Category B perhaps do not overlap as significantly as do those discussed already, but their effectiveness still depends on a positive relationship to some extent. The participants indicated that the ease of understanding of feedback was an important factor in its helpfulness, as was the type of language used. It is clear from the data, however, that individuals find that certain types of feedback and language meet these criteria, but that the exact types tend to vary for each individual. A positive and trusting relationship between a teacher and her students seems likely to result in a greater degree of knowledge about these individual preferences which, in turn, can enhance the possibility that each student will receive a form of feedback that he finds easy to interpret and in the language which appears helpful to him.

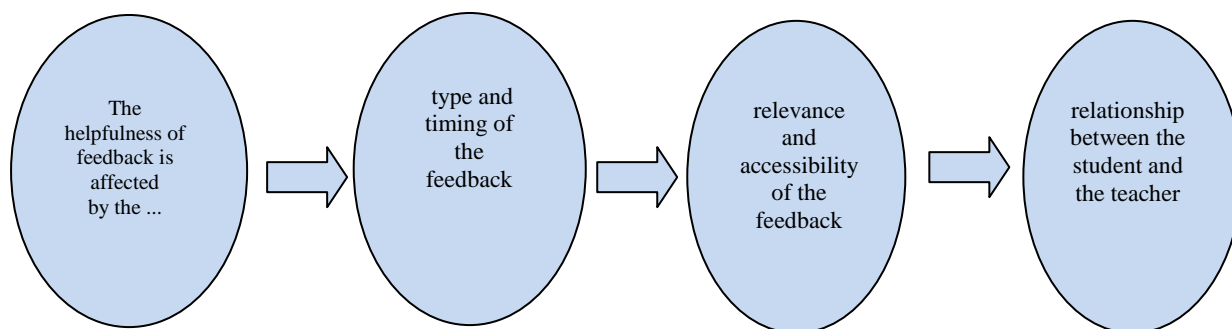
Based on the remarks from the seven boys, Category C (the helpfulness of feedback is affected by the type of feedback ), although it is a separate category, appears to be subsidiary in many ways to Category B (the helpfulness of feedback is affected by its depth of meaning and accessibility). By this I mean that all aspects of Category C affect the dimensions of Category B. For example, a student may not find some types of feedback (Category C) as easy to interpret (Category B) as others. He may also find some forms of language helpful or unhelpful (Category B), according to whether the feedback is in oral or written form (Category C). Category C is a separate category, however, because some individuals do not appear to see beyond the aspects of Category C to some aspects of Category B. I have indicated this hierarchical relationship in the Outcome Space for this question (see Figure 6). The perception that the helpfulness of feedback is affected by the timing of the feedback

(Category D) also to some extent overlaps with Category B, but at the same time is separate from Category C. The co-equal relationship of Category D with Category C and the overlapping relationship of both to Category B are also shown in Figure 6.

### ***Outcome space for Question 2***

The helpfulness of feedback is shown as being dependent in the first instance on the nature of the relationship between the student and the teacher. Students in the present study expect that their teacher will provide relevant feedback which keeps them fully informed of their individual progress towards goals. They believe that their teacher expects them to implement the feedback she provides. To be effective, these expectations must form part of a trusting relationship between each student and his teacher. When a trusting relationship exists and the expectations of the students are met, the relevance of the feedback and the ability of the student to access it is shown as being the next most important aspect of the helpfulness of feedback. The relevance and the accessibility of the feedback by the student are affected by the timing and the type of the feedback. I argue that these important structural aspects are particular to each individual – individuals will respond to certain aspects of these categories in ways particular to each person. For this reason it is neither possible to identify any specific type of feedback as being helpful or not helpful to a group, nor is it possible to say that providing feedback at a particular time during a task will be effective for all class members equally. The knowledge that these are in themselves important aspects, coupled with an understanding of the variation likely within a group of class members, should prove useful for a teacher as she prepares feedback for her own class, however.





**Figure 6. Outcome Space for Question 2: “What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?”**

### ***Discussion of the literature relating to Question 2***

There is support in the literature for my argument that the relationship between the student and the teacher is an important factor in deciding on the helpfulness or otherwise of feedback. Often the studies which cover the issue of the relationship between the student and the teacher refer to it as being part of the general learning environment rather than relating it specifically to the issue of feedback (Black, 2001; Gagné et al., 1987; Weaver, 2006). Hattie (2009) included “valuable feedback” as one of the aspects of the effects on learning outcomes of teacher-student relationships. He found that the effect size of teacher-student relationships is 0.72, which places it towards the top end of medium influences on student achievement. Absolum (2006, p. 28) develops the concept of the relationship between the teacher and the learner further in his discussion for teachers of a learning-focused relationship, which he defined as

a relationship between a teacher and a student[,] the sole purpose of which is to support student learning .... where *both* the student and the teacher know that by

working together, the quality of student learning will be much better and the standard of achievement will be much higher. (emphasis in original)

Although Absolum wrote these notes on a learning-based relationship in a form intended for practising teachers rather than as a scholarly article, he stated that he based these comments on research such as that undertaken by Black and Wiliam (For example, Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Black & Wiliam, 1998b). Absolum went on to devote two chapters to his exposition of what a learning-focused relationship is and what it can achieve. He shows clearly how fundamental such a relationship is to effective learning: “The quality of the relationship between teacher and student is the key to the successfulness of the teaching... if the relationship is not right, the learning is slow, at best” (p. 43). He does not cover the effect of this relationship on the helpfulness of feedback, though, but I infer that it is a positive effect because he discusses various aspects of the process of teaching in some detail. These include building a learning-focused relationship; gaining clarity about what is to be learnt; promoting assessment for learning; promoting further learning; encouraging active reflection; and identifying the next learning steps. In each case, he states that the effect on learning is positive when the aspect is understood and implemented effectively. Absolum’s work is particularly apposite to my study because he is discussing students and their teachers in the context of primary-school classrooms in New Zealand. His views as exemplified in the quotation given above are directly relevant to the context of my study, and help therefore to extend the applicability of my finding that the student-teacher relationship is a key factor in deciding upon the helpfulness or otherwise of feedback.

Tollefson and Osborn (2008, p. 18) discuss the teacher-student relationship from a slightly different perspective, when they analyse the role of “friendliness and deeply genuine affection” as essential aspects of teacher-student relationships. Again, they do not cover

specifically the effect of this relationship on how helpful or otherwise feedback might be, but it seems likely that one effect of their emphasis on creating an emotionally safe classroom would be the development of a trusting relationship that has emerged from my study as one of the key factors in making feedback helpful.

Adcroft (2011) considers the relationship between the student and the teacher to be a component of effective feedback, particularly in the context of feedback as a social process. He notes that because feedback should be seen as a social process, then “the fundamental points of analysis are the human relationships involved” (p. 406). Adcroft goes on to discuss the concept of a “mythology”, in which underlying assumptions and beliefs determine interpretation and behaviour. He argues that if the mythologies of students and teachers regarding the purposes and mechanisms of feedback are not in accord then learning may well be compromised. This claim ties in with the other aspects of Category A, because it involves the differing expectations that teachers and students may have of their roles in the feedback process. It also may be applicable to Category B, because the accessibility and depth of meaning may be affected adversely if students and teachers have differing mythologies relating to feedback.

Bishop et al. discuss the relationship between teachers and students from the perspective of under-achieving Māori students enrolled in secondary schools. They find that, amongst many other factors, an imbalance of power between the parties involved affects the likelihood of these older Māori students engaging in meaningful educational exchanges. They recommend that professional development be offered to teachers in order to help them develop power-sharing theories of practice. These researchers suggest that “educators need to create learning environments within their classrooms where power is shared between self-determining

individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence” (2009,p. 736). Bishop et al. state further that one such learning environment is that of what they label a discursive classroom which is more process-oriented, rather than a more traditional model in which content is transmitted.

This shift from traditional to more discursive classrooms has taken place already in most New Zealand primary schools, although it may be less visible in secondary schools. It was evident that Mrs P’s classroom was run very much on the lines advocated by Bishop et al., and this was reflected in the findings. This study could therefore add to Bishop et al.’s conclusions by showing that while discursive practices are evident in primary schools, positive relationships remain critical to at least those aspects of the teaching – learning – assessing cycle concerned with the giving and receiving of feedback.

Cowie has also written extensively on teacher – pupil relationships as a factor in ascertaining the responses of students to formative assessment in the context of primary school science education, although not all of this discussion is concerned with feedback within formative assessment principles (Cowie, 2000; 2005a; 2005b). She has noted that teachers tend to have a view of their activities as being collaborative and facilitative within the bounds of the content to be delivered or developed during a particular lesson. In other words they support student input within limits, having felt that the responsibility for ensuring that what the student learns fits within acceptable scientific principles is theirs ultimately. This view is compatible with those of my participants who expressed their views of the teacher’s role in the giving of feedback. They felt that the teacher should identify for them which aspects of their work were correct and should indicate where they should next focus their attention. Cowie also found, however, that many students view the teacher – student relationship as hierarchical, with the majority citing instances where the teacher assumed automatically the right to take up and read the students’ exercise books, which belonged nominally to the

students. This attitude affected their responses in the classroom, but it says little about the students' subsequent responses to feedback given by the teacher. Those of my participants who claimed ownership of their work to the extent that they would ignore feedback which did not cater for this dimension may well have chosen to ignore feedback from a teacher who acted in this way. It seems that the findings from my study may well add to Cowie's discussion of teacher – student relationships by showing that teachers could be unaware of the importance attached by some students to the perceived ownership of the work being considered.

The issue of how the language used affects the ease of understanding of feedback is covered comprehensively by Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton (2001) in their discussion on the matter of how feedback should be communicated. They suggested that one problem with communicating feedback may result from a lack of shared understanding of the particular discourse employed by the person giving the feedback. This issue seems to relate to the mythologies spoken of by Adcroft, thereby linking the ease of understanding feedback with the relationship between the student and the teacher once more.

The helpfulness of feedback in relation to its timing is covered in the literature. This issue forms condition six of the ten conditions discussed by Gibbs and Simpson (2004) which, in their view, support learning. They identify the timeliness of feedback as being intrinsic in feedback that is “received by students while it still matters to them and in time for them to pay attention to further learning or receive further assistance” (p. 18). This definition fits well with the findings in my study that feedback is helpful if it enables further progress to be made, although the data in my study seem to indicate a slightly wider interpretation of when

this happens for individuals. This could be because Gibbs and Simpson were discussing feedback within higher education where students would move on to different content once their course was finished, perhaps even before they had received feedback from their current course. The participants in my study may well have moved on to different content before they received feedback on a particular piece of work, but this would take place within the wider context of the year's work and within the same learning environment. In such a case the students may be able to relate the feedback both to their prior learning experience and to the new learning they were undertaking.

There is discussion in the literature of the effects of different types of feedback on student achievement, but what is meant by "types" usually is less specific than the types presented to the participants in my study. Absolum, for example, discusses reminder-, scaffolding-, and example- prompts in his section on types of feedback (Absolum, 2006, pp. 122-123). On reading his discussion of these types I concluded that the types of feedback I presented to my participants in Interview 1 were not usually included in these types. This is because, for the original study, I had opted to provide a range of more and less helpful ways of giving feedback, whereas Absolum is discussing different ways of giving helpful feedback. Other studies include praise, criticism, and suggestion as types of feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2001), or consider text-specific and general feedback (Vardi, 2009). Such studies do not match well with the types of feedback used in my study, although the overall concept of the helpfulness or otherwise of feedback being affected by the type of feedback offered is endorsed.

### ***Summary***

I found that the helpfulness of feedback is affected in a range of qualitatively different ways.

The helpfulness of feedback is influenced primarily by the relationship that exists between the student and the teacher, particularly the degree of trust that the students have in their teacher. The helpfulness of feedback is influenced also by the relevance and ease of interpretation of the feedback as it is perceived by the student. The type of feedback and the timing of it are linked closely to the relevance and ease of interpretation of it. Research literature shows that each of these elements is an important aspect of feedback, but that there is limited application of these aspects to the helpfulness or otherwise of feedback.

## **Chapter 7: Phenomenographic analysis and discussion of the factors affecting individual responses to feedback**

### ***What factors affect individual responses to feedback?***

The third question I considered was related more directly to the main research question, and built on the findings from the previous two questions. I identified three qualitatively different ideas which affect an individual's response to feedback. These ideas, expressed as categories of description and their related structural aspects, are shown in Table 3. As with the first two questions I first describe the categories, using quotations from the transcripts to illustrate key points. I then present and discuss the outcome space for this question. Following this presentation I discuss the literature related to each category in order to place the findings within the relevant body of literature. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of the findings related to this question.



Table 3. Categories of Description for the question ‘What factors influence individual responses to feedback?’, showing the structural and referential aspects for each category

Category	Referential aspect (the meaning of each category). Factors which affect an individual’s response to feedback include...	Structural aspects (the aspects which contribute to and make up the category)			
A	the perceived ownership of work to which the feedback relates ...	1. when an individual decides to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback.	2. according to the degree to which the feedback matches the individual’s perception of the work	3. when an individual expects to participate actively in the feedback process	
B	an individual’s opinion of the person giving the feedback ...	1. according to the perceived honesty or otherwise of the message	2. when previous experiences influence an individual’s decision to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback	3. according to whether or not an individual believes the ‘full story’ is given	
C	the learning conditions and academic understandings of the individual according to...	1. the individual’s learning styles and abilities	2. the individual’s perception of the value of feedback	3. the individual’s perception of the value of constructive criticism	4. the individual’s perception of the future worth of feedback

### **Factors that affect an individual’s response to feedback include the perceived ownership of the work to which the feedback relates (Category A)**

Utterances relating to this category were identified on the basis of whether or not they indicated an element of personal responsibility for the piece of work involved. There was an element of ownership evident in the utterances selected, nevertheless. By this I mean that the participants did not see themselves as passive recipients of feedback. Instead, they regarded themselves as involved actively in the feedback process, with the right and responsibility to

consider the feedback they received and to act on it or not according to their own understanding of the situation. In this category, it is the student's perception of who owns the work that is important. For example if the student considers that the teacher owns the work then he is likely to feel that he should do what the teacher wants, ( that is, implement the feedback given by the teacher). However, if the student claims ownership of the work for himself then his perception that the teacher is claiming ownership affects his response. Most teachers do not see themselves as claiming ownership of a student's work, but if they don't grant ownership specifically some students may react negatively and reject feedback as a result.

## **Structural aspects of Category A**

### **1. An individual decides to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback**

There is a sense expressed in the utterances selected for this aspect that the individual himself would decide what feedback was helpful and would then act accordingly. This view was expressed positively by Amazing, who said "use the bits that will help you... just saying "You've done well", it's not really much of a help. .. saying "You have to improve" you take that in and use it" (AM3.017). This perspective contrasts with the more negative view expressed by Ryder: "I just don't really look at it ... I don't think it makes a difference" (Ry1.010-012). The link between the utterances of Amazing and Ryder is that, despite the different decisions they had made, both arrived at their own decisions about the feedback they had been given. I argue that this is related to their sense of ownership of their work, and that this is a significant factor in their response to feedback. Two of the boys indicated that they would always try to make use of feedback, but again there is an element of choice in their responses: "Well, now we haven't really had any feedback that hasn't helped us"

(TP1.018); “[Is there any feedback that you wouldn’t want?] No, not really” (OTB1.033-034). There were also utterances that indicated that the boys would make partial use of the feedback only: “I discussed earlier ...the small little pieces of writing that you don’t need for the future, and it’s got a tiny little piece of feedback that isn’t really ...even necessary” (TP2.194); “demanding is usually stuff I either ignore or it just goes in [but I don’t use it]..” (N1.018). Further comments relating to this point are as follows: “[When two teachers differ in their feedback] the first teacher, I’d kind of ignore the feedback, ‘cos it’s not really helping. The other teacher ... it would kind of annoy me but it would help me” (N3.041); “and sometimes what you do get, you just think: OK, good, move on...” (TP2.063). Overall the utterances selected for this aspect show that in this perception of feedback the participants are making conscious decisions to use or not use the feedback they receive. The implication is that the boys consider they have the right to decide what action they will take in respect of their own work, because there are no utterances that indicate either any discomfort about the decisions they have made or any doubt that they have the right to make such decisions.

## **2. The feedback matches the individual’s perception of the work**

In this aspect, individuals made decisions to accept or reject feedback based on the degree to which they felt it matched their own perception of their work, as revealed in the following utterances: “...because it’s probably right, and I reread it and just see what ... where the feedback is about something that I know it’s bad or something like that” (Am2.069); and “I didn’t really care what she’s said, I knew that I’d done right. I’d done... a good piece of work” (N2.082). The utterances show that the response could be accepting, as in the case of Amazing’s comments, or non-accepting as in Nelson’s comment about knowing he had done a good piece of work. At other times the response was partially accepting – for example, when Nelson said that he would go over his piece of work to see if he could identify what the

teacher had seen in it. In all cases, the student was making a judgment about the teacher's feedback in relation to his own opinion of his work. These boys were retaining the right to decide for themselves what action they would take, albeit usually in conjunction with the teacher's opinion.

### **3. An individual expects to participate actively in the feedback process**

To be selected for this aspect of Category A, utterances had to include some sense of active involvement on the part of an individual. This could take a positive form if the individual decided to implement the feedback. Two such examples are as follows: "If it's just saying I've done something good I trial it again but I wouldn't do it every time because it would all be just the same then. I want to try different things" (Am2.042); and "take what the feedback is and work on what the feedback was about. And always try to add something...and if you are able to do that, you could go up a level" (Ry3.029). These utterances indicate a willingness to accept feedback and to respond positively to it, although in this aspect there is also a strong sense that the feedback is intended to guide rather than to direct the response. This sense of guidance rather than dictating a direction was expressed several times by the participants, which shows that they wanted to have some choice in their responses: "I really don't like (being told what to do next) ... 'cos it always narrows it down to what I'm supposed to do..." (Ry1.036-042); and "[suggestions] that are sort of optional... you will do it but next time you can either do it better or you can do it the same next time ...it's kind of your choice" (N1.028-030). In this perception of feedback, the sense of being directed with no student input seems to be one of the issues associated with negative feedback. Examples include: "just keeping it positive – they'll [the learners will] listen if you keep it positive. 'Cos if you keep it negative and telling them what to do, they probably won't listen, they won't improve" (OTB3.059); "Usually negative feedback isn't really good for me because for me it doesn't really feel I should do it anymore. Sometimes it feels the teacher just thinks

I'm hopeless at this" (N2.004. Emphasis in original). The final utterance included for this dimension is even more explicit about requiring the active involvement of the learner in the feedback process: "half knowing how to correct yourself, and the other half is just learning how to thi... give yourself feedback and stuff; make your own decisions and that" (TP3.117).

The three structural aspects of Category A clearly show the expectation expressed by the participants that they will be actively involved in the feedback process because they have a perception of the standard of their work. The boys seem to claim the right to retain ownership of their work, to the extent that they will decide whether or not to incorporate the feedback they are given into what they are producing.

### **Factors that affect an individual's response to feedback include the individual's opinion of the person giving the feedback (Category B)**

This category relates to an individual's judgment of the degree to which he or she feels the person giving the feedback is accurate and honest in the feedback given. This judgment is influenced by factors such as prior experience of the person, the honesty of otherwise of the message being given, and whether or not the individual feels that he or she is being given a full picture of the work being discussed. It is important that I stress that no comment is being made on the actual attributes being discussed, because I am reporting only on the participants' perceptions of them. To an extent, therefore, it is immaterial whether or not the person giving feedback is intrinsically honest or otherwise. What matters in an individual's response to feedback is what he or she believes about the person. In other words, it is an individual's opinion that will influence what he or she does.

Three structural aspects for Category B were identified in the data. First, the student's opinion of the person giving the feedback will influence an individual's response to feedback

according to the perceived honesty or otherwise of the message. Second, the individual's previous experience with persons in a position to give feedback or to a specific person giving feedback will be influential. Third, whether or not the individual judges that he or she is being given the "full story" about his or her performance will also affect how an individual reacts to feedback. I now discuss each of these in turn.

## **Structural aspects of Category B**

### **1. The perceived honesty or otherwise of the message**

Utterances identified as belonging to this aspect indicated that although the participants employed different strategies in order to judge the truthfulness or otherwise of what they were being told about their work, the results of their strategies affected their response to the feedback: "More expressive words would make me accept that what that person is telling you is accurate" (TP2.084); and "I think when they talk to you ... 'cos they could just write any sorts of things down, and, like you wouldn't know if it was true or not" (OTB2.124-126). Further strategies were outlined by the participants: "I'd take it, and, um, I just keep doing what I'm doing, until finally he ... he or she, tells me what I'm doing wrong...I'd probably just write: Am I on track? Like, am I doing the right thing ..." (Ry2.161-Ry2.229); "[get opposing messages] that'd be alright, 'cos it's honest ... I'd just keep on going ... you don't really need to do anything about it 'cos it's just the truth" (TP3.055-TP3.061). There is a sense in the utterances that previous teachers may not have been perceived as being completely truthful, especially if no negative feedback is given: "[even though you get nice comments on your work, you're not sure] ... if it's true"(Ry1.094-095); "the primary school teachers always aren't that honest, but it gets more serious every year, starting to get better"

(TP3.022). The utterances selected for this aspect of Category B show that the participants are concerned with the perceived worth of what they receive as feedback, and that their responses can be affected by the degree of honesty they perceive to rest with the person giving it.

## **2. Previous experiences influence an individual's decision to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback**

The participants were asked to consider a hypothetical situation in which two teachers gave them feedback, one saying they were doing well and the other saying they needed to improve. In the context of this discussion some utterances emerged which indicated a perception that the participant's previous experience of receiving feedback in general, or their specific experience with a particular person, would affect their response to the feedback. Two examples follow: "You can't be too sure about feedback sometimes 'cos you get heaps of good feedback and you start to wonder if they're lying, sort of, but, um, you find out it's actually true... you always feel good..." (TP3.073-075); and "because, like one thing they said to improve on, and then the other ones, you don't need to improve on this – you already have improved it, so... something...mucked up" (Aw3.070).

Although the utterances for this dimension were limited, I feel that the idea implicit in them is significant because the boys were discussing their response to feedback specifically in relation to mixed messages being given. Tino Pai also expressed his reaction to getting feedback again from teachers who had given him one-sided feedback in the past: "I'd do something about it... I'd have to tell them about what happened ...I would've hoped they would've changed a bit" (TP2.114 -120-122). It is clear that he would approach any further

feedback from them with caution, and that this attitude would affect his response to it – whether he would accept, reject, or ignore the feedback.

### **3. The individual perceives that the “full story” has been given**

The utterances identified in this dimension did not refer only to the nature of the feedback being given. To be included in this dimension an utterance also had to include some indication that the participant expected that he would be given a complete picture of his work: “My teacher has been mostly all positive – she’s given me the full story every time and there have been some teachers at primary school where they haven’t given me the full story” (TP2.106); and “My own teacher gives me pretty accurate feedback – when she’s not writing too much” (Ry2.148). Further examples include: “[If they just don’t want to give you the hard messages]...then they shouldn’t really be doing this...they should have given it to someone else to do” (Tr2.102); and “I don’t like it when they ... give you positive messages and then there’s actually something kind of wrong...you might think you’re all good at it and then you fail at something” (TP2.096).

It is clear from the utterances quoted above that the participants not only expected to be given the full story but they felt also that they needed it in order to trust that the person giving the feedback was carrying out their contribution to the feedback process properly. It is also clear that if the participants lacked this trust then their response to the feedback would be affected, usually but not always negatively.



## **Factors that affect an individual's response to feedback include the learning conditions and academic understandings of an individual (Category C)**

This category relates to attitudes and understandings of the value of feedback. Four structural aspects were identified from the data. These were that: learning style and abilities, perceptions of the intrinsic value of feedback, perceptions of the purpose of constructive feedback, and understanding of the value of feedback in the long term affect an individual's response to feedback. Not all of the boys commented on these areas, however, but those who did were quite clear about their feelings.

### **Structural aspects for Category C**

#### **1. The individual's learning styles and abilities**

The idea contained in this aspect is that an individual's personal circumstances, such as learning difficulties or behavioural issues, will affect the nature of his or her response to feedback. Utterances related to this aspect were found in all three interviews. Interestingly, however, all but one came from one participant, Ryder. Apart from Ryder, only Tino Pai indicated that learning styles and conditions could affect an individuals' response to feedback. When commenting on the possibility that others in his class might respond differently to himself, the latter mentioned that dyslexia might have an impact (TP1.042-044). Several students in his class have been diagnosed with this condition, and it seems likely that Tino Pai had noticed the difficulties this caused for them.

Ryder commented at several points in Interview 1 that his reluctance to read had a marked effect on his response to feedback: "I'd rather have a marking 1 to 10 so I don't have to read

a lot” (Ry1.006-008); and “[feedback that didn’t help you to make your work better?] when there’s a lot of reading and writing involved” (Ry1.024). He elaborated on this point in further extracts as follows: “If you want to do well and remember what to do...to get you on the right track, you have to remember what happens up top [of the comment]” (Ry1.071); and “[anything...that you would like?] about the teachers and me discussing it ... I like that...[easier than reading]” (Ry1.080-082). Ryder was also aware that this was his own preference and that others might prefer different forms of feedback: “people like different feedbacks instead of me ‘cos I’ve got a friend who likes a whole lot of words and telling him what to do next” (Ry1.036). In Interview 2 Ryder showed that he has a strategy to help him overcome his problem with reading: “Either don’t bother reading it ... or just read the middle bit. ... ‘cos the middle normally has the most – the key part in it” (Ry2.075-077). During Interview 3 Ryder explained that he had been having tutoring in reading during the year and that this had helped him enjoy reading more and understand more difficult texts. He was able to tell me why he was reluctant to read his feedback at the start of the year: “because I couldn’t really understand the ...some of the words, and ... I just didn’t really like it, back then” (Ry3.054). Ryder was still concerned nevertheless about how he would cope at high school: “...depending on how well I’m going, it’s going to be... small feedback. If I’m not doing too well, it’s going to be quite a bit ... and I’m not going to be able to understand it all” (Ry3.094). It is clear that Ryder’s difficulties with reading affected his response to feedback, and it seems likely that this would be the case for other individuals who are experiencing difficulty in a learning area.

## **2. The individual’s perception of the value of feedback**

Utterances were selected for this aspect if they showed evidence of an individual’s understanding of the value and nature of feedback in a way that was likely to affect their response to it. Three utterances were responses to when I asked the boys what the difference

was between teaching and feedback: “Teaching is basically telling you what to do, and feedback is telling you what you should do” (Tr2.016); “Feedback’s like reminding you sort of because it’s sometimes stuff you’ve already learned but you don’t know how to use it” (Am2.123); and “[feedback] helps you, like guides you and helps you to improve your work next time” (Tr2.026). Some utterances indicate that the participant values all feedback, and would always respond to it by trying to use it: “All feedback’s good feedback, because no matter what it is, it’s probably going to help you at some point” (Tr2.076); “[the type of feedback wouldn’t matter ‘cos you’d always find something you could work on]” (Am2.055-060). One utterance indicated that feedback was different from encouragement, and was limited to the school environment: “I only get feedback in school but I get positive encouragement in sport” (OTB2.154).

### **3. The individual’s perception of the value of constructive criticism**

This aspect relates to perceptions of feedback which is designed to point out either where a piece of work is incorrect or where it could be improved. Often the participants used terminology such as “negative” or “demanding” to indicate their opinion of this form of feedback, and indicated that they might respond in different ways. Some utterances show an understanding that the purpose of this form of feedback is to help them improve: “just saying it’s good is good, but if it says what to improve on, it’s much better” (Am2.020); and “looking for ...sometimes negative things ...[and by negative things you mean things you haven’t quite got right yet?...]...yeah” (TP1.087-089). This idea of negative feedback still being useful is elaborated on in the following utterance: “if they put like “you’ve done it wrong”, it makes it better than saying nothing, ‘cos if you think it’s OK you’ll keep on trying it again and it won’t help you improve” (AM2.107). Some participants expressed a feeling that negative or demanding feedback would produce a negative reaction in them: “[you wouldn’t respond to negative stuff ... if I said it’s good to see that you’re doing such and such but

remember ... ] ... more effective” (OTB3.075). The participants at times struggled to express their belief that not all negative feedback was bad: “If it’s feedback saying you can improve on stuff, that’s basically negative without being negative” (N2004).

#### **4. The individual’s perception of the future worth of feedback**

The utterances selected to illustrate this aspect expressed a range of views about expectations of feedback at high school and later in life. Some participants felt that feedback would be ongoing and would be a part of their adult lives: “Having feedback throughout your life would be good because it keeps on learning” (AM2.036); “ In the workplace if you’re doing something wrong you get feedback to fix, then you can fix it and become more productive” (Tr3.018); and “At work feedback would be just the way you do things – saying “oh, you could do this better, do that better” – helps you do the job better and helps other people in your job” (N3.072). Others, by comparison, felt that feedback would not be always a necessary part of their lives. Two such comments follow: “When you’ve finished school you don’t really go on needing feedback ‘cos most of the things teachers have already said” (OTB2.146); and “Probably wouldn’t always need feedback because later on I’d probably learnt what’s right and wrong by then” (Am2.113). There was a sense that feedback at high school would differ from what they had experienced at primary school: “High school have a lot more teachers giving you different types of feedback ‘cos each teacher does things a different way” (N3.031-035); and “[There is] not as much feedback at high school – at primary and intermediate you’ve taken in all the feedback and it should help you and you are able to see what’s wrong with it...” (Am3.053).

Implicit in all of these utterances is the possible response each individual might make according to any conditions he might be experiencing – such as learning difficulties – and his understandings of feedback. The response may be to accept the feedback, reject it, or ignore

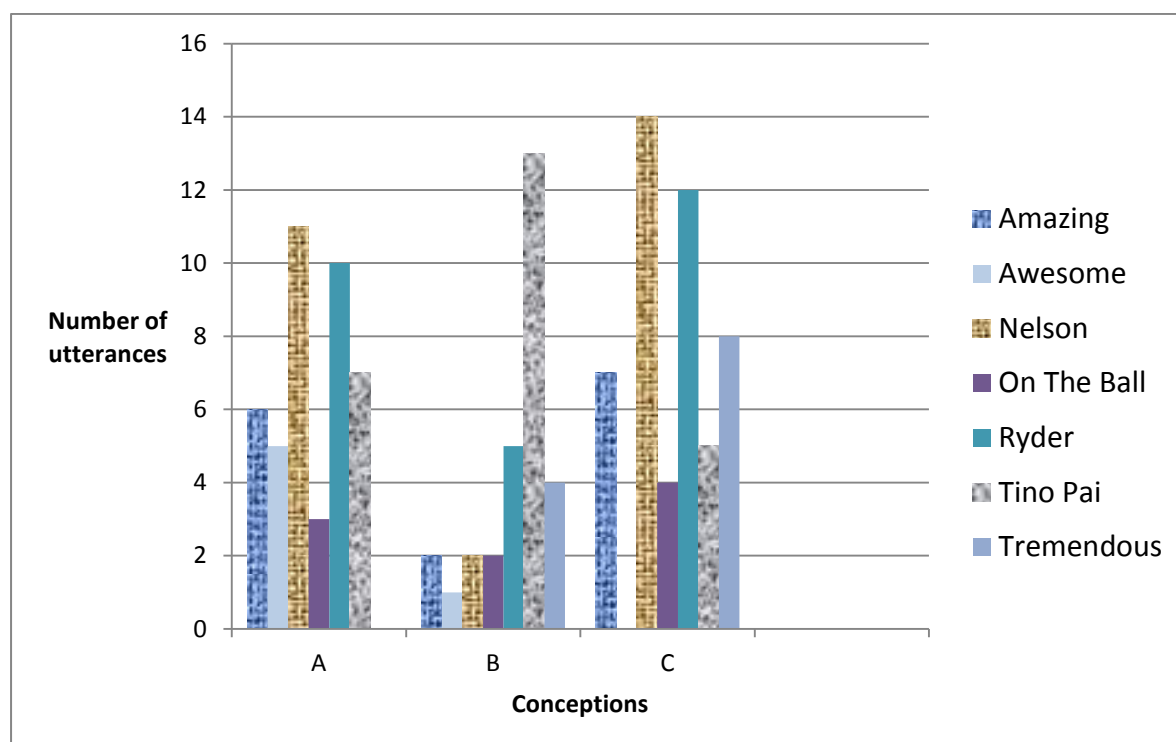
it, but the particular response will be dependent on the individual's particular circumstances, for example Ryder's reading difficulties.

### ***Discussion of findings for Question 3***

Three categories of feedback for this question were identified and described. These were affective in origin primarily, dealing as they did with attitudes and understandings. The categories identified were that factors which affect an individual's response to feedback include the perceived ownership of the work to which the feedback relates, the individual's perception of the person giving the feedback, and the learning conditions and academic understandings of an individual. These categories appear to be more discrete than are the categories for Question 1 (see Figure 3) and Question 2 (see Figure 6). One reason for this situation could be that the possible range of variations in student responses to feedback is more complex than is the range for the importance or helpfulness of feedback. If this is the case then it is less likely that the full range of variations would be elicited from any one group of participants. If the full range of factors could be discovered then it is possible that overlapping relationships similar to those identified for Questions 1 and 2 would become apparent. It is, of course, possible also that the full range of variations for the previous questions has not been discovered, and that perhaps the data represent a more complete range for those two questions.

Figure 7 shows a similar range of utterances for the factors that affect an individual's response to feedback as for the range of utterances identified for the importance of feedback (see Figure 3). As with their contributions to Question 1, not all of the boys contributed to each category of Question 3. It is clear that some participants – for example, Nelson, Ryder, and Tino Pai – contributed many more utterances to this question than did others, which may

indicate that some participants did not express their views as fully as did others. This difference in the number of utterances contributed by each participant may be another indication of the complexity of this area of response to feedback.



**Figure 7. Number of utterances contributed by each participant to the three categories identified for Question 3**

The first category identified for Question 3 concerns the individual's perception of his relationship to the work involved in the feedback process. Within this category, there was a strong emphasis on the sense of ownership of the individual's work. In this understanding of feedback the participants neither saw their role as passive nor did they feel that they should follow the advice they were given automatically. This is an important finding of the study because it indicates that a student may fail to implement the feedback he is given if either his sense of ownership is not acknowledged by the teacher or if he is not accorded an active role in the process. In this perception participants reported a range of possible responses to feedback, but in all cases ownership of the work was a factor. The boys also seemed to retain the right to decide whether or not the feedback was relevant, on the basis of whether or not it

matched their own perception of the quality of their work. Teachers may be surprised with this finding because they may feel it is their professional responsibility to judge the quality of the work, identify relevant areas for improvement, and then to provide appropriate feedback (Adcroft, 2011; Vardi, 2009; Weaver, 2006) It could be that there is an ongoing disconnection in classrooms between teachers and their students regarding their respective roles in the feedback process, and that this is one underlying issue affecting some students' responses to feedback.

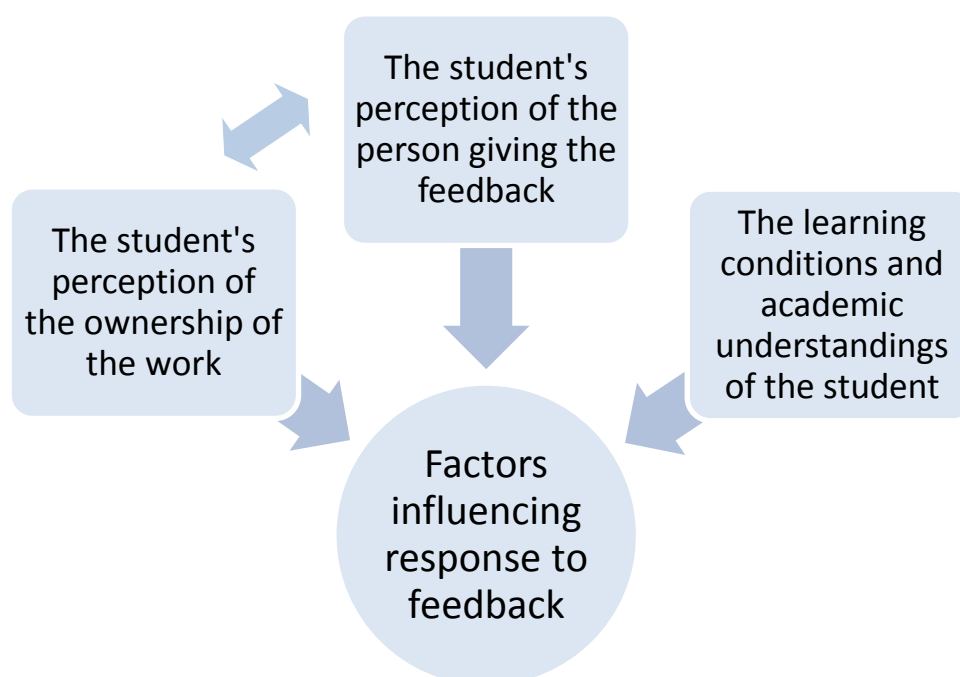
The second category for this question relates to an individual's opinion of the person giving the feedback. The participants were very clear about their need to receive a complete picture of their progress in their feedback. If they felt that a person was not giving them the full story then they would not reject the feedback they were given, necessarily, but were aware that it was not as useful as it could be. This perception affected their response to feedback. Many of them were prepared to try again to make use of a person's feedback, even if their previous experience had given rise to doubts about the integrity or competence of the person giving it. Again I feel this is an important finding because it shows the level of commitment by the participants to the process of feedback. Those participants who made it clear that they would not accept the feedback they were given (because of their experiences with a particular person) still wanted to improve their work, and regretted that this feedback would not be useful for that purpose.

The third category for this question related more to personal factors affecting individuals and less to the external factors evident in the previous category. The participants' understandings of the value and purpose of feedback had a significant effect on their response to it. Of particular interest was their response to constructive criticism which was seen by them often

as negative. The utterances seem to indicate that there are two responses to this form of feedback. Some of the participants showed that they would accept and implement feedback even if they perceived it as negative, while for others the negativity was enough to make them reject it. Because some of the language that was seen as negative is in common use in the classroom by teachers, this may be an issue which helps to explain why some students do not respond to feedback and improve their work as a result of it.

### ***Outcome Space for Question 3***

There are many factors that could affect student response to feedback, and it is unlikely that this study has identified all of them. The three categories which were identified in the data and which have been arranged to form the outcome space for this question, however, cover a range of qualitatively different ways in which these factors are related.



**Figure 8. Outcome space for the factors influencing a student's response to feedback**

As I noted in the discussion, the categories for this question are more discrete than those identified for the previous questions and therefore I chose a different method of presenting



them in the outcome space. Phenomenographic data analysis often results in a hierarchical structure being identified as was the case for the first two questions. However, data should not be manipulated in order to produce “logically and hierarchically-related categories of description” (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 305). It follows that a different visual representation may be needed to show a non-hierarchical outcome space. According to this view, the different categories are seen as contributing independently to the factors influencing a student’s response to feedback.

Of the three categories shown in the outcome space I believe that the student’s perception of the ownership of the work is related more closely to the student’s perception of the person giving the feedback than to the conditions and understandings of the student, although it is still a discrete category. I argue that the student’s sense of ownership of the work is influenced significantly by his perception of the person giving the feedback, and that both factors are influenced by the teaching style or personal attributes of the person giving the feedback. I have placed a double-ended arrow in the outcome space to indicate this relationship. The third category seems to be less clearly dependent on the student’s sense of ownership or the student’s perception of the person giving the feedback, because it is related to the student’s personal understandings. These perceptions probably have been developed, at least partially, in response to the beliefs and understandings of those persons around the individual student, including people who may have given them feedback in the past. I argue, however, that the pathway to development of these understandings in an individual student is less significant for his or her response to feedback than is the current state of his or her understandings. In this sense the understandings of an individual are not dependent on other persons, whereas their opinion of the person or persons giving them feedback is influenced directly by their current situation.

The outcome space shows that an individual's response to feedback may be affected by three factors – their sense of ownership of their work, their perception of the person giving the feedback, and their personal conditions (such as learning difficulties or conditions such as dyslexia) and understandings. These three categories do not overlap, but there is a closer relationship between the first two. The third one stands alone.

### ***Discussion of the literature relating to Question 3***

There is very little discussion in the literature relating to the factors influencing student response to feedback. Research into feedback has focussed traditionally on the effectiveness of feedback, often through isolating particular variables and measuring their effect on performance (Handley, Price, & Millar, 2011). Recently, a new line of research has been proposed which may offer further insight into student response to feedback. This research agenda, which emphasises student engagement with feedback, is “proposed as a counterweight to the attention traditionally given in the feedback literature to the study of effectiveness” (Handley et al., 2011, p. 544). Handley et al. draw on the research related to student engagement and feedback effectiveness in their discussion. They conclude that research is needed on the theme of “**..analysis** (and partial explanations) of the *influences* on, and *outcomes* from students' engagement with feedback... (Handley et al., 2011, p. 553). (emphasis in original). I believe that the present study begins to engage with this theme, and is therefore a useful contribution to the literature.

I considered the research on engagement in order to establish this study in the assessment field but found that in general the literature relating to this area is not relevant to my study directly, because it does not explore the student's response to feedback usually. An exception

is when the student's positive response is considered to be a logical follow-on from engaging him or her successfully in learning through changes in the type or style of feedback (See for instance Harris, 2008; Rowe, 2011; Walker, 2009). The phenomenographic analysis of my study indicates that other factors may be involved, but so far the impact of these has not been examined in the literature that I reviewed.

### ***Summary of the phenomenographic analysis***

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 I used phenomenography to analyse three questions. I first considered the importance of feedback. The analysis showed that this is related to three categories of description: feedback supports progress towards attaining immediate learning goals; feedback affects personal attitudes towards learning; and feedback supports deep learning and progress towards achieving long-term goals. I then discussed the structural aspects of each of these, using utterances to illustrate each one. The outcome space showed that students may have to develop a sound understanding of the importance of feedback in relation to short-term goals and personal attitudes before an understanding of its importance in relation to deep learning and long-term goals can be developed. Each aspect of the importance of feedback identified in the data was supported by the literature, although there are fewer studies on students' perceptions of, and attitudes toward, feedback from teachers.

The helpfulness of feedback was explored as a theme, and four categories were devised in order to explore this notion further. The most significant of these appeared to be the relationship between the student and the teacher, which affected the individual's perception of the relevance and ease of interpretation of the feedback. In turn, the relevance and ease of interpretation of feedback was seen to encompass the type of feedback and the timing of it.

Again, support for the existence and importance of each of these categories was found in the literature.

Factors influencing students' responses to feedback were found to include the individual's sense of ownership of his or her work, the student's perception of the person giving the feedback, and the learning conditions and academic understandings of the individuals receiving the feedback. The literature relating to these aspects was limited, though, because much of the work surrounding feedback has been concerned with its effectiveness. Recently there has been a call for more research to be conducted around the engagement of students in relation to feedback. I believe that this study may contribute to this area.

The phenomenographic analysis revealed the collective view of student opinions about feedback and it uncovered a range of qualitatively different conceptions of feedback through a phenomenographic analysis of the data presented in the interview transcripts.

## **Chapter 8: A suggested model of student perceptions of feedback, derived from the phenomenographic analysis presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7.**

In this chapter I present a model developed from the outcome spaces of the three sub-questions I asked, which are: Why is feedback important? What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?, and What factors affect individual responses to feedback? First, I will discuss how the model was developed and then show how it relates to the models of feedback developed by Hattie and Timperley (2007), and Tunstall and Gipps (1996b).

### ***Description and discussion of the model***

Following the phenomenographic analysis I considered how the categories identified for each of the three lines of inquiry might be represented in relation to each other. I combined the three outcome spaces that were produced through phenomenographic analysis and produced a model (see Figure 9). Following the pattern established by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Tunstall and Gipps (1996b), and as discussed in the review of the literature, I have represented the model in a layered view from Level 1 to Level 4. The levels form a hierarchy in the sense that all of the participants perceived all the elements represented in Level 1 as making feedback important or helpful, or were factors in their acceptance of feedback; whereas only one or two of them expressed similar thoughts in relation to Level 4. Levels 2 and 3 represent the areas that were identified through the phenomenographic analysis as being important, helpful, or were factors affecting their acceptance of feedback by all of the participants, although not all of them identified all of the areas. Those areas that seemed to arise from those shown at Level 2 as shown in the respective outcome spaces are represented as Level 3. In Figure 9, Level 1 represents the factors that I feel underpin the others as

expressed by the participants. For example, I have put the relationship between the student and the teacher at this level, because the phenomenographic analysis confirmed the finding in the literature review that unless the relationship is positive the student will probably not make effective use of the feedback received. I have also put the learning conditions and academic understandings of the student at this level because these are the factors which seemed to have the greatest impact on the individual's reception and use of feedback. They appeared to be pre-requisites which have to be satisfied before an individual will accept feedback.

At Level 2 I have inserted the aspects (meeting short-term goals, personal attitudes, type, timing, and the student's opinion of the person giving the feedback) that seemed to be of significance to all seven of the participants, because all of them expressed views on these aspects. It appeared to me that this wholesale coverage indicates that this is the next area on which individuals are likely to focus, once the factors shown on Level 1 of the model have been satisfied.

Level 3 includes student ownership of the work and the ease of understanding and accessibility of the feedback because these aspects were of great significance to some, but not all, of the participants. I consider that the aspects included in Level 3 represent a development from those included in Level 2, because many of them appeared further up in the hierarchies developed for the outcome spaces for questions one and two than were the Level 2 aspects. I assigned different levels of importance to some aspects based on the number of utterances associated with each one and on the number of participants who expressed views. For example I have shown the three categories for question three at different levels on the right hand side of the model, with only a linear connection between each of them.

The single aspect included in Level 4 is the importance of feedback to the participants in helping them to achieve their long-term educational goals. This represents the most long term level of thinking about feedback expressed in the interviews, although it was noted by only three of the participants. The individuals who expressed views relating to this aspect were also those who appeared to be operating more at Level Three of the model than at Level Two.

### ***Comparison of my model with the typology developed by Tunstall and Gipps***

Although not all of the elements of my model can be mapped onto the typology developed by Tunstall and Gipps, there seems to be a linear connection between the levels of my model and their typology. For instance, the Level 1 category of relationships from my model clearly relates to Type B (Approving) from the evaluative end of the typology, because the examples given of this type of feedback include elements which highlight the relationship between the teacher and the learner. Examples of this are ‘warm expression of feeling’ and ‘negative personal expression’.

In general, Level 2 on my model relates to Type C (“Specifying attainment”) feedback from the descriptive end of Tunstall and Gipps’ model. The Level 2 categories of short-term goals, personal aspects, and student opinion, together with the structural aspects identified for these categories, show a focus on knowing the next step and trusting that the teacher will be able to provide this information. Tunstall and Gipps describe Type C feedback as “feedback which is descriptive and identifies in a specific way aspects of successful attainment ... it was clearly the teachers who were identifying standards” (1996b, p. 398), which demonstrates the connection between Type C of the typology and Level 2 of my model.

Level 3 of my model was associated strongly with Type D (Constructing achievement) feedback from the typology. At Level 3 students appeared to be concerned with their own sense of ownership and their own understanding of their work, and were clearly moving towards a more independent mode of learning. Tunstall and Gipps stated that Type D feedback “...appeared to shift the emphasis more to the child’s own role in learning, using approaches which seemed to pass control to the child. There was much more of a feel of teacher as ‘facilitator’ rather than ‘provider’ or ‘judge’...” (1996b, p. 399). This shows a relationship between Type D of the typology and Level 3 of my model. Level 4 of my model could be considered to relate to this type of feedback, although the element of a longer timeframe which is the essential feature of Level 4 is not immediately apparent in the typology. However, aspects such as reflection and the ability to self-assess can be identified in the description of Type D feedback which is quoted above.

### ***Comparison of my model with the model developed by Hattie and Timperley***

Not all elements of my model could be mapped onto the model developed by Hattie and Timperley. However, there were very clear links between Levels 2, 3, and 4 of my model and the task and self-regulation levels identified by Hattie and Timperley.

Level 2 of my model corresponded generally to the task level (called feedback about the task or FT) of the model developed by Hattie and Timperley; that is, feedback about how well a task was being performed or accomplished. Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 91) stated that FT could be more effective if “it is about faulty interpretations, not lack of information”, which implies that FT can incorporate either or both of these forms of feedback. Elements of task level feedback could be seen in the categories developed for all three questions in my study, such as short-term goals, the timing and type of feedback, and student opinion.



Levels 3 and 4 of my model clearly relate to the self-regulation level (called FR in the model) which, according to Hattie and Timperley, "...implies autonomy, self-control, self-direction, and self-discipline" (2007, p. 93). These authors go on to state that "Effective learners create internal feedback and cognitive routines while they are engaged in academic tasks...less effective learners ... depend much more on external factors for feedback" (2007, p. 94). This thesis is endorsed by Cowie (2000) in her discussion of the difference in feedback preferred by students with learning goals (which can be identified with Hattie and Timperley's self-regulation level) and those with task completion goals (which can be identified with Hattie and Timperley's process level). This observation implies that those of my participants who could be identified as operating at Level 3 and 4 of my model could be seen as more effective learners overall. I argue that, although this may indeed be the case, my model identifies the important differences in response to feedback between my participants more effectively than it identifies the effectiveness of their learning preferences.

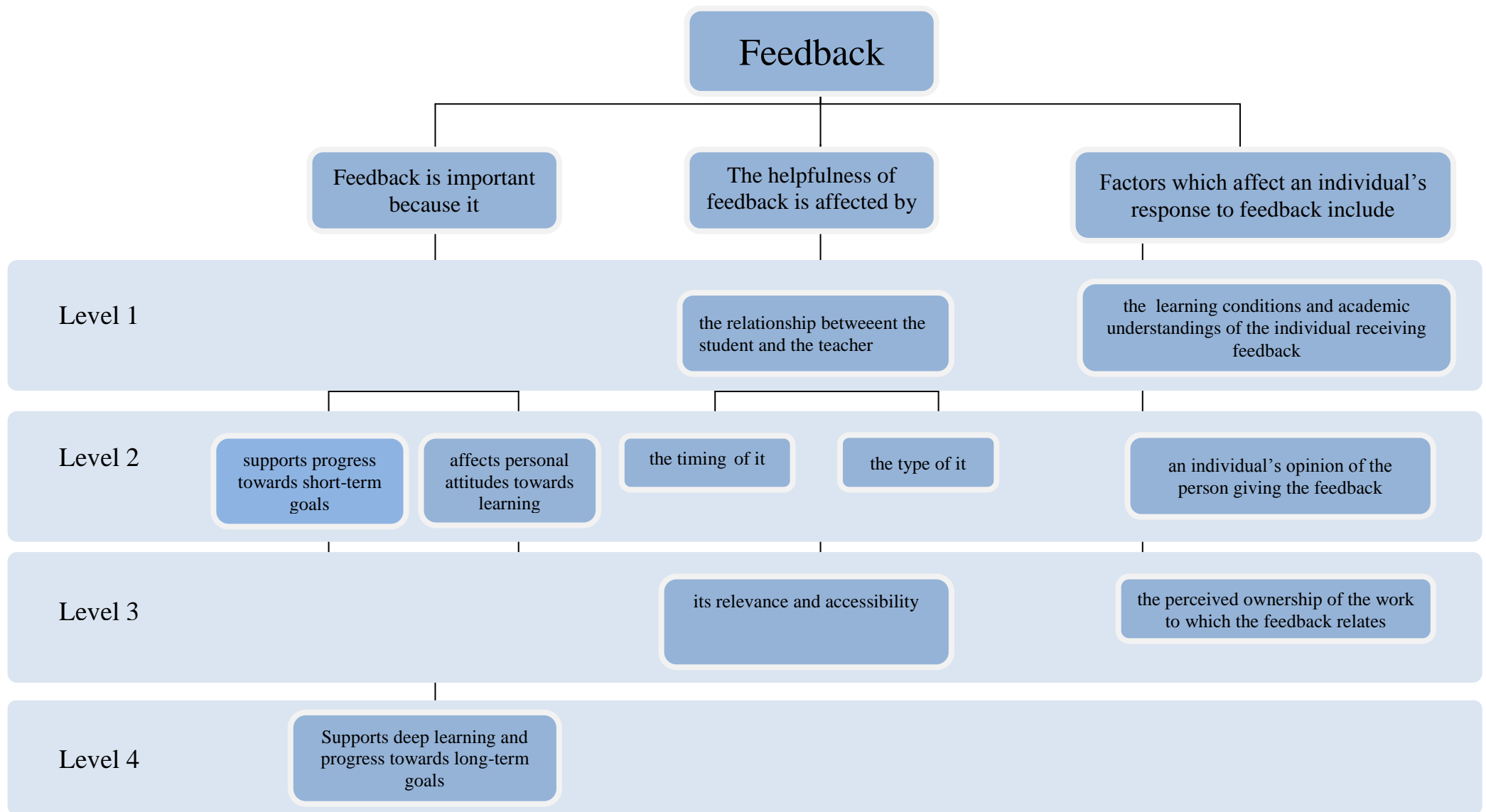


Figure 9. Suggested model of student perceptions of feedback, developed from the outcome spaces identified through phenomenographic analysis

## *Summary*

I have designed and presented a model of student perceptions of feedback based on the outcome spaces developed for each subsidiary research question. The phenomenographic analysis identified the collective views of the participants and allowed a model to be constructed which shows how these categories may be related to each other at a collective level. Because I wish the findings to be of use to classroom teachers I feel it is necessary to take the collective view as expressed in this chapter and show how the categories I have identified may be manifested in individuals – that is, to show how one individual may hold a range of these perceptions. Therefore in Chapter 9 I present case reports for Ryder and Nelson in order to demonstrate how this range of categories may relate to particular individuals. The case studies will also allow me to recapture the voice of individual students, thus supplementing the phenomenographic findings.

## **Chapter 9: Case Reports and discussion of two of the participants**

In this chapter I present case reports on two of the participants in the study in order to show how a collective view of feedback, as shown in the phenomenographic analysis, may manifest in a single individual. The purpose of the case reports is to demonstrate how the findings of the phenomenographic analysis – that is, the range of categories that I identified – may be applied to two of the individual participants, so as to explain how the phenomenographic findings help to address the research question “What influences the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary school students?” The case reports will also ensure that the voice of individual students is heard within the wider context of this study. The value of using case research in this way is that classroom teachers will be able to see how the perceptions of feedback held by one individual may differ from those held by another individual, in contrast to the broad similarities which may be evident between them. I will illustrate the individual differences apparent between students by mapping the profiles of Ryder and Nelson onto the model.

In any qualitative study ethical issues are raised continually, particularly when thick rich description, which is one of the main aims of case study reporting, is used (Holliday, 2004; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). In my research, as part of the process of gaining informed consent, I promised to participants to maintain their confidentiality. The combination of thick description and the small number of participants raised a particular issue in this regard. Kaiser (2009, p. 1635) emphasises that even meticulous “data cleaning” cannot remove all contextual identifiers pointing to individuals, and that researchers must consider whether the use of particular quotations may lead to identification of individuals through deductive

disclosure. Deductive disclosure which is also known as internal confidentiality (Tolich, 2004) occurs when the traits of individuals, groups, or organisations make them identifiable in research reports (Kaiser, 2009). In order to lessen the possibility of deductive disclosure, I have elected to present only two of the participants as case reports, thereby reducing the number of identifiable traits relaying to individuals evident through the case reports.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, one of the aims of the study is to use student voice to explore the general area of what makes feedback work for some New Zealand children. In order to facilitate this process I will use the words of the individuals as much as possible to make and illustrate points. I have drawn mainly on the interviews to develop the reports but have also used limited data from the questionnaire, observations, and work samples. I have chosen Ryder and Nelson as the two examples described in the case reports deliberately so that some variety is presented. Both are articulate boys, and present quite different views on feedback, but there are significant differences in their social and academic standing which will become evident as the reports progress. Following the presentation of each boy as an individual case I have presented a brief cross-case analysis in order to show the similarities and, possibly more importantly, the differences between the responses of each of the two boys to the dimensions of feedback identified through the phenomenographic analysis. I have prepared a profile for each boy based on the model I developed (see Chapter 8) so as to facilitate the comparison.

### ***Case Report 1: Ryder***

Ryder is a friendly and approachable boy, who is well integrated into the social life of the class. He was one of the first class members I met at the start of the year because he arrives at school in the morning, usually before many of the others.

Ryder's attitudes towards feedback, as shown in his interview transcripts, changed over the year. This could have been because he relaxed in my company as the year progressed, and so felt more able and comfortable to express his views. However, he felt comfortable enough to reveal some of his more extreme views in the first interview so I do not think the developing relationship between us was the cause of this change. It is also very clear from the comments he wrote on his survey which was administered in March – nearly two months before the first interviews took place in May – that these ideas were formed already at that stage. He marked several items on the questionnaire as being “not very helpful”, and added comments such as “I don't read it” and “I never read it”. At this stage he felt that talking to his teacher about his work was helpful because “I try to listen[sic]”, and that receiving grades were also helpful because “I like grads [grades]”. He selected “grads” again as being the most helpful type of feedback for him because “I take a quick look at it and try to get the same or get better the next time”. Ryder raised all of these points again in the first interview. For instance, in response to the first question in this interview the following exchange took place:

Researcher (henceforth indicated by “R”): Do you think feedback matters?

Ryder: Not really, but I'd rather have a marking one to ten.

R: Yes? Would you? Why would you like that?

Ryder: So I don't have to read a lot.

R: So you don't have to read a lot. Fair enough. So why doesn't it matter too much?

Ryder: I just don't really look at it.

R: Right. And ... and...because it's not helpful to you, or...?

Ryder: I don't think it makes a difference.

R: Right. Why doesn't it make a difference? A lot of people think it does make a difference, so I'm interested in this. 'Cos these are people who haven't spoken to kids (Laughs).

Ryder: (Laughs). Well, I just don't look at it.... read it. And when I do read it, I don't really change anything.

R: When you read it, do you agree with it, or do you not agree with it?

Ryder: Sometimes.

R: You do sometimes. Can you tell me a bit about what parts of it you do agree with and maybe what parts of it you don't agree with?

Ryder: When I forget to do ... like... punctuation and it [teacher's written feedback] tells me to put punctuation in, I agree with it there. Little things like that.

R: Has your class had any feedback that did help you to make your work better?

Ryder: Well it...well it... kind of ... I find it better when it... sometimes... like it marks my work so that sometimes I get to spell it correctly next time...

R: Right

Ryder: So that sometimes I ... read them as well.

R: Right. Have you had any... your class had any [feedback], that didn't help you make your work better?

Ryder: When there's a **lot** of writing and reading involved.

R: Right. Cool. Well now, let's think about the times you might get feedback while you're working on a particular unit, or a particular piece of work. What stage of work does feedback help you **most**? Like at the beginning or the middle or the end...

Ryder: Oh! Probably ....middle or end.

R: And why would that be?

Ryder: I ... just... find it easie...r. (Ry1.005 – Ry1.028)

I suspected that his problems lay with his limited ability to read, so at this point in the interview I decided to probe a little further:

R: Easiest to read it then? (Ryder nods his head).Ok. So do you normally not like reading all that much?

Ryder: No.

R: No. And is that because it's a hard job for you? Or because it's just...

Ryder: No... well, sometimes, but I just ...don't.... (Ry1.029 – Ry1.032)

Ryder seemed quite open to discussing his unwillingness to read as a response to feedback, but was less happy to indicate that this was because he could not read. He claimed instead that “feedback doesn’t make a difference”, but agreed when I suggested that he did not like reading all that much. He still maintained, however, that he just did not enjoy reading.

Ryder’s school records for March / April show that he was not achieving at the expected standard at this point. To reach the standard expected Ryder would need to be assessed as having completed working on level 4 of the curriculum by the end of the year. He was assessed in March as achieving well below the standard. The same was true for his writing overall although for some aspects, such as the content and audience aspects of his work, he was assessed as achieving just below the standard. He was working at Level 4 in Numeracy, thus almost reaching the required standard of completing Level 4 during the year. Given that he nearly reached the required standard in Numeracy it seems that Ryder is at least average in his overall ability, which suggests that his difficulties with reading are due to some other specific factor. It is clear from his comments that at this stage he ascribed his difficulties to a lack of interest, but there may have been some issues with his ability to read and comprehend



at a suitable level. Mrs P confirmed this possibility during an interview at the end of the year. Ryder has been diagnosed with dyslexia, which had contributed to his problems. By the end of the year Ryder had improved in his reading and writing, although still not enough to meet the standard. He was very proud of his achievement and told me about it:

Ryder: Um, in Reading I were at 3B, and then, um, I went up for my last AssTTle test, like my latest AssTTle test, to 4B.

R: Wow!

Ryder: So I went up, like, 2 or 3 levels.

This means that by November 2010 Ryder was working at Level 4 in Reading, although he did not meet the standard because he had not completed the Level. I asked him why he thought he had improved so markedly. I also asked him whether this had affected his view of feedback at all:

R: So ... how did you manage to go up so much?

Ryder: Um, I've...um, I've been going to a tutor class...

R: Right.

Ryder: ... to help me with spelling and reading ..

R: Right.

Ryder: ... and, um, that's really got me into reading at the moment, and I've been reading my own books at home ... now, and it's made me, like, able to read better than I were able to, so I'll be able to, like, read ... texts ... that I couldn't read before, maybe.

R: Right.

Ryder: Mm.

R: Cos I think I remember you telling me that ... right from the start of the year, you kept telling me that you didn't read feedback. Can you tell me why it was that you didn't read it?

Ryder: Um, because I couldn't really understand the ... some of the words, and um, I just didn't really like it, back then.

R: So you've changed.

Ryder: Yeah.

R: And you've seen the results.

Ryder: Yeah.

R: You must be very proud.

Ryder: Mm.

R: Congratulations, cos that's not easy, what you've done. (Ry3.031 – Ry3.061)

Mrs P was aware of the tutoring that Ryder had been receiving, but felt that there were other factors involved in his rapid progress:

Mrs P: He has taken **big** steps during this year, with a ...knowing in... by himself that high school was coming up, he's been proactive in im ... in striving to improve. He is attending outside tutoring and he claims that that is part of his... is responsible for part of his progress, and I've no doubt that it possibly is, but one of the biggest things is, he has found a ... um ... an author ... and a text that he absolutely enjoys, and he's ploughing his way through this ... set ... of chronicles one by one, and sometimes now I catch him reading when he shouldn't be (Mrs P. and R. laugh).

R: So what author's that?

Mrs. P: It's the ... um ... Deltora Quest ones...

R: Oh right...

Mrs P: ... which is a real boys' fantasy ... um ... text...

R: So he's reading for enjoyment ...

Mrs P: He's reading for pleasure.

R: ...and by choice

Mrs P: ...and by choice, yeah. And he has worked really hard in maths. He ... he was moved up from my class last year, which is a very low maths class, to ... up two steps ... um, and at the beginning of the year, there was messages from mum [that] he was feeling uncomfortable, he didn't like it ... obviously he was wanting to return, and I said I wanted him to stick it ... out of his comfort zone, and to give it a go and, you know, we'd work on what he wasn't understanding. Pointed out to the teacher that he was dyslexic and might need a little bit longer to ... to understand Word Problems and things, and he's now ....

R: Flying?

Mrs P: Flying.

R: Great.

Mrs P: Flying. And, um, I have requested, even though his test results didn't show that for [the name of the local High School], that he be put in an average class, and they've accepted that.

R: Oh good.

Mrs P: And I have no question now, with the end of year assessment data that he won't more than handle that comfortably. And also I believe that once he goes on to get into the subjects that he particularly is passionate about, the graphic kind of design sort of things, then no-one will actually realise just ... where he's come from.

R: Right.

Mrs P: Or the difficulty [dyslexia] that he may be carrying.

R: Right. So ... Ryder would be in the average stream at high school.

(Interview with Mrs P on November 29, 2010)

Ryder himself was aware that he might still face difficulties at high school in spite of his improved reading ability:

R.: The other thing about high school is that you move around from a ... class to class for different subjects...

Ryder: Yeah.

R: ... so I suppose that means a lot of teachers?

Ryder: Yeah.

R: How's that going to ... I mean ... so what do you expect from feedback from all those teachers next year, or what do you think it's going to be like?

Ryder: Um .. I think it's going to be like ... depending on how well I'm going, it's going to be, um ... small feedback [from teachers]. If I'm not doing too well, it's going to be quite a bit ... and I'm not going to be able to understand it all. (Ry3.089 – Ry3.094)

I have described Ryder's issues with reading at some length because it has shaped his views about feedback. The most significant set of utterances from him across all three questions related to the ease of understanding of the feedback being its most helpful aspect. As shown in the quotation given above, Ryder has concerns about whether or not he will be able to understand the feedback he will get in high school, especially if he is having difficulty with his lessons.

When I analysed Ryder's response to Question 2 (What makes feedback helpful or not helpful for individuals?) I found that for him ease of understanding of the feedback is paramount. He prefers to receive a grade of some sort because for him it is informative without involving much reading. Ryder manages to extract considerable information from a grade, or a mark out of ten, and is keen to improve his grade or mark.

R: So ... you would know, when you saw 4 out of 10, what would it tell you ... about your work?

Ryder: Probably I weren't ... either I weren't listening, or I didn't understand how to do it properly.

R: So you would know that it wasn't a particularly good ...

Ryder: Yeah.

R: ... thing, right? So if you got 9 out of 10 ...?

Ryder: Um, ... I'd try to improve on it next time, or ... something, like just try repeating it and get 9 out of 10 again.

R: Ok, and if you got 7 out of 10 for the same thing?

Ryder: Probably try a **bit** harder. (Ry2.046 – Ry2.053)

His reading issues mean that Ryder also finds feedback which is less complex to be helpful, especially if it is oral. He does not mind a small amount of writing that tells him what to improve on, in addition to the grade or mark being given. Ryder has also developed an interesting coping strategy to use when he gets a long comment on his work:

Ryder: Lots of writing ... sometimes.

R: Mm. So when you do get lots of writing, you just ...

Ryder: Either don't bother reading it, or ... just read the middle bit.

R: Why the middle bit?

Ryder: Cos the middle normally has the most ... the key part in it.

R: The key part being ...?

Ryder: Yeah ... the bit ...

R: ... where it tells you what to do?

Ryder: Yeah. (Ry2.073 – Ry2.081)

Here Ryder is indicating that he is aware of a praise sequence similar to the one used extensively by the Toastmasters Organisation, known as CRC (commend-recommend-commend) or PIP (praise-improvement-praise). Its rationale is outlined in the following manner:

This [sequence] is based on educational research which has established that negative feedback is a very ineffective way of changing human behaviour. Clear explanations and demonstrations of proposed changes followed by praise for improvement, no matter how slight, and encouragement to keep trying, is the most effective style to facilitate change in behaviour. (<http://www.toastmastersvq.net/evaluationguide/>)

Ryder also articulated the precise nature of his difficulty with reading long comments. When responding to a question from me about different types of feedback, and referring to an example of a 'long comment feedback', he said:

Ryder: ...cos in this one, in the one with heaps of writing, you have to like, read through a lot and still remember what happens up [at the] top [of the feedback], and the teacher tells you what you've done well and tells you what could happen next, and then at the bottom it says 'please see me to discuss this'. And then, I'd have the number 4, I'd have the medium sized writing, cos it's easier to remember.

R : So, just to recap, you've put the B+ top; you've put the corrections second; you've put the short comment third; you've put the one about the levels fourth; and

you've put the long comment last. And you said that's because you would have to remember...

Ryder: Like, remember ... if you want to do well next time, and remember what happened – uh, what to do next, like, what to get you on the right track next, you have to remember what happens up top...

R: I see...

Ryder: and for another way it says 'please see me to discuss this' at the bottom, so the teacher can remind you as well.

R: Right. But you still don't think that's very good?

Ryder: I wouldn't read it, often.

R: You wouldn't read it.

Ryder: No. (Ry1.071 – Ry1.079)

This excerpt is a good example of the way in which Ryder and the other participants used the ranking task as prompts. They felt free to comment on anything to do with feedback as they considered the examples of feedback they were given, rather than being constrained to answer the question more narrowly. I did not attempt to channel their thoughts in one direction but did probe their responses in order to elicit a more full expression of their ideas. Ryder's awareness of his difficulties with reading and understanding text makes me wonder how effective the technique of "sandwiching" the improvement aspects of feedback between two positive comments really is. Because Ryder wants to improve his work, and either does not want to or is unable to read a long comment, he has learned to ignore the beginning and end of a paragraph of feedback and to focus instead on the improvement part of the feedback. I suspect that some students with similar issues to Ryder may not know how to seek out the feedback designed to show them how to improve, and therefore could lose an opportunity to reach a higher learning standard. If teachers of such students reverted to recording only the

next steps of learning, or other critical comments, then the issue of the damage caused by negative feedback would remain. Perhaps Ryder's preference for oral feedback shows a way in which teachers could overcome this difficulty. Students who have difficulty reading or understanding passages of written feedback could receive praise for what they have done well and their next step of learning orally, without having to struggle with reading a more complex piece of feedback. For Ryder, the timing of the feedback he receives does not affect its helpfulness. When asked directly when, during a piece of work, he would find feedback most useful Ryder answered rather vaguely that he would probably prefer it at the middle or end of a piece of work, and, after prompting from me, could only add "I ... just...find it easi...er" (Ry1.026-028).

Another major influence on Ryder's view of the helpfulness of feedback is how much he (or any other student) trusts the teacher to be truthful. At the end of Interview 1 he said he did not know what his teacher thought of his work because not all of the teacher's comments are "true". He illustrated this situation with a story about his brother's friend, whose teacher Ryder claimed "hated" him but still reported to his parents that he was a pleasant student to teach in class. Ryder repeated this story in Interview 2, and indicated that if he discovered that one of his teachers was not telling him the truth then he would still accept their feedback and keep doing what he was doing until "...finally he ... he or she ... tells me what I'm doing wrong" (Ry2.161). Trust appeared to be more important for Ryder than it was for some other participants.

Ryder's response to feedback is dependent usually on his retention of the ownership of his work. He decides routinely whether to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback he is given, sometimes basing this conclusion on his own perception of the quality of his work. The



honesty of the message being given is very important to him, and many of his responses are based on his perception of this. Ryder makes his decisions on the basis of previous experience of the person giving the feedback, but does not reject feedback automatically from a person he suspects may not be giving him the “full story”. His learning difficulties obviously have a major impact on his response to feedback but he also stated several times that he does not value feedback, claiming that it does not make a difference to his work. Many other utterances indicate that he cares about feedback and wants to use it to improve his work, so it seems likely that this stated indifference is another coping strategy related to Ryder’s reading problems.

In summary, the main influence affecting Ryder’s views on feedback is his difficulty with reading. He prefers a simple form of feedback, a grade or similar, because he can take significant information from it. Ryder finds reading a long comment difficult because he finds he cannot remember what it says at the top of it by the time he gets to the bottom. To overcome this problem he has learned to focus his efforts on the middle of a piece of feedback where he expects to find the suggestions for improvement that will help him. Trust is another major issue for Ryder, and he does not believe that every teacher will be truthful with him. He has developed a strategy for this situation also, saying that he would keep on doing what he is doing until someone tells him it is not correct in some way. He does not accept feedback uncritically, and makes constant decisions about his response to it. Ryder received extra tutoring during the year and this intervention has contributed to an improvement in the standard he has attained. At the beginning of the year he claimed that he did not think feedback was important, or that it changed anything. This may have been another strategy to cope with his learning difficulties because, when these were alleviated, he was able to say that feedback was important to “help you improve”. Ryder now has many positive attitudes towards his school work, and in spite of his difficulties wants to improve his

learning outcomes. He is not sure that he can do this, but sees feedback as one way of achieving his goals.

### ***Case Report 2: Nelson***

Nelson has many social and behavioural issues. At the beginning of the year I observed that he was seated by himself, more or less in isolation from his peers, and that he was not well integrated into the social life of the class. Nelson was the participant mentioned in chapter 4 who appeared to set a test for me, presumably to help him assess how genuine I was in my stated aim of getting to know the class in order to carry out the research. On my first visit to the class I approached Nelson and greeted him, using his real name. He appeared surprised and asked how I knew his name. Then he narrowed his eyes and said “How do you spell my name?” Fortunately I had noticed the slight variation in the spelling of his name from the more traditional spelling and spelt it correctly. He was visibly astonished, and commented that I was only the third person in the school who had spelt his name correctly. From then on he appeared willing to accept me, and we were able to establish some sort of rapport, although there were further “tests”. One of these was when he called me over and told me about a book he was reading. It was Frank Herbert’s *Dune*, and because I am familiar with the series we were able to have a discussion about it. My knowledge of his reading material and willingness to discuss it with him as an equal marked a step further in the development of our rapport.

Yet another step forward occurred the day after we recorded Interview 1. He had asked to change his codename and had selected an unusually spelt name for a particular and personal

reason. I considered this selection overnight, and came to the conclusion that I could not allow this because it raised the risk of internal disclosure to unacceptable levels. I told him that he would have to change his codename and gave my reasons for this proposal. I asked Nelson to choose whether to continue with his chosen codename but with a more usual spelling; to keep the original codename he had drawn at the beginning of the year; or to select another name altogether. He listened carefully, then opted for 'Nelson'. From then on he was open and frank with me, considered his responses to my questions carefully, and in every way indicated that he had accepted me and respected my role as a researcher. As I considered his utterances, particularly his insistence on the ownership of his work and being an active participant in the feedback process, I realized that he had been following a similar set of beliefs in his interactions with me. One of the factors in the development of our positive relationship was my acceptance of him as an individual with the right to make decisions about situations which concerned him. However, he was unruly and disrespectful to his teacher, classmates, and other adults in the room during most of the year. I saw several examples of unacceptable behavior from him, but in line with my wish not to interfere with the running of the classroom I did not raise these with him.

I have detailed the steps by which Nelson and I developed some form of rapport because I believe that his behavioural and social issues have had a major impact on his views of feedback. I feel it is necessary to show that on the face of it his views as expressed to me were earnest, and that I accepted them as being a reflection of his own opinions. I hope that the insight I have gained into Nelson's views on feedback may be useful when teachers who are trying to cope with similarly 'difficult' students in their rooms consider how best to give them feedback in ways which the students may accept. Nelson's views on feedback

underwent a change over the year, as will be seen later in this report. I should stress at this point that I believe this was at least due partly to the positive classroom climate established by Mrs P. Her efforts and those of other staff at Rangatahi did appear to work for Nelson and other classmates with similar behavioural issues.

Nelson considers feedback to be very important overall, with utterances relating to every aspect of each category of Question 1: Why is feedback important? As far as the importance of feedback in supporting progress towards immediate learning is concerned he feels that refining knowledge (i.e., letting him know specifically what he can do to improve his work) is a very relevant aspect. All the structural aspects of Category A are represented in his utterances, but the remaining three are represented not as strongly as is the refinement of knowledge. This is possibly because he has a well-developed ability to self-assess his work, so Nelson has possibly self-assessed his rate of progress already, as well as the other aspects represented in Category A. The importance of feedback as a means of motivating students and changing their behaviour is present in his utterances, but he relates much more strongly to the importance of feedback in the development of persistence, as shown in the following utterance:

Oh, um, usually between the very start and the middle 'cause then it helps me to write more and like when I'm actually writing the work it helps me like 'good work' so, oh, I've done some good work, probably write some more good work. So it actually helps me write. (N1.018)

There are several similar quotations which indicate that Nelson views positive feedback as being very important in developing an attitude of persistence. The extracts are found in all

three interview transcripts, even in Interview 3 during which it became apparent that his views on some aspects of feedback had changed throughout the year.

As noted earlier, Nelson has a very well-developed ability to assess his own work. This is probably the key component of his attitudes towards feedback and, as will be seen later in the report, is possibly the source of some of his difficulties in the classroom. He stated very strongly that he often knew he had done a good piece of work, and attempted to explain how he knew this:

Nelson:           Honestly, I don't actually know the content myself .. and... yeah. All I know is that I um ... I just get a feeling I've just done something right.

R:                 Interesting. So it's a feeling ...

Nelson:           Yeah, it's just a feeling that's like ... uh, like I don't know why, I don't know how, I just ... I just know, like, my brain just tells me I've done something right, and ...

R:                 What if when you do something not right ... what goes on in your head then?

Nelson:           It just tells me that – cos I just know that I haven't done something right.

R:                 Cos it doesn't feel so good?

Nelson:           Mmm. Or .. the teacher said it's ... yeah.

R:                 Sometimes you need the teacher to ...

Nelson:           Yeah, cos sometimes I don't know what I've done wrong, like for certain things. And then cos I can't really tell the difference ...

R:                 Between what's really good and what's not quite ...

Nelson: Yeah, sometimes ... for me, it might be really good; for the teacher it might be absolutely wrong. (N2.042 – N2.052)

While this excerpt illustrates Nelson's ability to self assess, it also shows another strong aspect which is his ability to reflect on his work. He understands that different people may view what he does in different ways, and he is prepared to consider alternative views about the merits or otherwise of his work. In many instances it is clear that while other people's views of his work would not be accepted he does reflect on what he is told, whether he implements these suggestions or not. Nelson is also one of the few participants who is aware of the importance of feedback in later life, after his formal schooling will have finished:

R: And is that just at school, or right through life?

Nelson: Um, probably right through life.

R: So how would ... how would it work if you weren't at school? I mean, obviously when you're in your job you're not ... writing in a book and handing it in.

Nelson: Mm.

R: So how would it work, then?

Nelson: Basically, just the way you do things. They could say, 'Oh you could do this better, do that better ... [need] to improve it, so ... it helps you do the job better, and helps other people in your job. (N3.067 – N3.072)

As far as the helpfulness of feedback is concerned Nelson typically has strong views. In particular, he holds strong (and not always positive) beliefs about what he expects of his teacher and about what he thinks she expects of him. Nelson feels his teacher is quite demanding of him, and expects him to be better than he thinks he is. He has an interesting theory about the reason for this:

Nelson: Yes, but she – what I think is she’s trying to make me good at what I’m not particularly good at. As in if she gave me time, gave me good, like feedbacks [sic] like the first one [referring to the type of feedback he had placed first on the ranking task], I probably would have got good at writing. But she’s been quite demanding, expecting me to be the best writer. Yeah.

R: And you find that tough.

Nelson: Yeah, particularly tough. (...) with this but I am quite tall and I ... she’s probably making me quite over the average as in because I usually stand out.

R: So you wonder whether she thinks you should stand out in everything.

Nelson: Yeah, because if I’m average like everyone else but I’m tall and I stand out everyone else is going to think I’m dumb. Same thing with my dad, he was quite tall. Yeah the teacher pushed him more, and my dad says small people get away with more things. (N1.086 – N1.090)

Nelson’s theory here is that because he is tall he looks older than he really is, so his teacher (and other people) may expect him to be working at a level suitable for the age which people think he is, rather than his actual age. He is a few months younger than most of his classmates but did not look out of place physically, being one of the taller boys in his class.

One of the strongest influences on Nelson’s views about the helpfulness of feedback was the language used. He was very resistant to anything he saw as “demanding” or “negative”. He commented on this aspect many times, particularly at the beginning and middle of the year, and was at times quite vehement in his dislike of such language:

R: ...Alright, let's think about the kinds of feedback that your class has had. So, has your class had any feedback that did or didn't help you to make your work better?

Nelson: Well, I don't know about my class much. For me it helps a lot. Kind of the negative stuff that if it wasn't so demanding it probably would've helped and would've like, even though it's negative it would have told me "oh right this is what I need to improve on" but the teacher, our teacher kind of writes kind of demanding as in 'you need to!'...

R: I see, so...

Nelson: Say I had bad handwriting, it's like "you need to write better" and she'd next time [say] "improve on your skills in writing".

R: And what would've made that feedback better for you?

Nelson: Well, it would have told me "oh, well I need to improve on my penmanship" as in it wasn't kind of like she's yelling at me like "you need to work on this better!" and (...) finally, it's still negative but it's telling me in a more subtle way that I need to work on my writing.

R: So then, to you it sounds as though it's trying to help you.

Nelson: Mmmm.

R: Right. Whereas if it's just written "Do this!"...

Nelson: Yeah, that's not really helping, it's just more demanding .. demanding is usually stuff I either ignore or it just goes in. (N1.007 – N1.016)

In this excerpt it is the language used that Nelson objects to, not the fact that he needs to know he must improve his work. He tried to express this by saying "...it's still negative but it's telling me in a more subtle way that I need to work on my writing" (N1.012). There are



many other utterances in which he stated his dislike of demanding language, and declared that he preferred to feel he had options. Nelson was opposed so strongly to demanding language that he simply ignored the feedback suggestions, feeling subsequently that he was not able to improve his work. Transcript 1 seemed to show that Nelson was unaware that it was his own attitude that was causing the loss of opportunities to improve his work but, during the year, he seemed to gain more insight into this aspect of his work. By Interview 3 it was clear that his attitude had changed:

R:               Ok, so if we go back to some of the early discussions we had in other interviews, when you said that ... um ... **angry** feedback – I forget what your words were, but ... you were very clear that it was ... feedback that was negative ...

Nelson:       Yeah.

R:               ...would you still respond to it?

Nelson:       Um. [Nods]

R:               You would? And do you think that's something that's changed in you over the year?

Nelson:       Yeah.

R:               You do? Can you tell me a bit more about that? Why do you think you've changed over the year in that thinking?

Nelson:       Well, usually if... cos she [the teacher] used to just annoy me so I didn't listen to her, but now it annoys me but helps me.

R:               Right. So you ... you really look at it. I think you told me one other time you usually know whether you've got things ... together, or not ...

Nelson:       Mm.

R:               ...and so ...

Nelson:       It's only sometimes when I'm like ... when I'm really sure.

R:                Yeah. So you're telling me really there's something going on in your head that you're ... um ... analysing and ... um, taking note of the feedback and making your own decisions ...

Nelson:        Yeah.

R:                ... about it. And one of the things that's happened over the year is that you've decided that, even if it annoys you, you still should pay attention.

Nelson:        Yeah. Cos it could help me.                (N3.046 – N3.060)

This situation, for Nelson, was a real turnaround. He has now accepted that when feedback is intended to help it can be productive to consider it, no matter what the language is like. Clearly it still annoys him, but he has decided to accept the suggestions anyway. I do not think this signals a change in his basic beliefs about what makes feedback important or helpful, however, although it is a change in the way he responds to it.

One significant aspect of Nelson's views about feedback is that he is well aware of the benefits of constructive criticism, when he is given suggestions for improvement or told why a particular piece of work is not 'good enough'. Initially, however, he would refuse to take advantage of it because of factors which many teachers might find largely irrelevant. In particular, the language Nelson objects to would not be seen as demanding by many teachers. As I have mentioned before, the sentence construction "You need to ..." as a lead into a suggestion for a next step of learning is used quite commonly in classrooms but clearly it would not be effective with (or welcomed by) Nelson. Perhaps a similar attitude could explain why some students do not seem to incorporate feedback into their work, even when what is known about good practice is followed.

Nelson's response to feedback is influenced very strongly by his sense of ownership of his work, and in particular by his expectation of being involved actively in the feedback process. He feels he has a good awareness of the relative worth of his own work, and considers the feedback he receives in relation to his own perception of his work, as revealed in the following utterance: "Um, that ... that time I didn't really care what she said, I knew that I'd done right. I'd done, um, a good piece of work" (N2.082).

There are several utterances which illustrate the same theme. Overall, it seems that Nelson may be operating at a level of self-assessment well beyond what might be expected of a Year 8 student, and is in fact an independent learner in many ways. Some of his difficulties in the classroom may arise from this awareness, because many teachers would not be expecting this level of development from a primary student, especially one who has not given any signs of being brighter than his peers academically. As a result, Nelson's needs in this area may not have been recognised or catered for. By the time I met him he had a long-standing reputation for very poor behaviour. In response, Nelson seems to have developed an attitude towards his teachers which has influenced his learning significantly. His views on feedback are an expression of his initial disdain for his situation. It is heartening to see him making progress in this area over the year. By the end of the year he was seated in a group with his peers, and had become something of a leader in the group. Mrs P commented extensively on some of the changes she had noted during the year:

Mrs P:           He has many difficulties with social behaviours. He is ... not reaching potential, because as he sees things in such a black and white world. "Why bother if I don't have to?", and he seems to also, we've recently worked out, have some sort of difficulty with writing as an actual process of writing ... the physicality of writing,

which could account for the minimal amount of work that gets done. He's ... quite openly can speak about everything that's going on. He has supportive parents; parents that I think were under ... under some sort of illusion, probably from his primary school, that he was gifted and talented, and there was an air of frustration there, because he may be in some parts, but it's not... really ... significant, and he doesn't justify accelerated learning programmes. He does certainly prefer the computer for any learning, and as a tool for presentation. Um ... he has – or had – very little social cues. So, as I always say, before you can actually learn, you have to have some functioning in that way to be able to make ... [to] get going. This year has seen him stay in the classroom, and has seen him move from being in isolation, as he was last year, with his back to the class, to now sitting with his peer group. He went on camp, and ... was part of the group with no other ... no problems other than you would have with a normal ...

R:                   Right ...

Mrs P:             ... group of kids you would have on camp. (excerpt from interview with Mrs P, November 29, 2010).

In summary, Nelson's relationship with his teacher is an important aspect of his response to feedback. It lies in the area of his expectations of his teacher and the expectations he feels she has of him. The honesty or otherwise of the messages he receives are not as important to him as they are to Ryder, probably because awareness of his own work and his ability to self-analyse makes him less reliant on the opinions of others. Nelson understands the worth of feedback and of constructive criticism, and is aware of the role that feedback can play throughout life. His behavioural difficulties have affected his responses to feedback, but there were signs by the end of the year that as his behaviour and attitude were becoming more

acceptable Nelson was gaining more from the feedback he was receiving. He still expected strongly to play an active role in the feedback process, and had very good self-assessment skills to bring to it. At the beginning of Interview 1 Nelson was concerned with the various difficulties he thought he had perceived with his teacher's approach to giving feedback, but by the end of the year he had moved past these and could respond positively. I am sure that Nelson's attitude was still likely to impact on his achievement adversely, but when I asked him at the end of Interview 3 if there was anything he wanted to add he stated calmly and positively that feedback is good and is important to help people improve.

### ***Cross-case analysis***

In the first part of this chapter I presented two case reports which explore individual responses to feedback in relation to the categories identified through the phenomenographic analysis. In this section of the chapter I will explore similarities and differences between the individual cases by means of cross-case analysis. This process involves a consideration of individual cases in relation to each other in order to illuminate the wider picture. Such analysis is a strategy used often by case study researchers to enhance the external validity or generalisability of case-study findings (Merriam, 2009). Because my study is not solely a case study, and because of the limited number of participants, I am not claiming any degree of generalisability, but I feel that the cross-case analysis will help to enrich the picture I am constructing. I believe it will also enhance my argument that individuals vary considerably in their responses to feedback, and that this reality affects the use they make of it subsequently.

I analysed the data for the two cases by first identifying all the utterances that related to each category of the phenomenographic analysis from the interview transcripts and from the questionnaires completed by each of the participants. I then tallied the utterances against a list

of the categories and their structural aspects, and listed them for each boy. In this way I was able to identify the categories where there was a difference of four or more in the number of utterances between Ryder and Nelson, and also those where there were three or fewer utterances. For instance, Nelson made one contribution to the category and aspect that the helpfulness of feedback is affected by its depth of meaning and accessibility because of the helpful or unhelpful language used (Category B, Structural Aspect 3 of Question 2), whereas Ryder made ten. By comparison they each made one contribution to the category and aspect that factors which affect an individual's response to feedback include the learning conditions and academic understandings of an individual relative to the individual's perception of the future worth of feedback (Category C, Structural Aspect 4 of Question 3).

The similarities between Ryder and Nelson were ascertained by identifying the number of aspects for which there was a difference of three or fewer in the number of utterances between the boys. There were 19 of these, spread across all ten of the categories identified through the three questions and the 37 structural aspects associated with them. There were very few utterances identified for any one of the structural aspects, consequently, with one or two utterances identified by each individual for most of them. Four utterances were identified for two aspects. These both related to Question 3: What factors affect individual responses to feedback? Both Ryder and Nelson contributed four utterances to the category that the factors which affect an individual's response to feedback include the learning conditions and academic understandings of an individual relative to the individual's perception of the value of feedback (Category C, Structural Aspect 2 of Question 3). Nelson contributed four utterances, and Ryder two, to the category that factors which affect an individual's response to feedback include the perceived ownership of the work to which the feedback relates according to the degree to which the feedback matches the individual's perception of the

work (Category A, Structural Aspect 2 of Question 3). I found this broad spread of similarities coupled with the low number of utterances fascinating because initially the two boys appear very similar in their views on feedback, given that they agree apparently on so many items. The low number of utterances involved suggests, however, that these aspects are not very relevant to either of them and that they do not represent their more strongly held views. The aspects which were similar include many which are represented in the literature as being important aspects of feedback, such as its ability to enhance achievement or to give information on progress. Other similarities related to the research literature include the individual's perception of the value of feedback (both boys valued it) and the relative worth of oral versus written feedback. The fact that the boys do not appear to value these facets of feedback very highly may be significant, and contributes to my argument that it is individual differences rather than broad similarities which have the greatest effect on the acceptance or rejection of feedback.

The remaining utterances were used to identify differences, which I grouped into two types. The first included eight aspects which were commented on by both boys with a difference of four or more utterances between the two boys. A further seven aspects were commented on by one boy only. I felt these constituted a separate grouping because, although the views of one boy were clear the views of the other on these aspects were unknown and therefore the similarity or differences in their views could not be ascertained. Where both boys had contributed views, I found differences of four or more utterances for eight aspects. Ryder had made more contributions to five of these, and Nelson to three. They are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Aspects on which Ryder and Nelson differed by four or more utterances**

Question number, Category and Dimension of variation	Heading for the category and structural aspect	Number of utterances: Ryder	Number of utterances: Nelson
Q1, Cat. A, Aspect 1	Feedback supports progress towards immediate learning goals when it refines knowledge	1	7
Q2, Cat. A, Aspect 2	The relevance and the accessibility of feedback affects the helpfulness of feedback when the full story is given	4	8
Q2, Cat. B, Aspect 1	The relevance and the accessibility of feedback affects the helpfulness of feedback according to the ease of understanding	10	3
Q2, Cat. C, Aspect 1	The type of feedback affects the helpfulness of feedback when it is simple (i.e., one specific type).	7	1
Q3, Cat. A, Aspect 1	Perception and retention of ownership of the work to which the feedback is related is a factor influencing an individual's response to feedback when the individual decides to accept, reject, or ignore the feedback	9	1
Q3, Cat. B, Aspect 1	The student's opinion of the person giving the feedback is a factor influencing an individual's response to feedback according to the individual's perception of the honesty of the message	6	2
Q3, Cat. C, Aspect 1	The conditions and understandings of individuals are factors influencing an individual's response to feedback according to the individual's learning styles and abilities	10	1
Q3, Cat. C, Aspect 3	The conditions and understandings of individuals are factors influencing an individual's response to feedback according to the individual's perception of the worth of constructive criticism	1	5

These differences between the two cases relate to aspects only where both boys contributed utterances and where there were at least four utterances, but the fact that both participants expressed an opinion strengthens the comparison. Table 2 shows that Ryder is concerned more than is Nelson with the ease with which he understands the feedback he received, and that his ability (in this case Ryder's ability to read with ease) has a major influence on his response. In contrast Nelson finds the role of feedback in refining knowledge very important, and has strong expectations of his teacher. He also finds feedback helpful when it is more complete and includes suggestions for improvement. In general, Ryder finds that aspects relating to his ability and the honesty of the message have a bigger influence on his views of



feedback whereas Nelson is concerned more with issues relating to his participation in the feedback process and what is contained in the feedback.

Of the seven aspects I identified where utterances were recorded for one boy only – and were not included in Table 4 therefore – six were from Nelson and one from Ryder. Those from Nelson included some of the aspects that were developed the most in his thinking, such as his ability to self-assess and to reflect on his work, for which seven and four utterances were recorded respectively. The greatest number of utterances (ten) was recorded by Nelson for the effect on the helpfulness of feedback of the language used. The only utterance from Ryder to fall into this group related to the influence of his prior knowledge of the person giving the feedback on its helpfulness to him, for which he recorded four utterances. These higher numbers of utterances show that the differences between the boys relate to strongly held views, whereas I felt that the similarities are not so meaningful to them because of the low number of utterances.

The question of individual differences in views about feedback is the major finding of this study. These differences are likely to have a much greater effect on their responses to feedback than might the similarities between them (although it is important to note that such a conclusion is based on analysing my two case reports only). This is probable even when there is a broad range of similar views involved. This finding may have great significance for classroom teachers; it may have implications also for general classroom practice. Teachers have to work with these situations regarding feedback in their classrooms; teachers can't not engage with this aspect (Absolum, 2006; Brookhart, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2006). It is possible that feedback which caters for the similarities found within a group of students will be accepted by members of that group, but it may not have as powerful an effect as will

feedback which caters for the strongly held but dissimilar views which individual students may possess. It could be the case that focusing on the general effectiveness of feedback based on the similarities found within a group, together with a subsequent improvement in standards of attainment by pupils, has been masking the potential for much greater improvements in situations where feedback which caters for these individual differences is given.

One of the main findings of my study is that what matters in feedback is a very individual decision. To illustrate this point I will now present the profile of the two participants whom I discussed in the case reports when mapped onto the model. The structural aspects that are presented as shadow boxes are those that seem to be more significant in the case of each of the two participants. The profiles are shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11.

### **Profile 1: Ryder**

Ryder's profile shows that he is concerned minimally with aspects related to the importance of feedback. For him the main issue was his low level of reading achievement, which was a particular condition for him. Ryder was also very focused on the ownership of his work. The other aspects which he mentioned frequently related to his concern about his personal learning difficulties. For example, Ryder mentioned frequently that the accessibility of the feedback was related to its helpfulness, as was the type of feedback. He preferred simple feedback which did not require him to read a great deal. If the feedback he was given did not fit his preferences then he stated that he would not read it. During Interview 1 Ryder said he would not read feedback because he did not think it made a difference, but by Interview 3 he was indicating that this initial reaction was because he could not read it always. What

mattered to Ryder about feedback was an individual response that was influenced heavily by his personal condition.

## **Profile 2: Nelson**

In contrast to Ryder, Nelson's views on feedback covered a much wider range of dimensions. He, like Ryder, felt that conditions and understandings and the ownership of his work were important considerations. Unlike Ryder, however, Nelson did not seem so preoccupied with the relevance and accessibility of the feedback he received. His views on the relationship between the teacher (or the person giving the feedback) and himself were expressed more clearly and more often than those of Ryder on this subject. Nelson was also much more interested in the importance of feedback to help him meet his short- and long-term goals. By comparing the two profiles (those of Ryder and Nelson), I can identify significant differences between these two boys in their perceptions of feedback and their responses to it. I think it is important to note that both boys have positive views about the nature of the relationship between themselves and their teacher and also about their personal conditions and understandings, which implies that these essential conditions for the reception and implementation of feedback have been met by their teacher in this situation. When the structural aspects included in Levels 2, 3, and 4 of the model are considered the differences between the two boys become much more obvious, however. I argue that it is at these levels where the likelihood is higher of feedback being received and implemented in ways which lead to improved learning outcomes, because it is here that the differences between the two individuals become most pronounced.

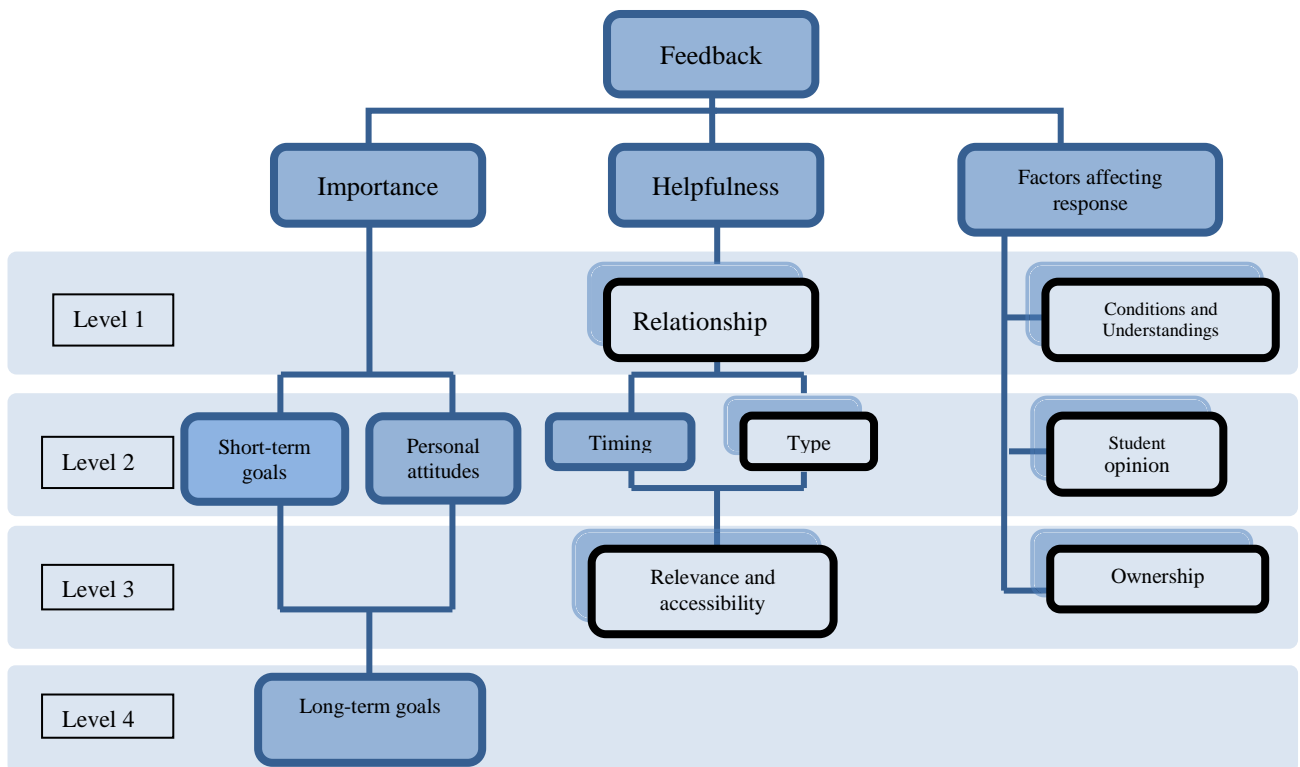


Figure 10. Diagram showing the feedback preferences of Ryder

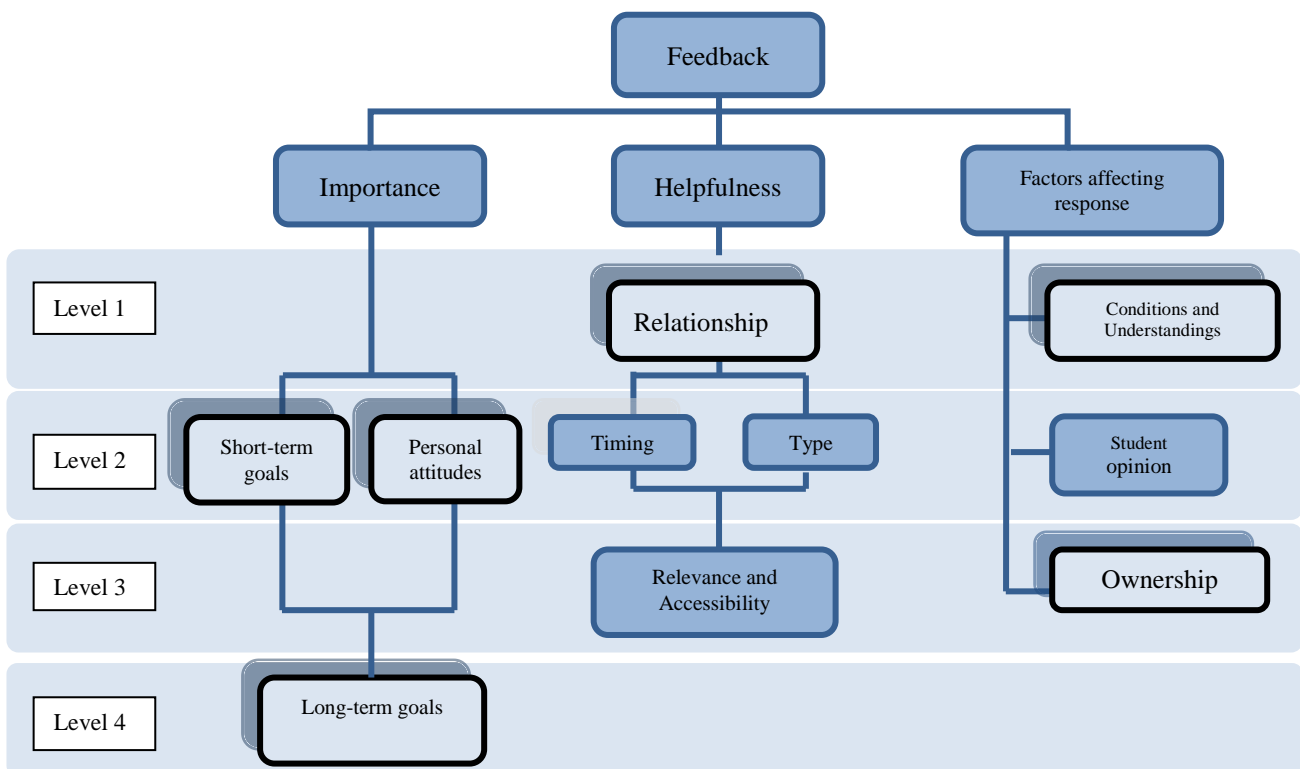


Figure 11. Diagram showing the feedback preferences of Nelson

As discussed earlier in this chapter, when the case reports are considered Nelson is operating at a much more independent level than is Ryder. Although retaining ownership of their work is important to both boys, it is much more evident in Nelson's case. He is self evaluating, and has a strong sense of the importance of feedback both now and in his future. On the one hand, he retains the right to make his own decisions regarding feedback, and sees the teacher as a contributor to the process of giving and receiving feedback rather than as the originator of it. Ryder, on the other hand – although also retaining a strong sense of ownership – is concerned very much more with his own issues (in his case, his reading ability). His views of feedback are coloured by this focus.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter, I have presented case reports for two of seven the participants in the present study. I have also provided a cross-case analysis to demonstrate what may be termed the feedback-profile of each boy. This analysis showed that the biggest influence on the views of Ryder was his difficulty with reading and his need to feel that the message he was being given was honest. For Nelson, however, the biggest influence was his personal attitudes, especially towards the language used in the feedback he is given. He has a well-developed ability to self assess, and through his sense of ownership of his work Nelson also expects to be involved actively in the feedback process. With reference to the teacher's role in providing feedback, Mrs P gives excellent feedback based on Sadler's three points. She tells each student the standard he has achieved, the standard he is aiming for, and suggests some means of bridging the gap. Ryder will implement the feedback usually and will take some action to bridge the gap if the feedback is presented in ways which he finds meaningful – that is, ways which take account of his reading ability. Nelson, by comparison, is not likely to take action to bridge the gap unless he is left with some role to play in the process. He will reject feedback which he finds 'demanding', by which Nelson seems to mean anything that does

not allow him some form of choice. Following the case reports I undertook a cross-case analysis. This analysis showed that the similarities between the boys, while widespread, were of relatively less importance than were the aspects on which they differed. It is in their differences that the key aspects of their views on feedback were discovered. This finding is the major outcome of this study. It is one that may have important implications for classroom practice.

## **Chapter 10: Conclusions**

In this chapter I explain how the findings of the study as presented so far answer my main feedback question, which is: What influences the reception and subsequent use of feedback? The results of the study may lead to a better understanding of this aspect of the learning process therefore the main aim of the research has been met. However, in order to maximise the contribution of the study I have developed a model showing a range of responses to feedback, and I discuss its possible applications to the general classroom setting later in this chapter. I hope that this section will prove useful in showing how the results of the study may be beneficial to the learning outcomes of a wider range of children than those involved in the study. Following this I present the limitations of the study then, finally, I discuss some areas for further research which may build on this study.

### ***The Findings***

The key finding of this study is that the similarities in perceptions of feedback held among this group of individuals are not as important in their response to feedback as are their differences. The model shows that the two boys who were the subjects of the case reports have very different views on what matters in feedback to them, and they respond therefore in very different ways to the feedback they are offered. I consider that the research question “What affects the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary schoolchildren?” may be answered well by knowing which of the aspects shown on the model are important to each individual, especially the aspects shown on Levels 2 and 3. It seems to me that individual differences relating to these aspects may have hitherto been masked by the focus on the general content which feedback should have in order to be effective , that is it should identify

the standard achieved, the standard to be achieved and identify some way of bridging the gap (Sadler,1989). For some individuals factors such as their perceived ownership of the work being considered in the feedback or their trust in the person giving the feedback may affect their response negatively, which in turn may result in no evidence of a reduction in the ‘gap’ between the standard attained and the standard required being apparent. I conclude that the factors identified through the phenomenographical analysis, especially when individual differences relating to these are identified, may be part of the process by which feedback is or is not implemented by students.

An important finding of the study is that individuals may hold more than one view of what makes feedback helpful or important, but that they often relate more to one of these views than others – that is, they may prioritise one view over another in their response to feedback. This finding adds to my argument that it is the differences between individuals rather than their similarities that have the greatest effect on their response to the feedback they are given, because a similarity of opinion between two individuals may be held strongly by one individual but be much less important to the other. Therefore, even when a teacher has identified similarities in perceptions of feedback within a group of individuals in her class it may be that not all of them will respond strongly and positively to feedback which caters for that similarity. An individual who does not respond as expected may well be reached through feedback which caters for that individual’s difference of opinion from the remainder of the group. In other words, the student may not be rejecting the feedback wholly but may see feedback in that form as being less important than the teacher considered it would be. For such individuals reasons which account for whether or not they will respond positively to feedback may have to be sought in the individual profile of their perception of feedback (i.e., their differences).



Another finding was that although different students may find the same particular type of feedback helpful they may vary as to why they perceive it as helpful. This is related again to the differences rather than the similarities between individuals, but the importance of the differences may be masked for classroom teachers by the similarity in preferred type that they may have noticed.

It seems that the degree to which individuals trust their teacher is a key component in establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between a teacher and a student. The importance of having a positive relationship is not a new finding, because I found that it was supported strongly in the literature, but it is possible that the trust element is more of a key factor in a student deciding whether or not to utilise the feedback they have been given than has previously been realised.

A further finding of the study is that some students feel that their retention of the ownership of their work is a very important factor that influences their response to feedback. Such students appear to require an active role in decisions relating to positive implementation of the feedback they are given in order to improve their work and, therefore, their learning outcomes. Many teachers may feel that making these decisions is part of their own role in the process, and this disconnection between the views of themselves and individual students may be another key factor affecting the response of some students to feedback.

One of the findings that I found most surprising was the possibility that some of the language used by teachers in the classroom commonly may be affecting the responses of some of their students, even though the language is intended to be positive and encouraging. An example of

this is the phrasing of the next step of learning in terms such as “Now you need to ...”.

Students who have a strong desire to retain ownership of their work, and therefore claim an active role in the process, may feel that this is ‘demanding’ or ‘negative’ language (to use Nelson’s terms) and they may choose to ignore the feedback subsequently. Although Nelson did eventually revise his opinion sufficiently to acknowledge that this form of language may be helpful, it took him most of the year to come to this understanding. If his views had been known much earlier then it is likely that feedback in a form which he found more helpful could have been devised earlier in the academic year, with a subsequently greater improvement in his learning outcomes.

Another finding of the study, and one which is not well covered in the literature I consulted, is that some individuals are aware of the long-term importance of feedback in their lives, while other individuals do not seem to share this awareness. The study does not show whether or not this awareness affects students’ responses to feedback, but it is an interesting finding and is one that could be explored further perhaps.

The use of phenomenography in this study allowed a collective view of perceptions of the importance and helpfulness of feedback and of a range of factors which affect an individual’s response to it to be drawn from the individual views expressed by a small group of participants. This collective view gives more stability to the model drawn from the outcome spaces derived from the phenomenographic analysis of the data than would normally be expected from such a small sample. The model, however, is still best considered as a suggested outline rather than as a definitive version of factors which may affect a student’s response to feedback. Because the model is drawn from a collective view, and is therefore more stable than the expressions of individuals, teachers may find it useful as they consider

those of their pupils who do not respond to feedback in ways that they may have expected them to.

Another contribution made by the use of phenomenography in this study was that it allowed the collective view to be used to identify the profile of individual participants relating to their perceptions of feedback. By doing this, it may be possible to identify which aspects relating to student feedback are important to an individual as well as showing the areas in which his perceptions may differ from those of his classmates. These differences may be small but could be of great significance to the student and may affect his response to feedback.

### ***Limitations of the study***

The limitations of this study include the small sample size, and the fact that participants were selected from one school only. These limitations are at least partly the result of the convenience sampling technique I employed but, as I have noted elsewhere, this is often the case for education research given the difficulties which can be experienced in accessing schools and students for research purposes. However the small sample size did allow an in-depth exploration to be undertaken of the views of the individuals involved which, in turn, increases the value of the data gathered.

Another consequence of the convenience sampling and therefore the small number of participants is that since I chose to focus on a group of boys for this research project, the perceptions of girls relating to feedback are not covered. The possibility that there are gender differences in students' perceptions of feedback needs to be explored and should form part of a research programme based on this study.

In this qualitative study, as in other qualitative work, the findings could be subject to other interpretations. This, together with the convenience sampling, means that the findings are not generalisable to wider populations, although generalisation is and was not an objective for this study. The suggestions that I make later in this chapter are intended for use by individual classroom teachers as they find them appropriate, and are not intended to provide a definitive answer to the reception of feedback in their classrooms. The study is limited in scope, because seven members of one class only were involved as participants. Although this is in accord with phenomenographic principles it means that further work is required on a larger scale, in order to increase the generalisability of the findings. For this purpose, further studies should be planned and implemented with a much larger population and in a variety of contexts. It would also be useful if the study was repeated in international settings in order to explore the applicability of the findings to other school settings in other cultures.

### ***Application of the research***

I will now consider what my conclusions mean for classroom teachers. Although there are many primary classroom teachers who, like Mrs P, give excellent feedback I am aware that there are still some primary classroom teachers who, for whatever reason, do not as yet implement all that is known currently about giving feedback in ways which make a positive difference to the achievement levels of their pupils. I am also aware that there is a body of literature available which seeks to address this problem specifically. Because I consider that this area lies outside the scope of my own research and because it is well served already, I am assuming that my research will be most applicable to those who give feedback already in accordance with what we know of good practice. Therefore I am directing the following suggestions to classroom teachers who give good feedback already but who are puzzled by

those of their pupils who do not seem to benefit from the feedback they are given. The following suggestions are also intended for use with a limited number of students only in each class, because of time restraints. I suggest that each teacher may have two or three students in the class who are not responding to feedback in ways which seem helpful, and that these two or three students could be the focus of a more in-depth investigation of their views.

The first suggestion I would offer to teachers is that they should consider what they know already of their selected students' abilities and difficulties with learning. I am sure that in most cases this will be substantial, but, if not, I suggest that more information is gathered and considered. This is because the findings of this study show that gaining this knowledge is essential to the effective crafting of feedback for individuals, in ways that will increase the likelihood that it will result in evidence of some closure of the gap between the current and desired standard by individuals. Next, I would suggest that teachers consider honestly the relationship they have with each student. Is it respectful and as far as possible amicable (even when the student, like Nelson, exhibits quite severe behavioural difficulties)? If difficulties in the relationship between the student and the teacher are identified as being an aspect of the lack of response to feedback by some individuals then this area would need to be addressed, again because the study reaffirms findings from the literature that shows this is an essential basic element of giving good feedback.

Following this consideration, it would be desirable to establish each student's personal profile and perhaps to map it onto the model. In the section of this chapter relating to further research and development I discuss the possibility of the development of a more structured instrument which could be made available to teachers for the purpose of gaining this information.

Because this instrument would not be available for some time I offer the following suggestions for teachers who may be interested in exploring the views of their students in the meantime.

Teachers may have some information they can draw on already to carry out this process, but if not I would suggest that devising a simple survey which asks each student about his or her preferences would be an effective means of gaining this information. Teachers might like to consider using my three subsidiary questions, with the categories and structural aspects I have identified as a basis. As an example of how this could be done, Category A of the first question “Why is feedback important?” could be structured as follows:

Is feedback important? Yes / No.

If yes, then feedback is important because it helps me to achieve my short-term goals when it

- a) Helps me understand more
- b) Helps me improve
- c) Shows me my mistakes
- d) Tells me how I’m doing.

The students could then indicate one or more of the options which they consider to be the most appropriate for them. I have modified the actual category to include an option where the student can indicate that he or she does not think feedback is important. This was implicit in my interview questions when I asked the boys “Do you think feedback is important?”, but it was not included in the categories because there I was investigating the research question “Why is feedback important?” For classroom use, however, the option of indicating that feedback is not important should be available to the students. If a student indicated that he or she did not think it was important then the classroom teacher may wish to follow up with a one-on-one conference with the student in order to probe his or her reasoning. I did this with

Ryder, who said in Interview one that he did not think feedback mattered because it made no difference. As I have stated elsewhere by the end of the year he was able to discuss with me his reasons, which were related to his lack of reading ability.

Once the classroom teacher has identified each student's profile, I suggest that the teacher considers his or her existing feedback techniques in order to make best use of this new information. It may be that little more than a change in wording is required. This would be the case for Nelson who indicated strongly that he wished to be offered a choice in the feedback. He said that phrases such as "Perhaps you could consider ..." or "Next time you might like to ..." would work for him, whereas the phrase "You need to ..." was not acceptable to him. Ryder, however, required a change in the format of his feedback. He would probably respond well to verbal feedback, given in a one-on-one dialogue, and this may be a technique that classroom teachers could consider using with some of their students.

Whatever techniques individual classroom teachers use in giving feedback, or whatever changes to their current practice they may decide to make, one thing seems clear: their students are very likely to be aware of the role played by feedback in helping them to improve their work. Many if not most of them will be eager to respond once feedback is delivered to them in ways which are meaningful to them. The boys I interviewed all had learning and/or behavioural difficulties of one sort or another, and all had different views on feedback, but each was keen and eager to discuss the whole area of feedback with me. I came away with the strong impression that feedback and their education did matter to them, no matter how adept they were at hiding this from their peers and (at times) their teacher.

### ***Suggestions for further research and development***

As suggested earlier in this chapter, this study was limited in size and scope. Further studies are required based on a larger scale questionnaire designed to investigate the extent to which the perceptions of feedback, on which the categories and structural aspects identified through the phenomenographic analysis are based, exist for students in New Zealand schools. This would be an essential first step in the design of an instrument suitable for use by teachers in classrooms. This further large-scale work would be necessary, because basing an instrument on the views of seven children could miss other perceptions which would be of value to teachers in classrooms. It would also be helpful if an instrument was prepared for identifying the views of individuals so that they could be mapped onto the model. I have outlined one possible approach earlier, but full development and piloting of a suitable instrument still needs to be undertaken. A more robust sampling technique, such as a random sample of Year 8 students in New Zealand, in sufficient numbers to allow some generalisation, would be necessary for this purpose.

Another obvious area where further investigation is needed is to study the views of girls and other groups of boys on this subject. It would also be desirable to carry out similar studies overseas, in order to place the findings of this study in an international context. Qualitative studies are not by nature replicable, and another researcher would not identify necessarily the same categories and structural aspects from the data I gathered. Further exploration, using the same research questions and the phenomenographic approach, should give further additional insights into this topic.

Undertaking an extended study which tracked the academic progress of individuals following the identification and mapping of their preferences would also be valuable. This could utilise



a small-scale approach, using a small group of pupils, or it could be scaled up to a study incorporating a much larger group of students. If this was done then the results could be reported possibly by using quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. The data from a large-scale study could be used also to strengthen the generalisability of the work.

An investigation of the responses of different teachers to the information gained from identifying and mapping the preferences of their students could also be useful, particularly if any individual differences in their own strategies for giving feedback could be identified (given, of course, that all of these teachers were giving effective feedback at the start of the study).

## ***Summary***

In this chapter I have presented the conclusions I have drawn from this study. I have established that the answer to the question “What affects the reception and subsequent use of feedback by primary schoolchildren?” varies according to each individual’s profile, based on the factors identified through the phenomenographic analysis. This variance may account for much if not all of the lack of response exhibited by some individuals to the feedback they are given, if this feedback is given in accordance with what we know about “good practice”. In particular, the differences between individuals may be more significant in their response to feedback than the similarities between them. I have then shown how the model I developed may be used in primary classrooms to provide further information for teachers as they search for ways to make the feedback they give more meaningful. Following this I have outlined some areas where further research and development may add to our knowledge of the field.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Letter from The University of Canterbury giving ethical approval for the study

Appendix B: Letter of application to Rangatahi Intermediate School

Appendix C: Consent forms and information sheets

Appendix D: Interview schedules

Appendix E: Materials presented to participants during the first round of interviews

Appendix F: The questionnaire

Appendix G: Workbook pages illustrating the analysis process used to develop the categories for Question 1 (What makes feedback important?)

Appendix H: Selected interview transcripts

Appendix I: Typology developed by Tunstall and Gipps

Appendix J: Feedback model developed by Hattie and Timperley

## *Appendix A: Letter granting ethical approval*

Human Ethics Committee

Tel: +64 3 364 2241, Fax: +64 3 364 2856, Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz



Ref: HEC 2009/58/CoEdn

13 October 2009

Judy Williams  
School of Educational Studies & Human Development  
College of Education  
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Judy

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "What makes feedback work for primary school children?" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Dr Missy Morton'.

A small blue circular stamp, possibly a library or archival mark, located to the left of the name.  
Dr Missy Morton  
**Chair**  
**Educational Research HEC**

*"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other*

## ***Appendix B: Letter of application to Rangatahi Intermediate***

J.A.Williams

School of Educational Studies and Human Development,

College of Education

Universtiy of Canterbury

Tel: +64 3 345 8277,

Email: [judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz)

The Principal

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear **XXXXXXXXXX**

I am a staff member and PhD student at the University of Canterbury College of Education, working in Professional Studies and Professional Practice. My PhD study, entitled ‘What makes feedback work for primary school children?’ will require me to work with a teacher of Year 7/8 children over a period of one school year within a school setting. I would like your permission to work within your school to carry out this research. I have attached an information sheet about the study for yourself, the Board of Trustees and the classroom teacher, and would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this. I have also prepared information sheets for the parents / caregivers of the students involved and for the students themselves.

Academic and Ethical Approval for this study has been granted by the relevant University of Canterbury Committees. I will be supervised during this study by Associate Professor Alison Gilmore and Dr. Alex Gunn. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact myself or Professor Gilmore. Our contact details are as follows:

Mrs Judy Williams

Assoc. Prof. Alison Gilmore

Lecturer	School of Educational Studies and Human
School of Educational Studies and Human	Development
Development	College of Education, U.C.
College of Education, U.C.	Email: <a href="mailto:alison.gilmore@canterbury.ac.nz">alison.gilmore@canterbury.ac.nz</a>
Email: <a href="mailto:judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz">judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz</a>	Phone (03) 364 2259.
Phone: (03) 345 8277	

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

Regards,

J.A.Williams

Lecturer

College of Education

University of Canterbury.

## Appendix C: Selection of consent forms and information sheets



### What makes feedback work for primary school students?

#### Information for Parents/Caregivers of class members

My name is Judy Williams. I am a Lecturer at the University of Canterbury College of Education. For my PhD, I am studying what makes feedback work, and I would like your child to participate in the research.

I will be observing in your child's class, and may ask your child questions about the feedback he or she gets so that I can better understand what they think about it. I will also ask your child to fill out a questionnaire about the types of feedback he or she has received and what he or she thinks works well. The survey will be completed in the normal classroom setting and will be administered by your child's teacher. Each of the children will have a code name so no-one else will know who filled out each questionnaire form or who made the comments I will use in my report of this research.

If you agree for your child to take part in the research, please sign the consent form below. I have also sent the children a letter and consent form to sign.

All the original notes that I take and the original survey forms will be kept in a locked cupboard in my office at the University of Canterbury for a minimum of five years after the study is finished and will then be destroyed.

The results of the study might be submitted for publication in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. You may at any time ask for additional information or results from the study.

If you have any questions about this project, you can talk to me or to Associate Professor Alison Gilmore, who is my supervisor. Our contact details are below. If you have any complaints you may also contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Education Research Human Ethics Committee; see contact details at the foot of this page.

Mrs Judy Williams Lecturer School of Educational Studies and Human Development College of Education, U.C. Email: <a href="mailto:judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz">judy.williams@canterbury.ac.nz</a> Phone: (03) 345 8277	Assoc. Prof. Alison Gilmore School of Educational Studies and Human Development College of Education, U.C. Email: <a href="mailto:alison.gilmore@canterbury.ac.nz">alison.gilmore@canterbury.ac.nz</a> Phone (03) 364 2259.
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If your child changes their mind about sharing their ideas with me, that's fine, too; all they have to do is say so. He or she can withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

Thank you for thinking about helping me. I am looking forward to meeting your child.

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:  
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.  
College of Education, University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH  
Telephone: 345 8312

What makes feedback work for primary school children?

## **What makes feedback work for primary school children?**

### **Information sheet for class members.**

My name is Judy Williams and I am studying for a PhD Degree in Education. For part of my work, I need to find out what sorts of feedback are used in your classroom by your teacher, and what sorts of feedback do or don't work well for you.

To do this, I will be observing in your classroom at different times over the next few weeks. I may talk to you about things that I want to understand better, or ask you questions about the feedback you get from your teacher. I may write down your comments to use when I give presentations on this project or when I write my report. I will make sure your real name is not written down when recording your comments and will make sure your real name is not used in the report or presentations. You can choose your own code name to use instead. If you don't want to participate, you can choose not to make any comments when these discussions happen and no-one will mind.

I will also ask you to fill out a questionnaire for me. If you choose to participate in this, it will be done in your own class with your own teacher, and your name will not appear on it at all. If you change your mind you don't have to fill out the questionnaire and no-one will mind.

All the original notes that I take and the original survey forms will be kept in a locked cupboard in my office at the University of Canterbury for a minimum of five years after the study is finished and will then be destroyed.

The results of the study might be submitted for publication in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. If you want to, you can ask for additional information or results from the study at any time.

If you are happy to take part you will need to sign the consent form and return it to your teacher. Your parents/caregivers will need to sign a form too. If you have any questions you can talk to your teacher or your parents/caregivers.

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College of Education, University of Canterbury  
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Telephone: 345 8312

## **What makes feedback work for primary school children?**

### **Information for Parents/Caregivers of individual participants.**

My name is Judy Williams. I am a Lecturer at the University of Canterbury College of Education. For my PhD, I am studying what makes feedback work for individuals, and I would like your child to participate in this research.

As you know, I have been visiting your child's class over the last few weeks to see what sorts of feedback are used in the classroom by your child's teacher, and what sorts of feedback do or don't work well for your child. Now I want to find out what makes individual students decide whether or not to use the feedback they get from their teacher.

I will be observing in your child's classroom for the rest of this year, as I have been for the past few weeks, but now I will be more interested in how feedback works just for your child. I won't be marking your child's work, or changing what happens between your child and his or her teacher, but I may ask your child questions about what I see happening during class so that I can understand it better.

I may write down your child's comments to use when I give presentations on this project or when I write my report. I will make sure your child's name is not written down when recording any comments and will make sure his or her name is not used in the reports or presentations. If your child doesn't want to talk about something, he or she can choose not to answer any of my questions.

All the original notes that I take and the original survey forms will be kept in a locked cupboard in my office at the University of Canterbury for a minimum of five years after the study is finished and will then be destroyed.

The results of the study might be submitted for publication in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. You may at any time ask for additional information or results from the study.

If you agree for your child to take part in the research, please sign the consent form below. I have also given your child a letter and consent form to sign.

If you have any questions about this project you can talk to me or to Associate Professor Alison Gilmore, who is supervising me for this study. Our details are given below:

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2. Complaints may be addressed to:  
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.  
College of Education, University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH  
Telephone: 345 8312



## What makes Feedback work for primary school children?

### Information for Individual Students.

My name is Judy Williams, from the University of Canterbury College of Education, and I am researching what makes feedback work.

As you know, I have been visiting your class over the last few weeks to see what sorts of feedback are used in your classroom by your teacher, and what sorts of feedback do or don't work well for students. Now I want to find out what makes students decide whether or not to use the feedback they get from their teacher.

I will be observing in your classroom just as I have been for the past few weeks, but now I will be more interested in how feedback works just for you. I won't be marking your work, or changing what happens between you and your teacher, but I may ask you questions about what I see happening during class so that I can understand it better. If you change your mind about taking part in this study, you can stop at any time and no-one will mind.

I may write down your comments to use later when I give presentations on this project or when I write my report. I will make sure your real name is not written down when recording your comments and will make sure your real name is not used in the reports or presentations. I will use your special code name instead. If you don't want to talk about something, you can choose not to answer any of my questions and no-one will mind.

All the original notes that I take and the original survey forms will be kept in a locked cupboard in my office at the University of Canterbury for a minimum of five years after the study is finished and will then be destroyed.

The results of the study might be submitted for publication in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. If you want to, you can ask for additional information or results from the study at any time.

If you are happy to take part you will need to sign the consent form and return it to your teacher. Your parents/caregivers will need to sign a form too. If you have any questions you can talk to your teacher or your parents/caregivers.

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1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

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College of Education, University of Canterbury  
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Telephone: 345 8312

## **What makes feedback work for primary school children?**

### **Parent/Caregiver Consent Form**

I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the project, *'What makes feedback work for primary school children?'*

I have read and understood the information given to me about the research project and what will be required of my child/the child in my care.

I have discussed the project with \_\_\_\_\_ and am happy that he/she understands what he/she will be asked to do and that he/she can withdraw at any stage.

I understand that anything my child says during this research discussion will be treated as confidential. No findings that could identify my child or his/her school will be published.

I understand that participation in this project is voluntary and that I can withdraw my child or he/she can withdraw from the project at any time without repercussions.

I know that all the original notes and the original survey forms will be held securely and kept for a minimum of five years following completion of the project and will then be destroyed.

I know that the results of the study may be submitted for publication in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. I know that I may at any time ask for additional information or results from the study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Complaints may be addressed to:  
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College of Education, University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

What makes feedback work for primary school children?

## **What makes feedback work for primary school children?**

### **Student Consent Form**

I have read or heard the information about the project and understand what it is about.

I have talked to my parents/caregivers about it.

I agree to fill in a questionnaire form, without my real name appearing on it.

I agree to talk to the researcher as part of the study.

I understand that I can change my mind about filling in the questionnaire or talking to the researcher and no-one will mind.

I know that if I have any questions I can ask my parents or caregivers, my teacher or the researcher.

I know that my survey form and any notes of my conversations with the researcher will be kept in a locked cupboard at the University of Canterbury College of Education for at least five years, and will then be destroyed.

I know that the results of this study may be used for articles published in national or international journals or presented at educational conferences.

I know that I can ask to see further results of the study at any time.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:  
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What makes feedback work for primary school children?

## ***Appendix D: Interview schedules***

<b>Interview Round 1 questions:</b>
1. Do you think feedback matters? Why / why doesn't it matter?
2. Has your class had any feedback that did / didn't help you make your work better?
3. During what stage of your work does feedback help you most?
4. If you could choose the feedback you got from your teacher, what would it be? Why?
5. (Ranking Task). "Here are some copies of a piece of work. Each sample is the same, but the kind of feedback on each is different. I would like you to put them in order from the most useful to the least useful. Please tell me about your choices. Why did you put them in this order?"
6. What does your teacher think about your work?
<b>Interview Round 2 questions:</b>
1. What makes feedback work for you?
2. How do you know that the feedback you're getting is true, that it's right?
3. What would you do if you got some feedback that you didn't agree with?
4. What is the difference between teaching and feedback?
5. Would you like to be able to choose the kinds of things you got feedback on?
<b>Interview Round 3 questions:</b>
1. What is the role of the teacher in feedback?
2. What is your job as the receiver of feedback?

3. What differences do you expect between High School and Primary School?
4. If you got contradictory feedback, what would you do?
5. What is the most important thing about feedback?
6. Why is feedback important?

***Appendix E: Materials presented to the participants during the first round of interviews.***

Five copies of a piece of a child's writing were prepared with different types of feedback on each. These were given to each participant to rank from 'most helpful' to 'least helpful' as part of interview 1. The participants were asked to comment as they carried out the task so that their thinking relating to their choices could be captured on the tape.

The participants were able to consult a typed copy of the original script as they carried out the ranking task. A copy of this is included below, followed by facsimiles of the cards given to the participants.

**TYPED COPY OF ORIGINAL SCRIPT.**

**Reflective Statement.**

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm Learning and I am developing skills well. One of the areas is storywriting. I have learned, how to use expressive words where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the 'ands' and things like that. Since I have been writing abit more, I have had better ideas. With Handwriting, I have improved a bit on slope and consistensy I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the beginning of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.

Science has been fun this year, because we have done more and exciting experiments than last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the Method too. So my science work is looking good now.

Sport, I have learned heaps and heaps in this, fair play, skills and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills most to do with Hockey, I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it, I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play, I'm able to do 'Indian dribble' the whole length of the Hockey field, and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games sportsmanship.

I have improved My skills in 'art', with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all excellent product.

This year I've found reading a lot more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I used to get restless if I read for too long, now I like reading.



# ITEM 1: SHORT COMMENT.

19/11/95 Reflective Statement

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm Learning and I am developing skills well. One of the areas is storywriting. I have learned how to use expressive <sup>words</sup> where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the and's and things like that. Since I have been writing abit more, I have had better ideas.

With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on slope and consistency. I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the <sup>beginning</sup> of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.

Science has been fun this year, because we have done more, and exciting experiments than Last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the Method too. So my science work is good looking good now.

Sport, I have learned heaps and heaps in this fair play, skills and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills, most to do with Hockey. I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it, I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play, I'm able to do 'Indian dribble', the whole length of the Hockey field, and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship.

I have improved My skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all excellent product.

This year I've found reading alot more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I use to get restless if I read for too long, now I like reading.

Well done. You have done some interesting things this year.



ITEM 2: MARK OR GRADE

19/11/95 Reflective Statement

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm Learning and I am developing skills well. One of the areas is storywriting. I have learned how to use expressive <sup>words</sup> where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the and's and things like that. Since I have been writing abit more, I have had better ideas.

With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on slope and consistency. I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the <sup>beginning</sup> of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.

Science has been fun this year, because we have done more, and exciting experiments than Last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly, and the Method too. So my science work is good looking good now.

Sport, I have learned heaps and heaps, this, fair play, skills and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills, most to do with Hockey. I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it. I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play, I'm able to do 'Indian dribble', the whole length of the Hockey field and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship.

I have improved my skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all, excellent product.

This year I've found reading alot more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I use to get restless if I read for too long, now I like reading.

B+



### ITEM 3: LONG COMMENT.

19/11/95 Reflective Statement

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm Learning and I am developing skills well. One of the areas is story writing. I have learned how to use expressive <sup>words</sup> where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the 'and's and things like that. Since I have been writing a bit more, I have had better ideas. With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on size and consistency. I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the <sup>beginning</sup> of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy. Science has been fun this year, because we have done more, and exciting experiments than last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the Method too. So my science work is good looking good now. Sport, I have learned heaps and heaps in this fair play, skills and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills most to do with Hockey. I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it. I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play, I'm able to do 'Indian dribble', the whole length of the Hockey field and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship. I have improved my skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all, excellent product. This year I've found reading a lot more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I use to get restless if I read for too long, now I like reading.

You have shown good analysis of your learning, choosing relevant areas for comments. This is a valuable habit to develop, because it means you are more involved in your learning, and it is more meaningful. Perhaps you could think again about sentences - especially when to use commas and full stops. Please see me to discuss this.



ITEM 4: LEVEL OF THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM.

19/11/95 Reflective Statement

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm Learning and I am developing skills well. One of the areas is storywriting. I have learned how to use expressive <sup>words</sup> where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the and's and things like that. Since I have been writing abit more, I have had better ideas.

With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on slope and consistency. I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the <sup>beginning</sup> of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.

Science has been fun this year, because we have done more, and exciting experiments than last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the Method too. So my science work is good looking good now.

Sport, I have learned heaps and heaps, this <sup>year</sup> <sup>skills</sup> and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills most to do with Hockey. I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it, I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play, I'm able to do 'Indian dribble', the whole length of the Hockey field and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship.

I have improved my skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all excellent product.

This year I've found reading alot more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I use to get restless if I read for too long, now I like reading.

You are achieving at Level 3 in Transactional Writing. You need to organise your work into paragraphs now, to move through to Level 4.



ITEM 5: CORRECTING MISTAKES.

19/11/95

## Reflective Statement

Over the year I have improved on just about every subject. I'm learning and I am developing skills well.

One of the areas is story writing. I have learned how to use expressive <sup>words</sup> where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting. I have learned to cut out all the 'and's' and things like that. Since I have been writing a bit more, I have had better ideas.

With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on size and consistency. I now can write a wee bit longer with neat, tidy and even writing. At the <sup>beginning</sup> of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.

Science has <sup>more</sup> been fun this year, because we have done more, and <sup>more</sup> exciting experiments than last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the method too. So my science work is good looking good now.

Sport. I have learned heaps and heaps <sup>this year</sup> skills and things like that. I have learned a <sup>great</sup> ~~great~~ deal of skills most to do with Hockey. I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it. I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play. I'm able to do 'Indie' dribble, the whole length of the Hockey ~~field~~ and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship.

I have improved <sup>my</sup> skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all excellent product.

This year I've found reading <sup>much</sup> ~~more~~ more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I used to get restless if I read for too long. Now I like reading.

*Handwritten notes in margins:*  
Punc. One of the areas is story writing.  
Punc. Gr use expressive words where they are needed which makes my stories sound interesting.  
Punc. Gr all the 'and's' and things like that. Since I have been writing a bit more, I have had better ideas.  
Sp With Handwriting, I have improved a lot on size and consistency.  
Sp neat, tidy and even writing. At the beginning of the year, I wasn't too tidy with my writing and it was messy.  
Gr Sp Science has more been fun this year, because we have done more, and more exciting experiments than last year. This year I have improved heaps on science write-ups. I have learned how to write a conclusion properly and the method too.  
Punc. Sport. I have learned heaps and heaps this year skills and things like that. I have learned a great deal of skills most to do with Hockey.  
Punc. Gr I've learned to keep the ball on my stick, to pass the ball and not hog it. I'm a wee wee bit better at fair play. I'm able to do 'Indie' dribble, the whole length of the Hockey field and I now know all the rules of Hockey well. Most of all I have learned to play games with sportsmanship.  
Punc. I have improved my skills in art, with great ideas, good finishing touches and over all excellent product.  
Sp clumsy This year I've found reading much more enjoyable, because I've been reading more books. I used to think reading was boring and I used to get restless if I read for too long.  
Gr Now I like reading.  
Punc.

## ***Appendix F: The questionnaire***

As mentioned in Chapter 3 I have included a copy of the questionnaire here because I used the answers two of the participants gave to questions 2 and 4. No other use was made of this data.

### **Feedback Questionnaire.**

**(How does your teacher help you to make your work better?)**

Thank you for agreeing to fill out this questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers - you only need to put down what **you** think is the best answer. It would be great if you answer all the questions.

**Remember to write your code name on this form.**

**Code name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please put a mark in the appropriate box.**

Boy ☐

Girl ☐

**Question 1. How often has your teacher given you different kinds of feedback so far this year?**

The first question is about the kinds of feedback your teacher has given you **so far this year**.

There are samples of each kind of feedback at the front of the room. You can look at these if you are not sure what each kind of feedback looks like.

Question 1 has 10 types of feedback. Beside each one is a comment. Please put a circle round the comment you agree with. If you aren't sure how many times you received a particular kind of feedback, just put a circle round the comment you think is closest to the number of times you received that form of feedback.

1. My teacher has talked to me by myself about my work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

2. My teacher has put general comments such as 'well done' or 'you did well' on my work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

3. My teacher has put a mark or a grade on my work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

4. My teacher has put detailed comments on my work telling me what I did well or what I need to

Work on next

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

5. filled out a marking sheet about my work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

6. My teacher has written on my work the Level of the New Zealand curriculum my work is at

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

7. My teacher has corrected the mistakes, such as spelling, punctuation marks or mistakes in maths on my work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

8. My teacher has given my class a test **before** we started a new unit or piece of work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

9. My teacher has given my class a test **after** we have finished a unit or piece of work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day

10. My teacher has talked to my whole class about the results of a unit or piece of work

never	two or three	once or twice	most days	every
	times this year	a week		day



## Question 2: How helpful is each kind of feedback?

In this part, you only need to think about the types of feedback which you have received so far this year. Just miss out any that you don't think you have received so far this year.

Each type of feedback has comments below it about how helpful it is. Please put a circle round the comment which you think shows how much that type of feedback helps you to do your next piece of work better.

After each part of the question, there is a space for you to say why you chose the comment that you did.

1. When my teacher talks to me by myself about my work , I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. When my teacher puts general comments such as 'well done' or 'you tried hard' on my work, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
-------------	----------	-----------------	---------	------

at all.                  helpful                  nor unhelpful                  helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. When my teacher puts a mark or a grade on my work, I think it is

not helpful                  not very                  neither helpful                  helpful                  very

at all.                  helpful                  nor unhelpful                  helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. When my teacher puts detailed comments on my work about what I did well or what I need to work on next, I think it is

not helpful                  not very                  neither helpful                  helpful                  very

at all.                  helpful                  nor unhelpful                  helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. When my teacher fills out a marking sheet about my work, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. When my teacher writes on my work the Level of the New Zealand curriculum my work is at, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. When my teacher corrects all my mistakes, such as spelling errors, punctuation marks, or mistakes in Maths on my work, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. When my teacher gives my class a test **before** we start a new unit or piece of work, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. When my teacher gives my class a test **after** we have finished a unit or piece of work, I think it is

not helpful	not very	neither helpful	helpful	very
at all.	helpful	nor unhelpful		helpful

because

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10. When my teacher talks to my class about the results of a unit or piece of work, I think it is

not helpful      not very      neither helpful      helpful      very

at all.      helpful      nor unhelpful      helpful

because

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**Question 3: Which type of feedback is most useful?**

This part is for you to say which kind of feedback is most useful to you, and why. Please think carefully about what helps you to make your work better. Use the following sentence format: "\_\_\_\_\_ is the most useful kind of feedback for me because

\_\_\_\_\_"

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**Question 4: Is there anything else you want to tell me about feedback?**

This part is for any other comments you wish to make. For instance, you may want to mention kinds of feedback which aren't on the sheet. Or perhaps you have had some kinds of feedback in other years, but not so far this year.

**Comment:**

**Thank you for filling out the questionnaire.**

**Appendix G: Workbook pages illustrating the analysis process used to develop the categories for question 1 (What makes feedback important?)**

Why is Feedback Important? Int. 1,2,3.

Categories. V1 as Bera Paper.

Version 2.

① Understand your work.  
 Ry 1 P1; TP3 P5; Ry3 P6; OTB 3 P3; Nel 3 P4;  
 Am 3 P1; OTB 1 P1; Tre 1 P1; Tre 1 P1; Am 1 P1

② Know what to do next - Strategies for improvement.  
 Ry 1 P3; Tre 3 P4; Nel 3 P3; Am 1 P1; Am 1 P1; Am 1 P1;  
 Am 1 P1; Tre 3 P4; Ry 3 P6; Nel 3 P4; Am 3 P4;  
 OTB 2 P6

③ Feel good about your work - Self esteem  
 Nel 1 P1; OTB 2 P6; TP1 P3; OTB 2 P6; TP1 P2;  
 Nel 1 P1; Aw 1 P1

④ Maximise your educational opportunities  
 (future focus) Tre 3 P4; Tre 3 P4; Nel 3 P4; Am 3 P4;  
 TP1 P1; TP1 P1.

⑤ Self awareness - giving self feedback.  
 TP3 P5; TP3 P5; TP3 P6; Nel 2 P2

⑥ Provides Clarity - don't know what you're doing.  
 Nel 2 P2; Aw 3 P4; Nel 3 P4; OTB 1 P1; OTB 1 P1;  
 OTB 3 P3; OTB 3 P3; Aw 1 P1; Aw 1 P1.

## categories - Why is feedback important? Version 3.

### ~~① Supports motivation V2~~

- ① Develops "deep learning"
- ① Enhances Achievement V2 ② ①  
Combine? Refines knowledge.
- ② Connects misapprehensions V2 ⑥  
Gives information on progress.
- ④ Increases or decreases self-esteem V2 ③  
Supports Motivation Changes behaviour.  
Develops persistence
- ④ Develops self assessment V2 ⑤  
Combine? Refines knowledge.
- ⑤ Develops future focus V2 ④  
Encourages reflection

### Version 4.

- ① Supports learning outcomes goals (Ver 2 Nos 1, 2, 6.)  
4 - refines knowledge  
2 - enhances achievement  
3 - connects misapprehensions  
9 - gives information on progress.
- ② Affects personal attitudes towards learning (Ver 2 No 3)  
1 - supports motivation  
7 - changes behaviour  
5 - develops persistence  
6 - increases or decreases self-esteem
- ③ Supports personal dispositions + long-term goals (Ver 2 Nos 4, 5)  
4 - develops self-assessment  
10 - supports future goals  
10 - develops "deep learning"  
12 - encourages reflection  
8 - extends instruction beyond initial question.



## ***Appendix H: Selected interview transcripts.***

The following transcripts have been selected to provide a range of the transcripts across the three interviews and across the participants. Eight of the twenty-one transcripts are presented.

### **Ryder Interview 1:**

- Ry1.001      R. Right, well we're underway. And you've chosen to be called ...?
- Ry1.002      Ryder Ryder.
- Ry1.003      R. So you're Ryder. And you understand what we're going to do?
- Ry1.004      Ryder. Yes.
- Ry1.005      R. Well, here's the first one. I'd like to think about the importance of feedback in helping you make your work better. Do you think feedback matters?
- Ry1.006      Ryder. Not really, but I'd rather have a marking one to ten.
- Ry1.007      R. Yes? Would you? Why would you like that?
- Ry1.008      Ryder. So I don't have to read a lot.
- Ry1.009      R. So you don't have to read a lot. Fair enough. So why doesn't it matter too much?
- Ry1.010      Ryder. I just don't really look at it.
- Ry1.011      R. Right. And ... and...because it's not helpful to you or?
- Ry1.012      Ryder. I don't think it makes a difference.
- Ry1.013      R. Right. Why doesn't it make a difference? A lot of people think it does make a difference, so I'm interested in this. 'Cos these are people who haven't spoken to kids (Laughs).

Ry1.014        Ryder. (Laughs). Well, I just don't look at it.... read it. And when I do read it, I don't really change anything.

Ry1.015        R. When you read it, do you agree with it, or do you not agree with it?

Ry1.016        Ryder. Sometimes.

Ry1.017        R. You do sometimes. Can you tell me a bit about what parts of it you do agree with and maybe what parts of it you don't agree with?

Ry1.018        Ryder When I forget to do ... like... punctuation and it tells me to put punctuation in, I agree with it there. Little things like that.

Ry1.019        R. Right. Good. Well now let's think about... if you do find some ... you get some feedback that's helpful ... if you do ... sometimes... let's think about the kinds of feedback that your whole class has had. Has your class had any feedback that did help you make your work better?

Ry1.020        Ryder Well it...well it... kind of ... I find it better when it... sometimes... like it marks my work so that sometimes I get to spell it correctly next time...

Ry1.021        R. Right

Ry1.022        Ryder So that sometimes I ... read them as well

Ry1.023        R Right. Have you had any... your class had any that didn't help you make your work better?

Ry1.024        Ryder When there's a **lot** of writing and reading involved.

Ry1.025        R. Right. Cool. Well now, let's think about the times you might get feedback while you're working on a particular unit, or a particular piece of work. What stage of work does feedback help you **most**? Like at the beginning or the middle or the end...

Ry1.026        Ryder Oh! Probably ....middle or end.

Ry1.027        R. And why would that be?

Ry1.028        Ryder I ... just... find it easie...r

Ry1.029        R. Easiest to read it then? (Ryder nods his head).Ok. So do you normally not like reading all that much?

Ry1.030        Ryder No.

Ry1.031        R. no. And is that because it's a hard job for you? Or because it's just...

Ry1.032        . Ryder No... well, sometimes, but I just ...don't

Ry1.033        R Don't? A lot of people don't. Alrighty, now... do you think other class members would feel the same way you do about when you should get feedback during your work?

Ry1.034        Ryder Um.... (message lost)

Ry1.035        R And why do you think that is?

Ry1.036        Ryder Um... like.. cos ... um ... people like different feedbacks instead of me 'cos I've got a friend who likes a whole lot of words and telling him what to do next.

Ry1.037        R Right.

Ry1.038        Ryder Which I really don't like

Ry1.039        R. You don't like being told what to do next?

Ry1.040        Ryder Mmmm – no.

Ry1.041        R. No. Can you tell me a bit more about why you don't like being told what to do next?

Ry1.042        Ryder Um ... like ... cos it always narrows it down to what I'm supposed to do and if I don't know it next time I normally get told off at my old school.

Ry1.043        R Right. So you don't like it being narrowed down to just one way. That's an interesting thing. I don't know that teachers think about that too much, you know. Have you found that? Now if you could choose the type of feedback that you got from your teacher ... what would it be? I know you said earlier just a one to ten type thing. Is that what you would always choose?

Ry1.044      Ryder Ah – one to ten and marking all the spelling, and corrections.

Ry1.045      R And why do you like that?

Ry1.046      Ryder Just.. I find it easier.

Ry1.047      R. Easier. To Understand? (Ryder nods). So are there any kinds that you wouldn't choose? (Ryder looks puzzled). I mean, could you go to your teacher and say 'Don't ever give me this!'

Ry1.048      Ryder Probably the whole lot of writing telling you what to do next.

Ry1.049      R. Right. And that's because (message interrupted).

Ry1.050      R. Do you think other class members would think the same way you do and want the same kinds of feedback?

Ry1.051      Ryder Some, not all

Ry1.052      R Some, but not all. Without saying any names, are any of the people I'm going to talk to, do you think would think like you do?

Ry1.053      Ryder Some of them, maybe.

Ry1.054      R Some of them, maybe. OK. Now, what I've got here now... is ... this is a piece of writing that was done by a kid. Now what I want you to do – you don't have to read it –

Ry1.055      Ryder Mmmm

Ry1.056      R but just look at the five different sorts of feedback, and think about which order you'd put them in from most helpful to least helpful. And talk to me while you're doing it so the tape can understand...

Ry1.057      Ryder Ok. Uh – I'd probably have the B+ cos it's the easiest, cos I know B is good and plus is even better.

Ry1.058      R And would it be the same if it was a D-?

Ry1.059      Ryder No. That would be bad, but it would still be the best...

Ry1.060        R The best type of feedback...

Ry1.061        Ryder Cos ... it's easier to understand for me.

Ry1.062        R Right

Ry1.063        Ryder And I'd have the correcting it all for number 2 because I find that you can just look at it and ... well, not this this one, but I find it easy sometimes to ... like, for some of them, cos in my writing I normally do ... miss a line ... write the next thing. And so teachers can just correct in between that line I've left. So I find it easy to understand.

Ry1.064        R Right. Now you can take your time over this, you don't have to rush.

Ry1.065        Ryder Yeah.

Ry1.066        R If you want me to read out the comments, I can do that for you.

Ry1.067        Ryder Um – I don't mind.

Ry1.068        R. OK.

Ry1.069        Ryder Probably the smallest writing for number 3, cos it just says 'well done, you have done some interesting things this year'. It just tells you that she ... that the teacher likes what you've done, and that you've done good work. And then I would have...

Ry1.070        R I would like you to read through that, or let me read it to you. Which would you rather?

Ry1.071        Ryder I don't mind. (pauses to read the comments). Well, I'd probably choose this one for number 2, cos in this one, in the one with heaps of writing, you have to like, read through a lot and still remember what happens up top, and the teacher tells you what you've done well and tells you what could happen next, and then at the bottom it says 'please see me to discuss this'. And then, I'd have the number 4, I'd have the medium sized writing, cos it's easier to remember.

Ry1.072        R So, just to recap, you've put the B+ top; you've put the corrections 2<sup>nd</sup>; you've put the short comment 3<sup>rd</sup>; you've put the one about the levels 4<sup>th</sup>; and you've put the long comment last. And you said that's because you would have to remember...

Ry1.073        Ryder Like, remember ... if you want to do well next time, and remember what happened – uh, what to do next, like, what to get you on the right track next, you have to remember what happens up top...

Ry1.074        R I see...

Ry1.075        Ryder and for another way it says 'please see me to discuss this' at the bottom, so the teacher can remind you as well.

Ry1.076        R Right. But you still don't think that's very good?

Ry1.077        Ryder I wouldn't read it, often.

Ry1.078        R You wouldn't read it.

Ry1.079        Ryder No.

Ry1.080        R Is there anything now that you have read it, that you think is good, that you would like?

Ry1.081        Ryder Um, about the teachers and me discussing it ... I like that.

Ry1.082        R You like to discuss things? You find that easier than reading?

Ry1.083        Ryder mmmm.

Ry1.084        R Right. Well we have just one last question. What does your teacher think of your work?

Ry1.085        Ryder I'm not really sure.

Ry1.086        R You don't know?

Ry1.087        Ryder No, not really.

Ry1.088        R No?

Ry1.089        Ryder Mmmm. Cos not all the teachers' comments are true, cos.. um... my brother's friend, XXX, his teacher hates him, and on his report card it said 'a pleasant student to teach in class' ...

Ry1.090        R Right

Ry1.091        Ryder ... and he hates him. The teahcer hates him.

Ry1.092        R So... you're not sure that...

Ry1.093        Ryder Yeah...

Ry1.094        R ... even though you get nice comments on your work...

Ry1.095        Ryder ...if it's true

Ry1.096        R How do you know if it's true?

Ry1.097        Ryder I'm not sure.

Ry1.098        R Do you think your teacher hates you/

Ry1.099        Ryder No

Ry1.100        R No? So would you trust what she wrote?

Ry1.101        Ryder Sometimes ... yeah.

Ry1.102        R Ok. That's all it is. So, thank you and we're going to` switch this off now.

### **Nelson Interview 1:**

N1.001        R: Okay, and this is an interview with Nelson. Who's decided to change his codename to Nelson. So the first thing is we want to think about is the importance of feedback in helping you make your work better. So do you think feedback matters?

N1.002        Nelson: Ah, oh yes. Cause sometimes it makes me feel good knowing that I've done really good work and sometimes it can be a little bit improved by as in a teacher.

Um sometimes she just goes a little bit negative as in she can she usually (...) like you need to improve on good work but you can yeah

N1.003        R: Right, so you like it when you get the good work bit of it but you're not so sure when she says you need to think that?

N1.004        Nelson: Well, usually because it says um usually feedback about something I need to improve on. It's kind of negative. As in part of it's positive but most of it's (...)

N1.005        R: Can you give me some examples?

N1.006        Nelson: Um (...) book which I didn't know we were doing it in the front and she says next time do it in the front. That to me was kind of negative. I thought she could probably say positive than what she actually wrote. Which would've probably (...) more (demanding?)

N1.007        R: So you like to be asked rather than to be told. Most of us are like that aren't we? Alright, let's think about the kinds of feedback that your class has had. So has your class had any feedback that did or didn't help you to make your work better?

N1.008        Nelson: Well, I don't know about my class much. For me it helps a lot. Kind of the negative stuff that if it wasn't so demanding it probably would've helped and would've like, even though it's negative it would have told me 'oh right this is what I need to improve on' but the teacher, our teacher kind of writes kind of demanding as in 'you need to'

N1.009        R: I see, so...

N1.010        Nelson: Like, say I had bad handwriting, it's like 'you need to write better' and she'd next time 'improve on your skills in writing'

N1.011        R: And what would've made that feedback better for you?

N1.012        Nelson: Well, it would have told me 'oh, well I need to improve on my penmanship' as in it wasn't kind of like she's yelling at me like 'you need to work on this



better' and (...) finally, it's still negative but it's telling me in a more subtle way that I need to work on my writing.

N1.013 R: So then, to you it sounds as though it's trying to help you.

N1.014 Nelson: Mmmm

N1.015 R: Right. Whereas if it's just written 'do this'

N1.016 Nelson: Yeah, that's not really helping, it's just more demanding. (...) demanding is usually stuff I either ignore or it just goes in (...)

N1.017 R: Well, now let's think about the time you might get feedback while you were working on a particular unit or piece of work. So during what stage of your work does feedback help you most? And I'm thinking sort of beginning, middle, end.

N1.018 Nelson: Oh, um, usually between the very (start?) and the middle cause then it helps me to write more and like when I'm actually writing the work it helps me like 'good work' so, oh, I've done some good work, probably write some more good work. So it actually helps me write.

N1.019 R: Okay, when you get it either just after the beginning or towards the middle. Um, what about if you get it at the end?

N1.020 Nelson: Well at the end usually I know I've done a good job, but it's usually you don't actually do it at the end.

N1.021 R: Do you think other class members would feel the same way as you do about the best time to get feedback?

N1.022 Nelson: Um, I'm not actually sure cause everyone's different, everyone might, everyone ... some people in particular might feel oh they like the feedback at the end more or at the very start or yeah. So I'm not actually sure.

N1.023 R: No. But can you think of some reasons why some people might prefer it at the end? Or at the beginning?

- N1.024 Nelson: Well they might prefer it at the end to know that ‘oh I’ve actually done (...) they said what they need to improve on and what they’ve done good. (...) And at the very start they might think ‘oh, uh, duh, this is good so I’ll keep on doing this.
- N1.025 R: So I’m on the right track.
- N1.026 Nelson: Yeah. I’m on the right track so I’ll keep doing it.
- N1.027 R: Yeah. Yeah, that’s helpful. (...) Now if you could choose the kind of feedback you got from your teacher what would it be? I mean (...) to your teacher and said ‘please give me this sort of feedback all the time because it’s what helps me most’
- N1.028 Nelson: Right, I’d probably do, I’d probably positive and like ‘next time please do’ as in ones that are sort of optional like the how I said ‘next time can you please do’ that’s a sort of optional. You will do it but next time you can either do it better or you can do it the same next time.
- N1.029 R: So it’s your choice.
- N1.030 Nelson: Yeah, it’s kind of the same ... it’s kind of your choice.
- N1.031 R: So you would like it if she said ‘you could try this’ or ‘you could try that’
- N1.032 Nelson: Yeah, it gives me options in what I can do next time
- N1.033 R: And then do you think (...) um, so do you think other class members would have the same sorts of ideas about that?
- N1.034 Nelson: Mmmm, they might. But I’m not entirely sure. (...)
- N1.035 R: Be a bit rude if you did wouldn’t it?
- N1.036 Nelson: Yeah, it’s like going into desks.
- N1.037 R: Yes. Now what I’ve got here are five copies of a piece of work that a student of mine did a long time ago.
- N1.038 Nelson: It is a long time ago, that’s like fifteen years.

N1.039 R: Yeah. That makes me feel old. Now it's the same piece of writing, you don't have to read it, but if you wanted to you might find it easier to read it on the back. But what I've done is put five different sorts of feedback on. And what I want you to do is look at them and think about them and decide which one would be the most helpful for you and which one would be the least helpful and put them in order and if you wouldn't mind just talking about it while you doing it for the tape and also identifying which piece it is, which i can help you with. And you can take as long as you like.

N1.040 Nelson: (...) so the first one is the one is basically the positive one.

N1.041 R: It says...

N1.042 Nelson: ...'Well done, you have done some interesting things this year' (...) I find that quite good feedback because it's telling you well you've done some good work as in it's provo ... as in it's provoking you to do more good work. Well, mainly the B+ one doesn't help much cause all it is is basically a letter symbol in a circle. And that kind of makes you feel like the teacher's, um, just ... just, that's how she does it. She just quickly goes through and yeah I wouldn't really like that, that would probably be the last one.

N1.043 R: Okay, well you don't know the others yet, but so you can change your mind.

N1.044 Nelson: 'You are achieving level three in transactional writing. You need to organise your work into paragraphs now' (...) that would probably be second to last. Or probably last cause to me it doesn't really matter about my levels in transactional thing, cause all I need to know is that I've done good writing, so... Right, this one is the one where you've (gone on?) and marked it all.

N1.045 R: Punctuation, spelling mistakes, the lot.

N1.046 Nelson: That's I could probably put that in the middle. Cause it shows me 'oh I need to' I could just, cause it's got this long sentence 'a great deal of' and you just wrote

‘many’ and that shows me ‘oh, I see (...) a great deal of’ I can just write ‘many skills’ yeah. It kind of helps me because it shows me ‘oh I need to work on this’ I need to like, cause it’s got ‘a lot’ and then you used ‘much’ and I think it’s got it somewhere else, yeah. She tell me instead of using ‘a lot’ I could use ‘much’ and it’s telling me that ‘oh this is how to spell this word’ also it’s telling me that I’ve got (...) cause I couldn’t see one two three yeah (...) count at least twelve different things in there.

N1.047        R: Right, so you...

N1.048        Nelson: Yeah, I’ll probably put that third. And last one, ‘you have shown a good deal of analysis of your learning. Choosing relevant areas for complem ... complements. This is a valuable habit to develop because it means you are more involved in your learning and it is more meaningful. Perhaps you could think again about sentences especially when you use commas and full stops. See me to discuss this.’ That will probably be second cause basically you’ve added a whole like paragraph of sentences to tell me that ‘oh I’ve done good but there’s also stuff I need to work on. I can also tell the teacher as well.’ So it gives me a chance to discuss it with you and also it tells me that I’m doing pretty good, and there’s a few things I need to work on.

N1.049        R: Right.

N1.050        Nelson: So that would probably come second.

N1.051        R: Right. So you don’t mind being told what to do when it’s written like that?

N1.052        Nelson: Not when it’s written like this. To me this is probably quite positive, as in you can also discuss it with your teacher, saying that ‘oh, um I think I’m quite doing well in this, am I actually doing well?’ yeah, so you can see what you’re doing right and see what you’re doing wrong.

N1.053 R: Right. Good. Can we put them down on the floor in the order that you think they should go on?

N1.054 (...)

N1.055 R: Just have a glance through and make sure that's the way you really think ...

N1.056 Nelson: yep.

N1.057 R: Okay. So just for the tape, you've put the 'well done, you ...'

N1.058 Nelson: ...'have done some interesting things this year'

N1.059 R: First.

N1.060 Nelson: (...) I done the one that I read just before second.

N1.061 R: Which is the long one.

N1.062 Nelson: Yeah, the really long one that's going to take me ages. Um, you've got the spelling and punctuation correcting one in the middle. You've got the 'you are at level three in transactional writing you need to' (...) second to last. And I put the B+ last.

N1.063 R: Okay. So now can you tell me why ... what makes the number one better than number two?

N1.064 Nelson: Because it's all positive.

N1.065 R: Right.

N1.066 Nelson: But, um, I think that could be improved on by saying positive improvements as in (start?) being positive about telling you that (...) stuff.

N1.067 R: Okay.

N1.068 Nelson: I've put the long one second because it's kind of ... it's actually kind of more demanding and there's not a lot of positive stuff in there. As in, I could ... there are only good ones, as in 'you have shown a good analysis' (...) when you're learning and this is not meaningful. And it goes on to all the bad stuff and it says 'please see me to discuss about all the bad stuff' as in 'oh, I got this wrong, I spelled it wrong, and mmm'

N1.069 R: (...) but still it's better than this punctuation one?

N1.070 Nelson: Yes, the punctuation one it doesn't really tell you whether you done your work all wrong, right or wrong cause the teacher could think you've done good work, but ... or you see that she's corrected it and by the look of this one whoever wrote it would basically see the teacher just being mean.

N1.071 R: I think I'd think that too.

N1.072 Nelson: As in, like you just put a whole lot of just spelling, punctuation, grammar, all that but the thing is if she were ... did that and wrote some comments 'you done good work but you need to work on your spelling, please try to improve your spelling next time' then I could've probably put that second.

N1.073 R: Okay.

N1.074 Nelson: Um, transactional, you at level three, I put that second to last because to me it doesn't really matter where my levels are cause usually at this stage it doesn't really matter.

N1.075 R: When would it matter?

N1.076 Nelson: Ah, probably at the end of the year cause that's when you're going to high school. If you started doing that at the end of the year it'd be 'oh, good, I'm going to get a ... I'm gonna be a good writer at high school and that.' And the B+ which is the last one, I put that last because that's to me that's not really feedback. It's just (...) numbers and letters and yeah it doesn't really help you much. You know B+ is good but it doesn't really help you. It just tells you you have done good work.

N1.077 R: So it doesn't help you

N1.078 Nelson: No room, it says nothing about improving it, nothing about (...) you done good work but you can improve on. Basically I would say that's probably for me it's the most useless thing. Cause I'm not really into just a number ... what is it, a letter and a

symbol with a circle around it. It's not really feedback towards ... that's not really feedback to me.

N1.079 R: To make your work better.

N1.080 Nelson: No, that's why I've chosen the first two.

N1.081 R: Right, because they would help you make your work better

N1.082 Nelson: Yes. It was work that would help me improve, it would help me say 'oh, I'm doing this good, keep doing it' that doesn't show you what you're doing good, what you're doing bad, what you need to improve on. Doesn't really give you any options. It just says B+

N1.083 R: Right. Okay, well thank you. Now I've just got one more question. Which is what does your teacher think about your work?

N1.084 Nelson: Um, usually thinks it's good cause I'm quite creative. I am quite smart but um yeah. I think she thinks my work is good but she's also kind of demanding me to write like longer. Cause for me writing isn't really my best skill, probably reading and probably art because I'm quite good at drawing.

N1.085 R: Right, so she thinks you're good at some things and

N1.086 Nelson: Yes, but she... what the thing is she's trying to make me good at what I'm not particularly good at. As in if she gave me time, gave me good, like feedbacks like the first one, I probably would have got good at writing. But she's been quite demanding, expecting me to be the best writer. Yeah.

N1.087 R: ...and you find that tough.

N1.088 Nelson: Yeah, particularly tough. (...) with this but I am quite tall and I she's probably making me quite over the average as in because I usually stand out.

N1.089 R: So you wonder whether she thinks you should stand out in everything.

N1.090        Nelson: Yeah, because if I'm average like everyone else but I'm tall and I stand out everyone else is going to think I'm dumb. Same thing with my dad, he was quite tall. Yeah the teacher pushed him more and my dad says small people get away with more things.

N1.091        R: I was tall

N1.092        Nelson: Yeah, I'm quite tall for my age. I'm only 11 and I'm taller than my mum

N1.093        R: ...yeah, yeah. I was tall, I know what you're saying. It's hard. You find yourself either doing slouching or ... is there anything else you want to add to what you've said, or any examples?

N1.094        Nelson: ...basically all I'd say is positive feedback is probably the best (...) cause positive feedback I've had my dad giving ... when I start writing something at home my dad gives me positive feedback and that's how I've got good at writing. I got better at writing because my dad kept giving me positive feedback on my homework and that's why I've got better at my homework, so ...

N1.095        R: ...good. Yeah. Thank you.

## **Tino Pai Interview 2:**

TP2.001        R. Ok, I'm going to get you to hold it, because as we found last time, your voices aren't as clear as ...

TP2.002        TP. Where do I speak into?

TP2.003        R. I think you speak into there or there. I'm not sure which is the mike, but if you just hold it on your lap there ... somewhere like that. Just ... relax ...cos your hand will get ...



- TP2.004 TP. Mm.
- TP2.005 R. Um, now you remember last time we talked about why feedback's important ...
- TP2.006 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.007 R. ... and we looked at, um, the sorts of feedback you'd had, and I showed you some different sorts, and you talked about what you prefer and why ... we're not going to be so structured this time. I'm just going to – we're just going to talk.
- TP2.008 TP. Mm.
- TP2.009 R. And, I might be saying things like ... 'Does that mean such and such?' or ... and then you can say, 'Oh, yeah, that's pretty much it', or you can say 'No...no ' (laughs) cos I'm just trying to be sure that I've understood what you're saying. Or I might say 'When you said before such and such, and now you're saying so and so, how do they match up?' – things like that. So, what we're going to talk about first is, what actually makes feedback work for you?
- TP2.010 TP. Mmhmm.
- TP2.011 R. I mean, what makes you want to accept it and work on it?
- TP2.012 TP. Well, ... um, just means I'm doing well. I haven't got much feedback lately – I don't think the rest of the class really has, cos she hasn't asked to hand in our lately ... so it's kind of ...
- TP2.013 R. So ... that ... by that, you mean written feedback ...
- TP2.014 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.015 R. ... on your ...
- TP2.016 TP. Like, in hand in Writing work, say 'Good job!' at the end, ... like, yeah ....
- TP2.017 R. That sort of feedback.

- TP2.018 TP. Mm.
- TP2.019 R. So, um ... what about ... verbal feedback ? I'm looking at the door there, because people look as though they're trying to come in, but we were told we could come here, so we'll just sit here. Um, what about verbal feedback? Have you been getting some of that?
- TP2.020 TP. No, I haven't – couldn't say I have.
- TP2.021 R. Would you like that, if you got that?
- TP2.022 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.023 R. Why?
- TP2.024 TP. Well, just cos there hasn't been much feedback lately, especially with writing and stuff, and it would be kind of 'Whoah! It's back!' Like with verbal feedback.
- TP2.025 R. What, it ... is verbal feedback something you've been used to getting, but you haven't just lately? Or is it something ...
- TP2.026 TP. Well no, I haven't go...really had much verbal feedback, but I would like to have some. Well, just to ... really ... know how you're doing, cos it gives you more of an understanding with verbal feedback rather than written feedback.
- TP2.027 R. Why is that?
- TP2.028 TP. Oh, just so you know that you're doing better ... like ...
- TP2.029 R. I mean is there something about actually being able to see the person, rather than just read the words ...?
- TP2.030 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.031 R. Is it in there somewhere...?
- TP2.032 TP. It's just a little thing of mine ... like, sometimes ... this kid once who got, like, 'Ok', 'Good work' written down, and the teacher walked past him and go [uses very animated voice]'Ok! Great work! Yeah!' and it make him a lot more happier, and sometimes

it's like [uses slightly doubtful, bored voice] 'That's all right' and like 'Oh yeah, your boo ... your writing's all right', but then your... he ... sometimes they explain more, cos you can't write all of it on paper.

TP2.033 R. Mm.

TP2.034 TP. Yeah.

TP2.035 R. So it's ... the tone of voice, come ... gives you more information ...

TP2.036 TP. Yep.

TP2.037 R. ... than just the words...

TP2.038 TP. Yep.

TP2.039 R. ... and also, you can get more because people can talk...?

TP2.040 TP. Yes.

TP2.041 R. ...a lot more than they can write?

TP2.042 TP. Mm.

TP2.043 R. So verbal feedback, for you, would actually work quite well?

TP2.044 TP. Yeah.

TP2.045 R. Yeah. But that doesn't mean you don't take notice of the written.

TP2.046 TP. No.

TP2.047 R. Mm. So, ... what ... is there anything about feedback that you would - or any feedback ... type of feedback, whatever – that you would not respond to, that you would just say 'No, I'm not going to ... work on – I'm not going to do that' or whatever? Is there anything ...?

TP2.048 TP. Well, there are some things where you get feedback, but you don't really have to work on it at all ...

TP2.049 R. Right.

TP2.050 TP. ... like, Writing Dash – smiley face ...

TP2.051 R. Yeah.

TP2.052 TP. But of course I haven't got one of those before.

TP2.053 R. Have you not?

TP2.054 TP. No – no, not like... hmmm, ... not like with Writing Dash, it's something else.

TP2.055 R. Now Writing Dash – that's where you get a topic ...

TP2.056 TP. Yeah, we get a topic and we write about it.

TP2.057 R. Yeah. I think it's what I used to call Ten Minute Daily Writing.

TP2.058 TP. We do it for seven minutes. We did one this morning of while ... you're out in the bush, without any cell phone coverage ...

TP2.059 R. Oh...

TP2.060 TP. We're doing Survival at the moment.

TP2.061 R. Right. Ok. So, ... it's not always necessary for every little bit of work to have great long screeds of feedback.

TP2.o62 TP. Yeah.

TP2.063 R. And sometimes, what you do get, you just think 'Ok, good, move on'.

TP2.064 TP. Yes. Definitely.

TP2.065 R. Right. Is there anything that you might ... where you might – or some situation, or some type of feedback, or anything you can think of where you might just say 'No! I'm just not going to do that! That's ... I just disagree'?

TP2.066 TP. Well, that's never really happened to me before. I'm not really sure about that one.

TP2.067 R. Ok, well that's fair enough if it hasn't happened to you.

TP2.068 TP. Mhm.

TP2.069 R. But suppose it did happen ... what sort of situation might trigger it for you, do you think?

TP2.070 TP. Not much ...

TP2.071 R. Not much?

TP2.072 TP. ...not really. Just accept it

TP2.073 R. Because I do know last time you said to me that all feedback was important.

TP2.074 TP. Yeah.

TP2.075 R. Mm. So you can learn from all of it ... you'd always accept ...

TP2.076 TP. Yes.

TP2.077 R. ... in some form.

TP2.078 TP. That ... last time was more focussed on the future ...

TP2.079 R. Yes.

TP2.080 TP. Now, it's now.

TP2.081 R. Right, Ok. Um ... another interesting thing, that actually came up from the last interviews – I forget who it was, I don't think it was you – but somebody said, 'Well ...' – what they were getting at was, how do you know that the person giving you feedback, has got it right? Is actually giving you good, accurate information?

TP2.082 TP. That is something to think about, yeah.

TP2.083 R. So, what would you think ... how do you ... what would ... what are the factors that might make you accept that what that person is telling you is accurate?

TP2.084 TP. Um... just ... more expressive words? Or something like that?

TP2.085 R. Ok. So ... supposing it was your teacher ...

TP2.086 TP. Yep.

TP2.087 R. Generally speaking, would you trust that that person's feedback was accurate?

TP2.088 TP. Ah ... kind of.

TP2.089 R. Kind of?

TP2.090 TP. Someone ... someone a bit more ... like, powerful, like Principal, deputy Principal – but you don't really get much feedback from them.

TP2.091 R. Right.

TP2.092 TP. That would be a bit more – or maybe a Tech teacher ...

TP2.093 R. Right.

TP2.094 TP. Yeah but teachers are all right.

TP2.095 R. Yeah, ok. What if – because some people have this idea, that they should give positive feedback, make people feel good, and so so they think it's kind not to say the things that are wrong. Now how do you know whether the person giving you feedback, and say it happens to be all positive, how would you know whether it was all positive, or that person was just not ... didn't want to give you bad messages?

TP2.096 TP. Well no, I don't like it when they do that, like give you positive message and then there's actually something kind of wrong – just get it all in one hit, you know, because then you might think you're all good at it, and then you fail at something, so they need to kind of give you the full story.

TP2.097 R. Give you full story?

TP2.098 TP. Yeah.

TP2.099 R. Yeah. So what if you found a person who ... you decided wasn't giving you the full story? How would that affect the next lot of .. your reception of the next lot of feedback they gave you?

TP2.100 TP. Well if it was something I was aiming to do in the future, I'd be really serious about it ... like really ... I don't want to fail in Architecture.

TP2.101 R. No! That's what you're going to do, isn't it?

TP2.102 TP. Yeah.

TP2.103 R. You have to go to Auckland?

TP2.104 TP. Yeah.

TP2.105 R. So ... what I'm really getting at is ... we said before that you really have to ... you trust that your teacher will give you good, accurate, full feedback?

TP2.106 TP. Mm. My teacher has been mostly all positive – she's given me the full story every time, and ... there have been some teachers in the past at Primary School, where they haven't given me the full story.

TP2.107 R. Ok.

TP2.108 TP. And I never actually knew about it until, like, two years later.

TP2.109 R. So if that person, one of those teachers came into your life again ...

TP2.110 TP. Yeah...

TP2.111 R. ... and gave you feedback, what would your reaction be?

TP2.112 TP. Like, feedback that they gave me years ago and some of it they kept secret ...?

TP2.113 R. Yes.

TP2.114 TP. Yeah. So I'd do something about it.

TP2.115 R. But now they come back into your life ...

TP2.116 TP. Mmhm

TP2.117 R. ...and ... they come up to you and they give you feedback ...

TP2.118 TP. Yep.

TP2.119 R. Um, how would you respond to it? What would your feelings about it be?

TP2.120 TP. I'd have to tell them ... about what happened ... yeah, and how to give me the full story.

TP2.121 R. Right. And so basically you wouldn't trust that they would give you the full story this time?

TP2.122 TP. Well, I would've hoped that they would have changed a bit.

TP2.123 R. Yeah?

TP2.124 TP. Yep.

TP2.125 R. Because that's pretty important.

TP2.126 TP. Mm.

TP2.127 R. But you couldn't be sure, could you?

TP2.128 TP. No, you couldn't.

TP2.129 R. So it might make you a bit more ... um ... critical, or look more closely at what they do give you?

TP2.130 TP. Yeah.

TP2.131 R. What would be some of the signs that they had actually changed?

TP2.132 TP. Ummm ... more positive, I reckon. Only slightly.

TP2.133 R. Mm.

TP2.134 TP. Yeah.

TP2.135 R. Cool. Now, another – how long have we been talking?

TP2.136 TP. Mmm – ten minutes.

TP2.137 R. Ten minutes. Ok. That's about right – that's about normally what we're doing. Ok, sometimes ... um ... sometimes, in some classes, children are given the opportunity to ... nominate, or ... choose the aspects of their work that they would like feedback on, ... rather than the teacher just looking at the work and deciding what they think. How would you feel about that?



- TP2.138 TP. Better.
- TP2.139 R. Better? Why would you feel better?
- TP2.140 TP. Cos then ... cos I'm not, like, biased, like other kids, like all ... all good, like, when some of that's not true.
- TP2.141 R. Now, what do you mean by 'biased'? 'Like other kids'?
- TP2.142 TP. Well ... about themselves. Like, if the teacher doesn't give them feedback, they're all, like 'Oh I did really good' and there's no negative input and that, but I prefer to be honest.
- TP2.143 R. So you're saying that some kids are not necessarily self-critical ...
- TP2.144 TP. No.
- TP2.145 R. ... or not totally honest about themselves?
- TP2.146 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.147 R. But you feel that you are?
- TP2.148 TP. Mm.
- TP2.149 R. So you would like to say, to yourself, 'I know I've done this bit well – don't need to be told that. I'm not sure about this bit, I'd like some feedback on this bit'?
- TP2.150 TP. Yep.
- TP2.151 R. You'd like to ...?
- TP2.152 TP. Definitely.
- TP2.153 R. Mm. That's interesting. Because that might save her time.
- TP2.154 TP. Yep.
- TP2.155 R. If you've written on your work, 'Tell me about whether my ideas are interesting', or 'Tell me about how well I've used adjectives', or 'Tell me how accurate my facts are' ...
- TP2.156 TP. Yeah.

- TP2.157 R. ... if you've done that work for her ... it might make the feedback more focussed? What do you think?
- TP2.158 TP. Yeah. Definitely.
- TP2.159 R. But then, ... there's always the chance that there's something in your work that you don't know about, or haven't noticed, that she notices. How would you ... how would we cope with that?
- TP2.160 TP. That's pretty much, the thing that my teachers did a couple of years ago at Primary...
- TP2.161 R. Mm...
- TP2.162 TP. Yeah.
- TP2.163 R. Didn't tell you about it? They noticed it but they didn't tell you?
- TP2.164 TP. Mm. Yeah, it's really annoying when people do that.
- TP2.165 R. Yeah.
- TP2.166 TP. Full story, once again.
- TP2.167 R. Yeah. So you'd probably want a bit of a combination of the two systems. One, where if the teacher notices something, they tell you ...
- TP2.168 TP. Yes.
- TP2.169 R. and one where you can nominate...
- TP2.170 TP. Yep.
- TP2.171 R. ... a couple of things?
- TP2.172 TP. Yeah. Fused together.
- TP2.173 R. Both together?
- TP2.174 TP. Mhm.
- TP2.175 R. And then, it's possibly quicker and easier if that was done verbally?

TP2.176 TP. Yea ... yeah. So like basically you're mixing the three together there ... with those two, and then my preferation (sic) for vocal rather than written.

TP2.177 R. Mm.

TP2.178 TP. Mm. That would work better.

TP2.179 R. And other combinations of that would work as well, wouldn't it?

TP2.180 TP. Yep. Just like a recipe – three main ingredients, toss all the other little things in there ...

TP2.181 R. (Laughs). Mix them up ...

TP2.182 TP. Yeah.

TP2.183 R. ...a cup of this and half a cup of that, but I'd really rather a cup of each?

TP2.184 TP. Yeah.

TP2.185 R. Yeah. Well, that sounds cool. Well, is there anything ales that you want to say or talk about, in regard to how you ... what makes you respond to feedback or not?

TP2.186 TP. Well ... sometimes it just goes through my head ... sometimes I have an impact on it, and sometimes I just concentrate on, like, 'Good! Continue on with life.'

TP2.187 R. So when you say 'Goes through your head', you just mean ... flies past and you take no notice?

TP2.188 TP. Well, I take some notice for about ... oh ...

TP2.189 R. A nanosecond?

TP2.188 TP.Ten minutes.

TP2.190 R. (Laughs). Ten minutes?

TP2.191 TP. Yeah.

TP2.192 R. And then you go ...?

TP2.193 TP. But those are the less important bits of feedback.

TP2.194 R. What makes a piece of feedback less important?

- TP2.195 TP. Just the small stuff, like, I discussed earlier with the small little pieces of writing, that you don't need for the future, and it's got a tiny little piece of feedback that isn't really ... even necessary.
- TP2.196 R. It's not going to affect your whole ...
- TP2.197 TP. But even then, rather than kids just not noticing it, I just keep it in there for just ten seconds ... ten minutes, just in case.
- TP2.198 R. (Laughs). Very wise.
- TP2.199 TP. Yep. And then some feedback you just tick off your list, because it says it's good ...
- TP2.200 TP. Uh Huh.
- TP2.201 R. And you think 'Ok, ...
- TP2.202 TP. ... 'It's good' and 'I remember that'.
- TP2.203 R. Ok. That's wise...
- TP2.204 TP. And then ... then the third one, I have a real impact on, that I'm really happy about it, like the one where you go running home ... to your mum ...
- TP2.205 R. Yeah ... 'Guess what Mum!'...
- TP2.206 TP. Yep.
- TP2.207 R. Yeah. And there might be some that you think 'Ok, I'm going to have to think about that'...
- TP2.208 TP. Mm.
- TP2.209 R. ... that's quite major and I'm going to have to think about that.
- TP2.210 TP. Yeah, and there are the little negative ones ... that you look and ... er ...
- TP2.211 R. So you're not ...
- TP2.212 TP. So there are basically five types of feedback.
- TP2.213 R. So we'll go through those again. There's the negative ones?

TP2.213 TP. Yes, there's small negative ones; small good ones; the ... alright ones, that you remember; the really big ones that you go home and tell your parents; and then there's the ones where they aren't honest.

TP2.214 R. Mm...and you haven't got the full picture.

TP2.215 TP. Yeah.

TP2.216 R. Right. And if you decide that somebody's in the habit of giving you dishonest feedback ...

TP2.217 TP. Yeah.

TP2.218 R. ... you wouldn't take much notice of anything else they said? Would that be one of the ten minute ones, or would that be ...

TP2.219 TP. Well, part of it would be ten minutes, the other would be, like, oh ... five weeks.

TP2.220 R. Yeah.

TP2.221 TP. Yeah.

TP2.222 R. But if they sa ... if a person like that, that you'd decided ...

TP2.223 TP. ... a person that you trust ....R ... so a person that you trust, that says something good, that's a really big one, that you might go running home and tell your mum...

TP2.224 TP. But then, if they are keeping something and you still trust them ... that's something ... a bit more advanced ... really ...

TP2.225 R. (Laughs). I guess, as you grow up , you're going to have to start making some of these ... find ways of making these decisions about feedback and people for yourself, aren't you?

TP2.226 TP. Yep.

TP2.227 R. So what age do you sort of think you'd be ... less dependent on somebody else giving you feedback, or ..

TP2.228 TP. Seventeen. Maybe.

TP2.229 R. Seventeen?

TP2.230 TP. But yeah, between University and High School, for some kids. (Lowers voice to a whisper) I'll probably still be at High School by then. I don't want to drop out! It's kind of weird.

TP2.231 R. Year 13, here we come.

TP2.232 TP. Yep.

TP2.233 R. Yeah. So, um, because I suppose that ...while you still need somebody ... to give you feedback at University - you're going to get your assignments and things ..

TP2.234 TP. Mm.

TP2.235 R. ... marked – it's not going to be ... so sort of 'in the moment' as it might be now, and you're going to have to make your own decisions more...

TP2.236 TP. There is a bit of feedback at University lectures, but serious stuff – real, good, proper words. Not like Smiley Face.

TP2.237 R. (Laughs.) Oh, I don't know, I do Smiley Faces sometimes.

TP2.238 TP. (Grunts).

TP2.239 R. But I do it for a joke, and that's different.

TP2.240 TP. Yeah.

TP2.241 R. Ok, so is there anything else you wanted to add? Or change?

TP2.242 TP. No. I'm good.

TP2.243 R. You're good? So am I. Ok, can you push the square button?

TP2.244 TP. Square button? This one?

TP2.245 R. Yes.

TP2.246 TP. OK.

## **Tremendous Interview 2**

Tr2.001                    R We're just going to talk. It's much less formal than it was last time where I had set question. Cos what I want to do now is to just get you to talk about some things, and for me to just say 'Well, is that what you mean, is that what you meant ... you said this you said that' sort of thing. So, I guess the first thing I would like to talk about is, what is it that makes feedback work for you?

Tr2.002                    T Probably that it's like ... it helps you to do what ... like say, the next thing that you do in writing, it's ...uh.... A way to help you with whatever you did wrong in the last story, and if you do the things that she's, well whoever's said in that thing, then you can carry it on to the next one and make your writing better ... or other types of things better.

Tr2.003                    R. Right. So it doesn't matter what the subject is ...

Tr2.004                    T No

Tr2.005                    R So long as you get told something that you haven't quite got the hang of...

Tr2.006                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.007                    R ...and that you can then improve on next time.

Tr2.008                    T. Yeah. Yeah.

Tr2.009                    R. So, that's quite ... that seems to me to be saying that you need...something... fairly specific in your feedback.

Tr2.010                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.011                    R.        So can you tell me a little bit more about the sorts of things you've found helpful, that have been specific?

Tr2.012                    T.        Probably the things that like ... that like... you might say the punctuation or something in that context would be like that – like you need to put full stops

there, and spelling, and that when you start a story you should be putting like capital letters and stuff like that, and ... yeah

Tr2.013 R. So to you, is there a difference between teaching, and feedback?

Tr2.014 T. Umm, yes I think so.

Tr2.015 R. Can you tell me a bit about that?

Tr2.016 T. Umm ... teaching is like basically like telling you what to do, and feedback is saying what you should do...

Tr2.017 R. Right

Tr2.018 T. ... so like you're getting taught to do certain things within the story or within other things but if you get feedback it can be ... a lot easier to remember because it's, like, writing or in some other way... it's the way, it's the way that it's said or written or...

Tr2.019 R. So that.. that seems to say that you get taught something, say it might be that you have to start a sentence with a capital letter...

Tr2.020 T Yeah...yeah...

Tr2.021 R. ...and then you write your story, trying to remember everything, and you get feedback after that...

Tr2.022 T yeah – like on what you did well, and what you didn't do and what you should go back and redo and ...

Tr2.023 R. Ok, so... we talked a bit about this last time but for you, why ... what is the most important thing about feedback?

Tr2.024 T. ummm... well, that it just helps you, like, all round, whatever it is, it'll help in the next thing that you do, or the next way you do it.

Tr2.025 R. Right... because that means ... when you say 'helps you', you mean that it ...helps you...



Tr2.026 T. Like, guides you...

Tr2.027 R. ...guides you ...

Tr2.028 T. yeah

Tr2.029 R .. and helps you to improve your work...

Tr2.030 T ...yeah, next time.

Tr2.031 R. ...next time. So why is that important, to improve your work?

Tr2.032 T umm...

Tr2.033 R Have a wee think about that then...

Tr2.034 T. Yeah.

Tr2.035 R. Ok, so feedbacks, helpful, useful, it guides you, it means you can do things better next time...

Tr2.036 T. Yeah...

Tr2.037 R. Why is it important to do things well, or to do them better next time?

Tr2.038 T. So ... say if you're doing it for a test, you can get a higher score and you can be proud of that, and you might get scholarships for certain things, like schools and stuff. And it'll help you in later life when you're going for jobs, and things like that. So you can get...

Tr2.039 R. Like, what...?

Tr2.040 T. Like, if you've just finished a job, and you get feedback from the employer, like to the new job person, then the feedback, if the feedback's good, then the new employer will be able to hear that and will be able to say that you're a good person and hire you.

Tr2.041 R. So, feedback doesn't stop at school?

Tr2.042 T. No.

Tr2.043 R. Ok, so it's not just about making ... schoolwork better,

Tr2.044 T. mmm

Tr2.045 R. It's about making everything you do better.

Tr2.046 T. Yeah.

Tr2.047 R. Ok. Can you think of any times outside of school where you feel you've had feedback that helped you?

Tr2.048 T. Ummm..... not me personally, but someone I know, he does golf, and he gets feedback every time, because if he does his swing wrong or something like that, he would get feedback from the trainer and, like, he would perfect it, because he's getting feedback from the person who's teaching him how to do it.

Tr2.049 R. Right. So again, you've got that sequence of teaching, trying it, getting feedback on it...

Tr2.050 T. And then perfecting that.

Tr2.051 R. So does feedback always have to come from someone else or can feedback..

Tr2.052 T. It can come from yourself, yeah.

Tr2.053 R. It can?

Tr2.054 T. Yeah.

Tr2.055 R. How do you do that?

Tr2.056 T. ummm... I... 'Cos if you kind of know how to do something but ... like you've read about it, and you don't actually know how to.. actually do it with, like, your hands and stuff, then you can say 'I did that good, but I think I should try again, because it wasn't perfect'.

Tr2.057 R. And that would be just general hobbies...

Tr2.058 T. Yeah

Tr2.059 R and skills and ...

Tr2.060 T. Yeah.

Tr2.061 R. So.. if we go back to that example you gave me about the capital letters at the start of the sentence, cos obviously that's something that you were taught quite a long time ago ...

Tr2.062 T. Yep...

Tr2.063 R. so.. presumably at some point you've got that one down. Would you still expect to get feedback about that, or would you think 'Oh, that's a bit...'

Tr2.064 T. For me, yes. Because sometimes I do forget to do it and I would get feedback for not doing it.

Tr2.065 R. Right. So you still think that there are times when if you don't do it...

Tr2.066 T. Yep.

Tr2.067 R. Would you expect to be given positive feedback when you did do it, at your age?

Tr2.068 T. Ummm ... I don't think as much... I don't really think you would now, but if you were, like, a Year 1 or 2, you probably would.

Tr2.069 R. So, at your stage of writing, what are the sorts of things that you would like to get feedback on?

Tr2.070 T. Ummm. Prob... I'm not sure, but whatever I get now, usually helps me, which is like 'well done, this suits, like, your writing style' and stuff like that.

Tr2.071 R. So there's quite a clear moving on ....

Tr2.072 T. Yeah

Tr2.073 R. ...to higher level ...

Tr2.074 T. Yep.

Tr2.075                    R. So... what ... would there be anything about a particular type or piece of feedback, or any situation, that would make you not respond to that feedback, and do it?

Tr2.076                    T. Ummm... probably not, because all feedback's good feedback, I think, because I mean, no matter what it is, it's probably going to help you at some point.

Tr2.077                    R. Right. So even if it was pretty negative, like ...

Tr2.078                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.079                    R. ... 'how many times have I told you...'

Tr2.080                    T. Yeah. It's like, if it was like that, it'd probably get through a lot more than 'Well done, but you still need to do this and this'...

Tr2.081                    R. Sorry, can we just follow up on that? If it was, like, 'how many times have I told you to do this' you think it would get through....

Tr2.082                    T. I think, for me personally, it would.

Tr2.083                    R. Can you tell me why?

Tr2.084                    T. Umm – probably because it's, like, it's more like ... like the way it's been said, it's more likely to stay in your mind than, like, 'Oh, yeah'...

Tr2.085                    R. Happy chappy...

Tr2.086                    T. Yeah. Cos it's more... you can remember it, because it's been worded the way it's been worded.

Tr2.087                    R. And then you then, 'Oh yes, I have been told that several times, I should have remembered'.

Tr2.088                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.089                    R. So then you think to yourself, 'Well, I shouldn't have needed telling about that'

Tr2.090                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.091 R. Yeah. How do you know if the ... uh ... feedback you get is actually true?

Tr2.092 T. Ummm ... don't know how... I suppose if it was to do with your writing, or to do with whatever you've been doing, it would be true, but ... if it's not, then...

Tr2.093 R. Would it be true no matter who gave it to you?

Tr2.094 T. Ummm ... I guess it would, just depending on what they say, and how they say it, and stuff like that.

Tr2.095 R. I'll phrase that a little differently then. Who would be the person or people that you would most likely listen to... when it came to getting feedback?

Tr2.096 T. Ummm, probably teachers and trainers or whatever, like the person that's been teaching you and been giving you the feedback, for a while and stuff, that knows what you're doing and knows how to do it properly and ...

Tr2.097 R. So, you'd assume that if you're being taught something, that it's ... that the person who's been teaching you knows what they're talking about.

Tr2.098 T. Yes. Yeah.

Tr2.099 R. I think that ... yeah. What if they don't want to give you bad messages?

Tr2.100 T. Ummm ....

Tr2.101 R. If they try to say 'Oh you're doing this well [Tremendous] and you're doing that well', and you think 'Oh everything's great'; and they just didn't want to tell you that you're not doing this, or you're not doing that...

Tr2.102 T. Um, well then, they shouldn't really be doing this ... like, they shouldn't really be writing it, they should have given it to someone else to do. Like, another teacher or another person that knows it, cos then it's not really as .. it won't really get through as well as something out, like a ...

Tr2.103 R. So if you found out that a person, that up till then you'd trusted to tell you ...

Tr2.104 T. Yep

Tr2.105 R. ... and you found out they weren't, what would happen then?

Tr2.106 T. Umm... I'd probably have to forget all the feedback that they'd said and probably have to relearn and redo most of my work.

Tr2.107 R. Gosh! You wouldn't feel too good, would you?

Tr2.108 T. No.

Tr2.109 R. No. So that – being able to trust – is actually quite important ...

Tr2.110 T. Yeah

Tr2.111 R. ... for you, for whether or not you'd accept feedback.

Tr2.112 T. Yep.

Tr2.113 R. If you had once found out that a person was fluffing around and not giving you the right ...

Tr2.114 T. Yeah

Tr2.115 R. ... or the hard messages, when they came back and tried to give you more feedback..

Tr2.116 T. I wouldn't listen to them.

Tr2.117 R. ... you wouldn't listen. That would be one reason why you just wouldn't respond to that feedback.

Tr2.118 T. Yeah.

Tr2.119 R. Ok. So feedback has to be given by somebody whose expertise ...

Tr2.120 T. Yeah. And what they were doing.

Tr2.121 R. And that doesn't have to be schoolwork.

Tr2.122 T. Yeah. It can be anything.

Tr2.123                    R. It can be anything. Ok, if we think more specifically about school right now, there are some ... I just wondered how you'd feel if you were told 'I want you to write down the topics or areas or aspects that you want to get feedback on'. How would you feel about that?

Tr2.124                    T. Ummm... I would say it would probably be hard, because I mean, you really want to get feedback on everything that you do, so you can change it to what you do next time, and if you pick certain things then it won't help you in other things that you don't pick.

Tr2.125                    R. And what would ... what would be the difficulty there? Just ... you having to decide...

Tr2.126                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.127                    R. ...what's important and what's not.

Tr2.128                    T. Yeah.

Tr2. 129                    R. Is that because you wouldn't think you'd be able to decide that yet?

Tr2.130                    T. Mmmm ... For the little things, then that might come back in later life and you needed to know, like, then you wouldn't be able to do it, cos it's ... you weren't actually taught, like, you didn't actually get feedback towards it...

Tr2.131                    R. Because you didn't actually ask for it.

Tr2.132                    T. Mm.

Tr2.133                    R. So, in general, you would probably find it quite difficult to be asked to choose your own topics for feedback.

Tr2.134                    T. Yep.

Tr2.135                    R. Ok, remember last time we talked about why feedback's important, and I just forget what you actually said. Can you remember at all, why it's important?

Tr2.136                    T. No...

Tr2.137                    R. I think you probably said something along the lines of cos you needed to know how to improve.

Tr2.138                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.139                    R. Cos that's what you've been telling me.

Tr2.140                    T. Yeah.

Tr2.141                    R. So is there anything else you can say about what would or wouldn't make you choose to go with the feedback?

Tr2.142                    T. Don't think so.

Tr2.143                    R. Don't think so? That's great.

### **On The Ball Interview 3:**

OTB3.001      R. Ok, this is the third interview with On The Ball, and I just want to start ... we're talking about feedback – as usual, and I would like to ask you: what do you see as the job of the teacher in the whole feedback process? What's their ... what is it their job to do?

OTB3.002      O. Well, they can give, like, good or bad feedback to say if you've done something great or you can improve on something.

OTB3.003      R. Right. So, it's their job to ... write down ... quite ... yeah, they've got to let you know where you're at, what you've done well ...

OTB3.004      O. Yeah.

OTB3.005      R. ... and what you need to improve on... So what's your job, in the feedback process?

OTB3.006      O. Your job is to do everything right, and, like, writing or something, put adjectives in and stuff like that.

OTB3.007      R. So that ... so if the teacher says you need to add in adjectives ...



- OTB3.008 O. Yeah.
- OTB3.009 R. ... it's your job to make sure that you do that? Is that right?
- OTB3.010 O. Yeah.
- OTB3.011 R. Cool. ... Um, so you said you're off to High School, next year, ...
- OTB3.011 O.Yeah
- OTB3.012 R. Can you tell me some of the things that you think will be different from Primary School, at High School?
- OTB3.013 O. It will be, like, a lot... a lot more classes and it'll be, like, more harder things to do. It'll be .. and it'll ... probably more friendly teachers ...
- OTB3.014 R. Maybe? Yeah? When you say 'more classes' ... what do you mean by that?
- OTB3.015 O. Like, more classes to go to for interchanges, like that. Instead of just for Maths, it'll be, like, for Writing and stuff to see if you improved.
- OTB6.016 R. Right. So it won't ... well actually at High School it's ... it's usually you have a different teacher for every subject, don't you, whether it's Social Studies or ... English, or ...
- OTB3.017 O. Yeah.
- OTB3.018 R. ... whatever. So, do ... what do you think that would make ... because you're going to be going to different teachers, what changes do you think that will make in the feedback that you get?
- OTB3.019 O. You might not know it then ... like, they might not know what ... you ... can do, like, as you ... if you've got to put in adjectives or not, so they might just wait for your writing, and if it's good or bad, they'll write it down for feedback, so you can improve on it.
- OTB3.020 R. Ok. And every teacher will give you feedback?
- OTB3.021 O. Oh, yeah, mostly.

OTB3.022 R. Yeah. So how do you think it would be, if ... you found that two teachers were .... Saying different messages? Like, ... I know you play Rugby, so imagine you had two coaches (laughs)

OTB3.023 O. Yeah.

OTB3.024 R. .. and one of them said 'Hey, you're doing this well. That's fine, keep it up'; and the other one said 'No you're not, you've got to do this. this and this', and you ... and you had different messages ...

OTB3.025 O. Yeah ...

OTB3.026 R. ... that wouldn't be very easy, would it?

OTB3.027 O. No.

OTB3.028 R. So what would happ ... how would you cope, what would you do, if that happened with two teachers at High School?

OTB3.029 O. Well, you just listen to both of them, and like, for the one that thinks you have to do more, you just, like, pick up your skills.

OTB3.030 R. Right.

OTB3.031 O. Yeah, just ... go with it.

OTB3.032 R. Even if the other one thinks it's fine?

OTB3.033 O. (giggles)

OYB3.034 R. Yeah?

OTB3.035 O. Well, that wouldn't really matter, if you, like, improved on this and improved, they'd just think you're, like, doing great in all the subjects...

OYB3.036 R. Right.

OTB3.037 O. ... I guess the other way you're going to get their attention.

OTB3.038 R. Get their attention?

OTB3.039 O. Yeah, like, as in good ... yeah.

OTB3.040 R. Doing good?

OTB3.041 O. Yeah.

OTB3.042 R. So you've ... you ... you think you'd have to ... do good in class ...

OTB3.043 O. Yeah

OTB3.044 R. ... to ... um, make them notice you?

OTB3.045 O. Yeah.

OTB3.046 R. Not play around in class to make them notice you?

OTB3.047 O. Yeah.

OTB3.048 R. Noo? Yeah? (both laugh). Just how it goes. Ok, so ... what ...um, I want to ask you, like, what is the most important thing about feedback for you, as far as you're concerned? So whether it's how it's given, what you get, who gives it – anything. Just, what is the most important thing about feedback?

OTB3.049 O. As long as it's positive and it, like ... and it also gives you things that you can improve on, like, so – it'll be, like 'Awesome work' and then it'll just go, like, on to saying that you can do, like, better, like put in more punga ... punctuation, and stuff like that.

OTB3.050 R. Ok, so you need those two things. You need to be told, given some positives about things you've done well; and then you need to be told where to next?

OTB3.051 O. Yeah.

OTB3.052 R. Ok. So that .. that's the important ... that's the heart of feedback for you? ... Alrighty, now the last question is ... the very first question I asked you at the first interview, and I'm just interested to see whether you think ... still think the same way or whether you think your answer might have changed, or if you can't remember what your answer was (laughs) .. um, so I want to ask you: Why is feedback important?

OTB3.053 O. It gives you, like ... using more opportunities and stuff to do, like, cos it could help you more, cos you don't know what you're doing... like, you might not know

what you're doing wrong. So that's what teachers are there for, to teach more stuff to learn about.

OTB3.054 R. Ok. So, you don't know whether you've got it right or wrong ...

OTB3.055 O. Yeah.

OTB3.056 R. ... when you do something, so it's up to the teacher to help you by ... telling you that – that you've done this right, you haven't done that right, this is what you can do.

OTB3.057 O. Yeah.

OTB3.058 R. Ok. Is there anything else at all that you want to add in, cos this is the last time we'll talk. So is there anything else about feedback that you want to say, or put on the record ...at all. Cos this ... this is your chance.

OTB3.059 O. Not really, but ... like, it's just keeping it positive and then ... like, they'll listen if you keep it positive. Cos if you keep it negative and telling them what to do, they probably won't listen, they won't improve on it.

OTB3.060 R. Oh, that's interesting. So ... in order to ... get people – if I'm a teacher - ...

OTB3.061 O. Yeah...

OTB3.062 R. .. and I want the kids in my class, to ... take notice of my feedback ...

OTB3.063 O. Yeah...

OTB3.064 R. ... that I give them, I have to put some positives in?

OTB3.065 O. Yeah.

OTB3.066 R. I can't just go 'I've told you often enough ythat you're supposed to improve on such and such, it's about time you did it. Why don't get on and do it'...

OTB3.067 O. Yeah ...

OTB3.068 R. If I wrote something like that ... you wouldn't ...

OTB3.069 O. I wouldn't really respond to it ...

OTB3.070 R. Right.

OTB3.071 O. Cos, yeah, it's ...keeping it positive.

OTB3.072 R. So if I said 'Well it's good to see that you're doing such and such, but ...  
remember I keep telling you to do so and so ...'

OTB3.073 O. Yeah...

OTB3.074 R. That would be ...?

OTB3.075 O. More effective.

OTB3.076 R. More effective.

OTB3.077 O. Yeah.

OTB3.078 R. That's a really interesting thing to say. I don't actually think anybody's said  
it just like that.

OTB3.079 O. Mm.

OTB3.080 R. So thank you very much. That's great.

### **Tino Pai Interview 3:**

TP3.001 R. Right, well this is the third round of interviews, and this is Tino Pai, come  
back for the third time.

TP3.002 TP. Mm.

TP3.003 R. Um, where are you ... where are you off to, to High School next year?

TP3.004 TP. Burnside.

TP3.005 R. Burnside?

TP3.006 TP. Yeah.

TP3.007 R. How's that going to be , do you think?

- TP3.008 TP. It'll be good. Hopefully more feedback.
- TP3.009 R. Yeah? Ok, so ... let's start by talking about that, because that's one of the things we're going to be saying ... talking about, is How do you think High School will be different from Primary school?
- TP3.010 TP. Well, in heaps of different ways. More serious approach, of course. Um ... yeah, it's just um the whole pressure thing, like, um, it gets harder every year, and then before you know it, you're off into the world and you have to make your own decisions.
- TP3.011 R. Right
- TP3.012 TP. Which I realised last night is quite scary, and all that stuff.
- TP3.013 R. What made you realise it?
- TP3.014 TP. Uh ... usu ... I thought it would be a breeze, but, you know it's just ... cos it ... um, it draws ever closer ... yeah.
- TP3.015 R. (laughs). So part of what you think it will be like at High School is getting you ready, to make your own decisions?
- TP3.016 TP. Yeah. Mm.
- TP3.017 R. Ok, so I'm going to ask you: what would you like, or what would you expect, from the feedback you get at High School?
- TP3.018 TP. Much more serious, more truthful and all that stuff.
- TP3.019 R. When you say 'more truthful', what do you mean?
- TP3.020 TP. Well, I ... I've said this a couple of times in the last interviews ...
- TP3.021 R. (Laughs). You have!
- TP3.022 TP. ...um... yeah, just ...well, you know how some – the Primary School teachers always aren't that honest, but it gets more serious every year, starting to get better.
- TP3.023 R. So they don't tell you ... lies...
- TP3.024 TP. No

TP3.025 R. ... but they might not tell you everything?

TP3.026 TP. Yeah.

TP3.027 R. Is that what you mean?

TP3.028 TP. Yep.

TP3.029 R. ... by 'not so honest'.

TP3.030 TP. Mm. I hope with High School it will all be honest and stuff.

TP3.031 R. Tell it like it is?

TP3.032 TP. Mm. Cos even if it ... kind of offensive in a way, which it isn't – some people think it is, but it isn't – um, you just need to know all that stuff, and get the full story.

TP3.033 R. Right.

TP3.034 TP. Yeah.

TP3.035 R. So one big difference between High School and Primary School, of course, is that you have a different teacher for each subject and each class ...

TP3.036 TP. Yeah, you don't have, like, an official teacher, just like not an exact class everywhere.

TP3.037 R. So, what difference do you think that would make?

TP3.038 TP. Well, I'm sort ...

TP3.039 R. To feedback?

TP3.040 TP. Well, lots of stuff. Cos I go ... I do Maths Interchange most days. There'll just be more Interchanges, basically, at High School, but I don't get much feedback from Maths. Um, teachers, um ... Maths, um, these past terms haven't exactly taken in their books ... their students books a lot. So, um, I'd like to see a bit more of that.

TP3.041

TP3.042 R. So you ... you think part of feedback is taking in the books? Having a look?

- TP3.043 TP. Yeah.
- TP3.044 R. And what, writing something, or ...?
- TP3.045 TP. Marking, all that stuff – you don't, you don't have to write something.  
You could just point out the mistakes, really.
- TP3.046 R. And that would help you?
- TP3.047 TP. Yeah.
- TP3.048 R. Right. So ... you've already noticed at Primary School that you get  
different ... depths of feedback from different teachers? Is that what you're saying?
- TP3.049 TP. Well, in Primary School it was all sort of the same.
- TP3.050 R. But, well, then you get more from one teacher than another?
- TP3.051 TP. Yeah.
- TP3.052 R. Would you expect at High School to see similar sorts of differences  
between teachers with feedback?
- TP3.053 TP. Well, it's not like getting teacher every different year, and just sticking  
with that teacher. That, like, um more ... twice the feedback each year up in Primary School,  
like it goes in a pattern like in Mathematics, but um, there'll be a jumble – a handful of all  
teachers in one year and you might change and the next year there'll be so many teachers that  
you meet and stuff, so ... all the feedback would be very different, cos there'll be heaps of it.
- TP3.054 R. Right, and so what would happen do you think, or how would you cope, or  
what would you ... how would you react, if you found that you were getting opposing  
messages from two teachers? Like, one teacher says 'You're doing fine at this', and another  
teacher says 'Well, actually you're not'?
- TP3.055 TP. That'd be alright, cos it's honest. Um .. yeah ... sort of.
- TP3.056 R. So how would you re ... what would you do about it?



TP3.057 TP. I'd just keep on going, cos it, it's not really ... you don't really need to do anything about it really, cos it's just the truth, you know?

TP3.058 R. Right.

TP3.059 TP. But if it's the same subject, it might be a little bit confusing...

TP3.060 R. Right.

TP3.061 TP. Cos, then, if it's the same subject when one teacher says you're fine and the other teacher says you're not that good at it, then you know that, um, that that teacher that says you're fine isn't giving you the full story, at all.

TP3.062 R. Maybe not. Although they might be right?

TP3.063 TP. Mm.

TP3.064 R. They might actually know more, I suppose?

TP3.065 TP. Yeah.

TP3.066 R. (laughs). And then wha ...

TP3.067 TP. You don't want to get ... you know, um, too ... against the teachers who give you bad feedback. That's ... not right, that's just the truth sometimes.

TP3.068 R. Yeah. So we'll go back to what would have been my first question but we got talking about High School.

TP3.069 TP. MM.

TP3.070 R. Um ... what do you see as the role of the teacher in giving feedback? Or, what's their job?

TP3.071 TP. Basically, just, um, go over all the stuff in their own time. Um, ... and just skim through ... pretty simple, really. Mm.

TP3.072 R. Ok. And what do you see as your job? In the whole feedback area?

TP3.073 TP. Well, to read it of course. Um ... yes, and just accept the fact ... sometimes ... that, um ... you see, you can't be too, um ... sure about feedback sometimes,

cos you ... sometimes you get heaps of good feedback and you start to wonder if they're lying, sort of, but, um, you find out it's actually all true ... it's ...

TP3.074 R. Then you'd feel good!

TP3.075 TP. Yeah, you always feel good and that, but ... um ... yeah.

TP3.076 R. So how does your ... job... in ... in the whole feedback thing, relate to what you said before about later on in life you'll have to start making your own decisions?

TP3.077 TP. Not much. But, um, there's hardly ... the only feedback you get later on in life is, like, 'You've been doing a great job', from your boss, or like ... yeah, all that stuff.

TP3.078 R. So, if ... if your boss ... if you've got to make decisions yourself ...

TP3.079 TP. Yeah

TP3.080 R. ... and your boss hasn't been around to tell you you're doing a great job for a while...

TP3.081 TP. Yeah.

TP3.082 R. How would you know how you're getting on? What would help you?

TP3.083 TP. Oh ... I'm not really sure, actually, about that one.

TP3.084 R. Hmm. It's interesting, cos I was really thinking maybe it has to go on inside your head.

TP3.085 TP. Yeah. You have to keep track of that sometimes. You can't just rely on someone else, I suppose.

TP3.086 R. Has that happened much for you yet, where you've made your ... had to be giving you your own feedback, and deciding?

TP3.087 TP. Not much. Yet.

TP3.088 R. Not much? Not yet? But that could happen.

Tp3.089 TP. Yeah.

TP3.090 R. Ok. ... Um, what is the most important aspect of feedback to you?

TP3.091 TP. Um...

TP3.092 R. Either in how it's given, what it says, what you do, ... whatever. Just anything.

TP3.093 TP. What I do.

TP3.094 R. ... Is the most important?

TP3.095 TP. Yeah.

TP3.096 R. So for you, the most important thing about feedback, is what you do with it?

TP3.097 TP. Yeah.

TP3.098 R. And what are the things that you might do with it?

TP3.099 TP. Um ... well, like I said in past interviews, if it's bad feedback, correct yourself; and if it's good feedback, try and get even better.

TP3.100 R. Right.

TP3.101 TP. Yeah.

TP3.102 R. Ok, would there ever be a circumstance where you just said ... 'No, that's rubbish. I'm not having anything to do with it'?

TP3.103 TP. Well, that's not really what feedback's ... usually... comes if really, cos I I don't know anyone who's actually got that sort of feedback.

TP3.104 R. No. (laughs). I'd be pretty upset if there was.

TP3.105 TP. Mm.

TP3.106 R. Well, the very last question ... (waits while dishwasher is emptied in the background) ... I'm going to go back to the very first question I asked you at the first interview.

TP3.107 TP. Ok.

TP3.108 R. And I'll be interested to see what your answer is now – whether it's the same, or whether it's changed over the year.

TP3.109 TP. Mm.

TPO3.110 R. So I'm going to ask you: why is feedback important?

TP3.111 TP. Um ... (inhales sharply) ... There wouldn't be much change in that question, it's always the same really. Um, just to better yourself, correct yourself, and know that you ca ... doing well or doing bad. And, um, ... you just need to get, um, used to more, and then throughout the last years of High School, you'll get ... need to get used to it less, until you're off in the world, and ... you can only rely on your boss for feedback about every six months ...

TP3.112 R. Yes ... (laughs)

TP3.113 TP. And then you have to make the decision for yourself; give yourself feedback, and, um, yeah. All that stuff.

TP3.114 R. Right. So, in a sense, getting feedback now and learning to think about it and respond, is ... sort of preparation for giving yourself feedback? Learning how to do it?

TP3.115 TP. Yeah.

TP3.116 R. You think?

TP3.117 TP. Sort of. Half ... and the other half is just, um, knowing how to correct yourself, and the other half is just learning how to thi ... give yourself feedback and stuff; make your own decisions and that.

Tp3.118 R. And when do you think that might happen for you? Starting now? Starting next year? Starting ... Year 10?

TP3.119 TP. Starting Year 11, hopefully. Then ... I think I'll just, um, ... I think, within four months of graduating, I'll probably go up to Auckland ...

TP3.120 R. Right.

TP3.121 TP. ... I suppose.

TP3.122 R. What you're ... cos what sort of job was it that you were after?

TP3.123 TP. Architect.

TP3.124 R. Architect – I remember now.

TP3.125 TP. Mm.

TP3.127 R. I suppose one sort of feedback for an Architect would be whether their houses didn't fall down.

TP3.128 TP. Mm. I'm more into, like ... well at the start of the year I was more interested in Retail but now I'm interested in, like, towers and stuff. Like ... you know, Sky Tower in Auckland, like I've always wanted Christchurch to have something like that ...

TP3.129 R. Right.

TP3.130 TP. ... a proper tower. Yeah.

TP3.131 R. So that ... that would be a real cool thing, if you ended up being the architect ...

TP3.132 TP. Yeap

TP3.133 R. ... of Christchurch's own tower.

TP3.134 TP. Mm. But still with houses.

TP3.135 R. Well ... I suppose you've got to have your bread and butter.

TP3.136 TP. Yeah ... yeah.

TP3.137 R. Well is there anything else you want to add, or say, or comment on about feedback? Cos this is it, this is the last time.

TP3.138 TP. No ... it's all good.

TP3.139 R. It's all good?

TP3.140 TP. Yep.

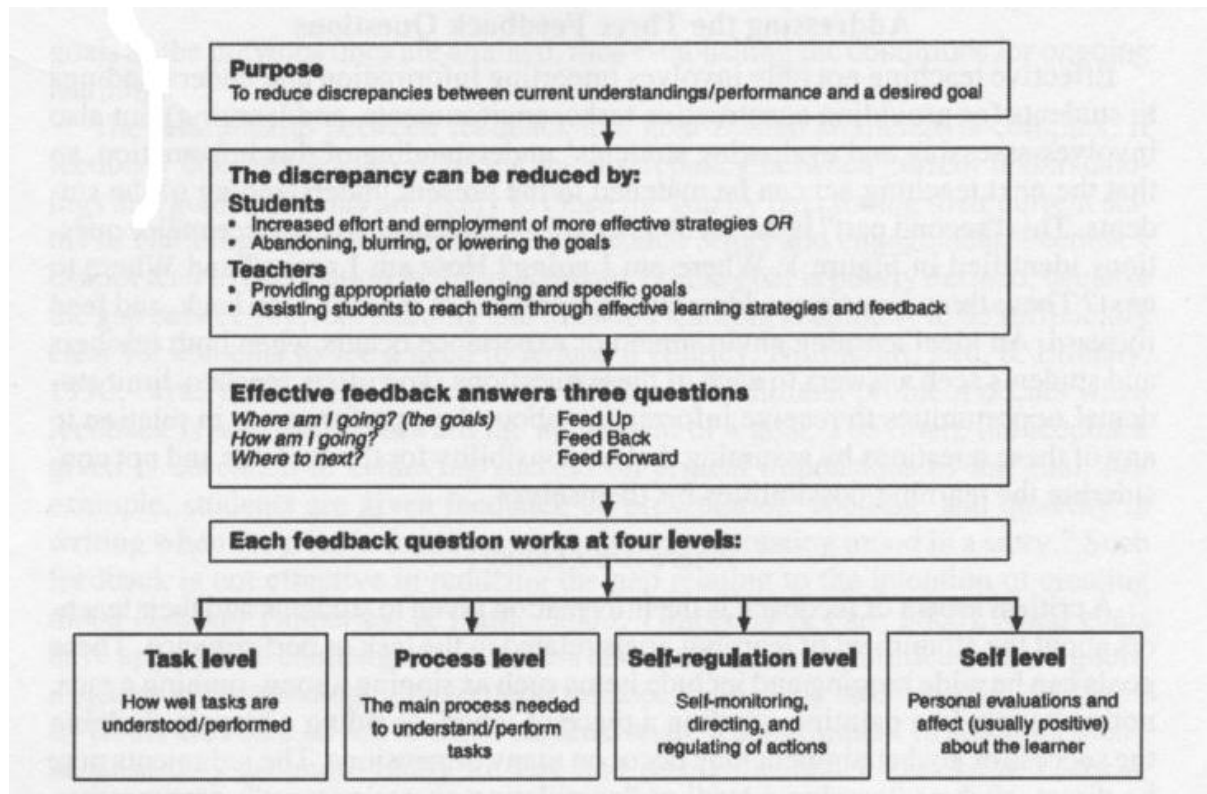
- TP3.141 R. You think we've covered everything you'd like to say, or have on the record?
- TP3.142 TP. Yeah. Cos considering I don't ... get that much feedback, not really much kids get feedback, um ... (lowers voice) I wasn't really interested in it if it were, actually.
- TP3.143 R. Yeah?
- TP3.144 TP. Um ...
- TP3.145 R. Sorry, I couldn't hear that: Not really interesting...?
- TP3.146 TP. Not really interested in all that feedback stuff, cos you don't get it so often .. um ...yeah.
- TP3.147 R. Ok.
- TP3.148 TP. That's it. Yeah.
- TP3.149 R. Thank you.

## Appendix I: Typology developed by Tunstall and Gipps

Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D	
Rewarding	Approving	Specifying attainment	Constructing achievement	1 Achievement Feedback
Rewards	Positive personal expression	Specific acknowledgement of attainment	Mutual articulation of achievement	
	Warm expression of feeling	Use of criteria in relation to work/behaviour; teacher models	Additional use of emerging criteria; child role in presentation	2 Improvement Feedback
	General praise	More specific praise	Praise integral to description	
	Positive non-verbal feedback			
Punishing	Disapproving	Specifying improvement	Constructing the way forward	
Punishments	Negative personal expression	Correction of errors	Mutual critical appraisal	
	Reprimands; negative generalisations	More practice given; training in self-checking	Provision of strategies	
	Negative non-verbal feedback			
Evaluative		Descriptive		

Appendix J:

## Appendix J: Feedback model developed by Hattie and Timperley





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