EXPLORING PRINCIPALS’ PURPOSES, EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER APPRAISAL IN VICTORIAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, September, 2016
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of professional learning and appraisal processes in their school; without their involvement this thesis would not have been possible.
ABSTRACT

There is a growing body of international research confirming a direct relationship between teacher quality/effectiveness and student learning (Hallinger et al. 2014) and research shows that teacher appraisal and feedback can significantly improve teachers’ understanding of their teaching methods, teacher practices and student learning (Hattie 2009). In response to demands for high educational quality (Isore 2009), teacher appraisal systems have come to be considered an important link in the chain leading to desired student outcomes (Ovando & Ramirez 2007). However, opinions vary as to how principals should appraise teachers and how processes of appraisal might improve teacher quality and performance (Hattie 2009; Taylor & Tyler 2012). Additionally, the ultimate impact of such processes on student learning outcomes is unclear (Leithwood et al. 2007; Jensen & Reichl 2011). The onus lies with principals to understand how they can best support their teachers to develop practices that will support all learners. Appraisal has become an assumed part of this support for teachers, taken up by state and federal governments as a means of lifting the performance of schools in Australia.

This grounded theory research has been undertaken in the context of the federal government’s formulation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (2011), the Performance and Development Framework (2012), and requirements set in Victoria by the Victorian Institute for Teachers for documented hours of professional learning for maintenance of registration (2005). This grounded theory study has aimed to give voice to the lived experiences and perceptions of 12 independent school principals in Victoria as they have negotiated the planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools with their teaching staff. It has
sought to find out what the principals have done through methods of appraisal to encourage their teachers to undertake meaningful professional learning, and what they have perceived to be enhancers/support and detractors/barriers in the processes undertaken.

Both ‘external drivers’ from the government and ‘internal drivers’ (Harris 2003) coming from school boards and parents, place pressure on school principals to show proof of improvement, and, in turn, pressure is applied on teachers. Key themes concerning the intended purposes of appraisal, the need to provide clarity of these purposes to keep teachers on side, and the significance of a school becoming a community of learners/a community of practice have surfaced. How student learning can best be supported, the types of professional learning that have a positive impact and how leadership is played out, are significant.

The findings contribute to research in illuminating the principals’ actions and highlighting many of the issues they face in negotiating the pressures for accountability, whilst aiming to promote the professional learning and effectiveness of their teachers. Even in taking a formative approach to appraisal, they have needed to draw on their leadership capacities to facilitate manageable directions and have needed to develop a deep understanding of the emotions involved in a process of appraisal to cope with teacher resistance and distrust of the processes. Whether such formalised appraisal processes are necessary to support the growth of teachers, and whether they impact on student learning outcomes, are in question. This research adds to our understanding from other research (Fullan 2014; Goe 2013) that formalised processes will not on their own provide for the level of focused collaboration in a community of practice needed to provide the best possible
teaching practices for students. A critical aspect of the need for staff to work together for the benefit of students, and to draw on the expertise of others to grow in the role of a teacher, stand out and point to the professional responsibility and accountability of teachers to continually improve their practice.

Suggestions for further research are presented on the most effective ways of accounting for progress as professionals; research with teachers to seek their views on how changes in pedagogy can best be encouraged; research on how the emotional resourcefulness of teachers can be fostered to enable them to benefit from feedback and collegial sharing of practice; and the role of middle management in supporting the professional growth of their colleagues.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Statement of the problem

The genesis of this thesis was my experience as an independent school principal, committed to promoting ongoing professional learning on the part of teachers, working with colleagues to devise approaches to teacher appraisal in the belief that such processes were the key to improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes. The problem has arisen that every school is compelled to have some form of teacher appraisal/feedback in place, so principals try to be as constructive as possible in implementing procedures that satisfy government expectations whilst still suitting their own school culture. Having been in this role as a principal, I am aware that principals do not necessarily have the time or knowledge to do it well; they need to rely on the capacity of senior staff, and identification of these staff with the processes undertaken, to assist in the management of them; they must deal with both the sensitivity and resistance of many teachers. Despite their efforts, they appear to remain unconvinced about whether appraisal significantly affects teacher learning and student achievement.

To set the context for this research, independent school principals have responsibility for the leadership and management of their schools. Amongst their wide range of responsibilities, they are accountable to their school board and school
community for the quality of the educational programs and teaching provided. As educational leaders the responsibility rests with them to create a learning environment wherein continuous improvement is encouraged, helping teachers enhance their capacity as educators for the benefit of their students’ learning. Multiple studies have highlighted that teacher quality is at the centre of successful student learning (Hallinger et al. 2014; Hanuschek 2010; Hattie 2009, 2012; Liu & Zhao 2013;). Leadership supportive of teacher development makes schools better places of learning for children (Fullan 2003; Robinson & Timperley 2007) and schools need to be places where adults, as well as children, are learning (Donaldson 2001; Greene 2001). However, as a result of government mandates for school improvement, teacher appraisal has taken a central place in the choice of methods that ensure teacher quality. Opinions vary as to how principals can best appraise teachers, and how processes of teacher appraisal might improve teacher quality and performance (Hattie 2009; Taylor & Tyler 2012); ultimately, the impact of these processes on student outcomes is unclear (Jensen & Reichl 2011; Leithwood et al. 2007).

The activities of school leaders are shaped by the need to manage change and cope with complexity. Harris et al. (2003, p. 13) cite the words of Day et al. (2000):

The contemporary school leader must be politically astute, a successful professional entrepreneur, a skilled mediator and an effective agent of change. Therefore, the bases of power now are sound knowledge of how
organisations function, interpersonal relations, group dynamics, personnel management and people’s value sets.

Harris et al. (2003) refer to ‘internal drivers’ for change involving a complex mixture of school-based factors, such as institutional needs and wants, which provide the impetus for the school’s development. Some are given, but others are ‘constructed’ by leaders within the school by their commitment to a particular vision, values framework or strategy of management. Added to these are ‘external drivers’, which arise from policy interventions and edicts that require compliance (p. 14).

A plethora of approaches to the appraisal of teachers and their professional learning has developed in response to accountabilities both within the school and external to it, and in response to the understanding (from research) that teacher appraisal and feedback may significantly improve teachers’ understanding of their teaching methods, teacher practices and student learning (Hattie 2009). This is an area plagued by discrepancies in intentions and approaches as well as mixed outcomes concerning the benefits of undertaking a process. Approaches chosen have not necessarily been helpful in improving practice (Alton-Lee 2003). The intersection between accountability and development in appraisal undertakings is of particular significance — a crucial factor being the criteria teachers are appraised against, including, but not limited to, student performance.

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1 I use the term ‘professional learning’ to capture teacher learning that arises as part of personal reflection and professional interaction, as opposed to ‘professional development’ that may be construed as being related to formal, external training (Cole, 2004). Refer to pp. 31-32 for further delineation.
It appears there is scepticism amongst teachers about teacher appraisal, even though formal appraisal schemes have been an expectation for two decades now. Such scepticism has resulted from a perception that appraisal is done to teachers, rather than with and for them (Dinham 2013); that it is carried out largely to fulfil administrative requirements and has little impact on the way they teach in the classroom, their development or improved student results (Jensen & Reichl, 2011).

If we work on the assumption that teacher quality is at the centre of successful student learning (Hallinger et al. 2014; Hattie 2009, 2012), departments of education and principals need to determine the type of professional learning that will be effective in terms of creating change in practice to improve teacher quality. The extent to which approaches to teacher appraisal can inform such professional learning needs to be determined. Teaching is a highly complex weaving of professional knowledge, professional relationships and values, with professional practices. How teachers own professional learning is equally complex (Shaw in Timperley et al. 2007). If teacher appraisal is to play a meaningful and beneficial role in supporting professional learning, then the onus lies with principals — as leaders of schools — to understand how to support teachers through such learning (Fullan 2003, 2014), to develop practices that will benefit all learners and to structure appraisal processes in such a way that they do support this development.
1.2. Discussion of the problem

From the 1990s onwards the topic of teacher appraisal has come into focus, heightened in recent years by ‘external drivers’ (Harris 2003). An intensification of public, political, bureaucratic and market accountabilities in education has made teacher appraisal a focus in student outcome-based measurement and appraisal (Glasman & Glasman 2006); it has now become the norm that schools will have some form of teacher appraisal in place.

In our era of globalisation, there is extensive interchange of knowledge on the bigger picture of school improvement. We are in an era of greater accountability as organisations and as professionals. More and more, countries are showing a growing interest in implementing comprehensive teacher appraisal systems as a response to the demands for high educational quality (Isore 2009, p. 31). There has been a search for more powerful strategies aimed at improving student performance, which Hallinger et al. (2014) conclude as leading policy makers and system leaders “to experiment with new models of teacher performance evaluation” (p. 6).

At the macro level, the federal government wants Australia’s education system to enhance its international economic competitiveness. Pressure is placed on schools to show proof of improvements in student performance, which in turn places pressure on teachers to enable such improvements. This is evidenced in Australia’s participation in international standardised testing regimes, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), to compare results with those of other
countries in Mathematics and Science, Reading Literacy and Computer and Information Literacy. In 2008, the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) commenced in Australian schools, with students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 being assessed annually with national tests in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy. The NAPLAN is the measure through which governments, education authorities and schools can determine whether or not young Australians are meeting important education outcomes. The Australian Government has also introduced the My School website which publishes information about schools (in particular, NAPLAN results), to enhance transparency and parental choice; consequently, it has resulted in pressure for school improvement through comparison.

At the state level, independent schools are tied to the state’s curriculum and, *ipso facto*, to the state’s expectations for teaching practices. In Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development sees high quality professional learning as one of the cornerstones of an effective school. Underpinned by the *Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning (Professional Learning in Effective Schools)* and the eS$^2$ Instructional Model, a range of professional learning programs and resources is available for teachers. Policies for teachers’ professional learning were outlined as part of the *Performance and Development*

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2 The e5 Instructional Model (2009) is a reference point for school leaders and teachers to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes high quality teacher practice in the classroom. The model outlines a process of engaging, exploring, explaining, elaborating and evaluating. Refer www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/e5.aspx
Culture Initiative. Introduced in 2005, this initiative aimed for all schools to have an accredited performance and development culture by 2008. As at the end of 2009, 98.4% of schools were accredited (Jensen & Reichl 2011). Although disbanded by the state government, such state sector approaches influence the broader educational arena — including independent and Catholic schools.

The state, through the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), conducts regular thorough audits and inspections of independent schools through their registration processes, to ensure compliance with state educational policies and expectations and to maintain educational standards. The quality of teaching is implicit in such auditing.

The use of professional standards for registration and regulation has become a common element of education systems both nationally and internationally. In Victoria, since 2005, registered teachers have been required to demonstrate that they have maintained involvement in professional development by validating completion of at least twenty hours per year and referencing such activities against standards, formulated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, then replaced by the National Professional Standards for Teachers in 2011 (see below). Although this requirement encourages involvement in professional development (Cosgrove & Mildren 2007), the emphasis for many teachers — as raised by Cole (2005, p. 4) — can be on attending courses or sessions provided by external providers, as opposed

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3 Published by the Leadership and Teacher Development Branch of the Office of School Education, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne, July 2005, this presents a model of learning that informs all the opportunities provided for teachers to engage in the improvement of their practice over time.
to being involved in activities directly related to improving their teaching practice for the benefit of student learning.

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (The Standards) were released by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2011, outlining standards of practice for teachers in professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement, organised in four career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead. In 2012, the *Australian Performance and Development Framework* was released, which outlines the critical factors for creating a performance and development culture in schools. The Framework links the work on the Standards with indication that, to focus on improving teaching, it is necessary to have a clear vision of what effective teaching looks like.

In addition to these requirements, there are various affiliations at the independent school level which exert influence and create impetus for teaching improvement (e.g. religious affiliations, Independent Schools Victoria, the Association of Heads of Independent Schools).

Lastly, there is impetus at the micro level as individual schools strive to improve to survive and thrive. The independent school ‘market’ is a highly competitive one, with schools competing for enrolments and striving to attain high student standards and results. Consequently, school boards may place pressure on principals to implement appraisal of teachers.
Following 14 years as a school principal, and various senior leadership roles prior to this, I recognise that schools on the whole do not do teacher appraisal well; there appears to be no set way that will suit all school contexts and intended purposes are not always achieved. Throughout my career I have been passionate about pedagogy and encouraging lifelong learning for students, having been personally committed to supporting the professional learning of teachers. In the role of principal, I worked with staff to develop a variety of approaches to encourage refinement of teaching practices and am aware of the complexities involved in formalising such processes in the form of teacher appraisal. My curiosity about the benefits — or lack of benefits — of teacher appraisal began in the 1990s, hence I have included relevant literature from this period of time in the Literature Review in Chapter 3. I applied these early insights in my own school when I became a principal and am very conscious of how I have changed my own views over time through observation of my own teachers’ further knowledge of contemporary research.

Critical questions that have arisen for me concern how much can be asked of teachers in fulfilling requirements of appraisal processes, what they find meaningful and useful in support of their teaching practices, and whether teacher appraisal has much impact on improving student learning. If the ultimate aim is to improve student learning, what forms of appraisal are effective and, in light of the complexities involved in pursuing a comprehensive appraisal scheme, are the benefits sufficient? Hence, with this research, I have sought further insight into what works well in a range of independent schools and what organisational characteristics are likely to be
conducive to the successful implementation of sustainable and effective appraisal that supports professional learning for the benefit of student learning.

Stein & Nelson (2003) refer to the greater emphasis that has been placed on leadership that actively promotes a climate of teacher learning within the school and holds teachers responsible for integrating this learning into their professional practice. In referring to “holding teachers responsible”, they allude to the pressure on school principals to determine suitable means of ‘accountability’ on the part of teachers. Stein and Nelson (2003) argue that:

Professional development for teachers is not sufficient to change instructional practice, especially across an entire system. Teachers must believe that serious engagement in their own learning is part and parcel of what it means to be a professional and they must expect to be held accountable for continuously improving instructional practice. Similarly, principals must not only be capable of providing professional development for their teachers, but also have the knowledge, skills, and strength of character to hold teachers accountable for integrating what they have learned in professional development into their ongoing practice (p. 425).

Cole (2005, p. 2) supports the need to encourage and support ongoing teacher effectiveness through the development of a strong professional learning culture: “The reason for adopting a specific focus on improving the professional learning culture within schools stems from a belief that there are only a few levers
for bringing about improvements in students’ learning and that the most effective levers are those to do with the performance of teachers (i.e. teacher appraisal and teacher development)”.

The significance of teacher quality and performance, as well as school leadership, is evident also in The McKinsey report (2007), *How the World’s Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*, which identifies four key characteristics evident in each of the systems examined:

1. They recruit great people to teach and train them well, based on the view that “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers”
2. They create circumstances in which teachers constantly improve their skills as classroom practitioners, since “the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction”
3. They create a culture and set of processes to ensure that every child succeeds and to have good data available to enable this kind of personalised approach
4. They understand that great leadership at the school level is a key enabling factor

The role of the principal is paramount in deciding the most meaningful approach to teacher appraisal and feedback in any given school. School principals play a vital role in leading effectively and designing the system of teacher appraisal
and feedback in their school that will both encourage professional learning and hold teachers accountable for the application of this into their practice. School principals must lead decision-making about which assessment methods are the most viable for their school. In this role, as in their broader role, school leaders “are challenged to respond to the school’s inner life as well as the external context” (Harris et al. 2003, p. 10).

Appraisal schemes might be more acceptable to teachers if they were seen as a means of providing evidence for what teachers need to learn (individualised), in consideration of what they have learnt, determining the professional learning required, in a continual developmental cycle. The interface between professional learning and appraisal is of particular interest in this study in the context of understanding how appraisal practices can be aligned to teacher professional learning outcomes (Cole 2005, p. 3) and can contribute to encouraging teachers and holding them accountable for involvement in professional learning, with the aim of developing the most effective teaching practices (Cole 2012).

The question remains as to whether the reallocation of school resources (e.g. teacher and leader time, development and maintenance of a documented system and financial resources) is likely to provide a robust pathway for school improvement (Hallinger et al. 2014).
1.3. Research questions

This thesis aims to determine what independent school principals do, through methods of appraisal, to encourage teachers to undertake meaningful professional development and integrate this learning into their ongoing practice. It seeks to find out the personal professional experiences of these principals as they negotiate the planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools. It will explore what principals see as enhancers and detractors. The major research questions are:

- What are the principals’ purposes, experiences and perceptions as they negotiate the planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools?
- What do principals do through methods of appraisal to encourage teachers to undertake meaningful professional learning and integrate it into their ongoing practice, and how effective do principals perceive these to be?
- What do principals perceive as enhancers and detractors in the appraisal processes undertaken in their schools?

1.4. Delimitations

Within this thesis, various approaches to appraisal are reviewed and critiqued to provide clarity in arguments and conclusions presented. However, an outcome of this grounded theory study is enhanced understanding of how principals
negotiate the choice of methods to use and why/how they negotiate the complex intersection between accountability and development. The major focus is on what principals do to support the engagement of teachers in high quality professional learning for student achievement improvement. I will explore appraisal from the principals’ perspective in terms of their experience in the implementation of an appraisal system for teachers, detailing: the seriousness with which teachers are perceived to approach the process; the difficulties involved in teachers fulfilling the requirements of the process; the honesty and integrity of the process as a developmental one; and principals’ perceptions of the value of the process in terms of teaching and learning, in light of the allocation of school resources to support such a process.

This research does not aim to explore mechanisms by which teachers can be recognised and rewarded for their work (e.g. through ‘performance pay’), nor will it explore approaches to the management of underperforming teachers.

How leadership is played out in the individual schools involved in this research will be a critical part of the interpretation of principals’ perspectives and experiences in the context of pursuing continuous professional learning of teachers and establishing successful developmental appraisal in their schools. However, the aim of the analysis will not be to evaluate the quality of the leadership of the principals involved. In undertaking this research with known and respected peers, I have had some misgivings about critiquing their approaches in realising the difficulties involved in devising and managing appraisal and professional learning. I
am also conscious that, in this research process, I have been appraising my own approaches over time and that what I thought was essential years ago, is no longer so.

Similarly, the aim of the research will not be to analyse leadership styles and critique various theories of leadership. It will aim to shed light on what leaders do and how they do it (i.e. leader behaviour, practices and choices) to support and encourage teacher learning for growth and to hold teachers accountable for this learning.

1.5. Definition of terms

Appraisal

The terms *appraisal* and *evaluation* are both used in the research literature. A distinction could be drawn on the basis of the Oxford and Macquarie dictionaries, wherein *appraisal* is defined as connoting estimation and *evaluation* as ascertainment or judgment. *Evaluation* could then imply more exacting, objective criteria. *Assessment* could be more closely aligned to *appraisal*, but this is not definitive. In broader context, what is being aimed at is a determination of what will enhance ‘teacher effectiveness’ or the ‘effectiveness of teaching’. It is noted that the terms *appraisal* and *evaluation* are used interchangeably in some research literature in the context of processes whereby ‘effectiveness’ on the part of teachers can be determined. The results of an *appraisal* may be used formatively to identify needs for
professional learning to improve teaching practices, or summatively for decisions related to promotion or rewards.

Throughout the thesis, I will use the term appraisal, except for where researchers are quoted and use terms such as evaluation or assessment.

**Leadership**

In the context of this study, leadership is understood as “leadership for learning” (Hallinger 2003; Heck and Hallinger 2009; Mulford and Silins 2009), a term that has come to subsume features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and shared/distributed leadership. The model of leadership for learning is a synthesis of conceptualisations proposed by various researchers — inside and outside of education — over the past several decades. It provides a “wide angle lens” for viewing the contribution of leadership to school improvement and student learning (Hallinger 2010).

The conception highlights the fact that leadership is enacted within an organisational and environmental context. The school is part of an ‘open system’ that consists not only of its community, but also the institutional system and social culture in which it operates (Mulford and Silins 2009). Leadership is shaped by characteristics of the leaders themselves: personal values, beliefs, knowledge, and experience. These contextual features and personal attributes ‘moderate’ or shape the behaviour of school leaders as they work to improve their schools, including their beliefs and practices underpinning appraisal. Leadership does not directly impact on student
learning; rather its impact is mediated by school-level conditions and processes (Hallinger 2010).

*Performance Management*

In the Australian school context, this term is understood as a summative process undertaken to monitor ‘underperformance’ of teachers, sometimes referred to as ‘due process’. Such a process may lead to termination of a teacher’s contract if improvements in performance are not made. It is noted that, in the school context of the United Kingdom, the term performance management is used for what would be referred to in Australia as teacher appraisal or teacher performance appraisal. This thesis does not venture into teacher underperformance.

*Principal*

The principal is the recognised, formal, authoritative leader of a school and is responsible for a range of activities involving leadership, management and oversight of curriculum, pedagogy and pastoral care. In the day-to-day life of the school, the principal liaises with a range of individuals and groups within the school and wider community. The principal has authority concerning the conduct of all school personnel and the content and management of all activities and programs, and is responsible for the quality of programs and the learning outcomes for students. In the independent school context, the principal is responsible to a school board or council for carrying out the agreed policies and guiding the directions of the school. In the systemic context, e.g. the Catholic Education System, there is an
additional layer of accountability to a higher body. All principals are responsible for fulfilling compliance requirements to government bodies for school registration; for example, in the Victorian context, the VRQA (the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority) is responsible for this.

In some of the research included from the United States, the term administrator is used; in the context of the United Kingdom, head teacher is understood as an equivalent to principal.

Professional development and professional learning

Professional development has been described as the systematic and formal attempts to advance the knowledge, skills and understanding of teachers in ways that lead to changes in their thinking and classroom behaviour (Cole 2005; Fenstermacher et al. 1983). That is, the purpose of teacher professional development is to improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that student learning is improved.

In the context of this thesis, professional development is taken to mean the broad range of activities undertaken by teachers both within and beyond their schools, based on both an educational and a training paradigm. Those based on an educational paradigm have broad, long-range objectives that are hard to quantify in terms of specific behavioural outcomes. Those based on a training program seek to bring about specific, immediate and measurable/observable improvements in classroom behaviours (Cole 2004, p. 4).
Cole (2004) makes a distinction between professional development and professional learning. The former, possibly related to formal, external training that might limit teachers’ perception of learning possibilities, the latter capturing teacher learning that arises as part of personal reflection, professional interaction and external input. This distinction will be of significance in my consideration of the interface between professional development/learning and teacher appraisal, of meaningful development or learning supported by constructive, productive appraisal methods. The term professional learning possibly provides a better starting point for discussions about ways to improve teacher effectiveness. The emphasis on learning rather than development enables one to open up discussions as to how learning takes place. It broadens perceptions of the avenues available for learning, as professional learning embraces both learning acquired through professional development activities and activities designed to guide improved performance such as mentoring, coaching, formal appraisal and colleague feedback (Cole 2004, p. 6).

1.6. Significance of the study

Appraisal processes have been a source of much contention, particularly where accountability elements have been involved. Also, research is inconclusive on the impact of appraisal processes on student learning outcomes (Hallinger et al. 2014; Ovando & Ramirez 2007). It is hoped that this research will contribute to our understanding of how appraisal processes, if applied, and professional learning can provide a process of growth to new knowledge and expertise for teachers as well as a means of influencing student learning outcomes.
The need to take into account successful leadership in action, to develop a better understanding of what principals do to facilitate teacher learning and how, and their influence on instructional quality is well recognised as worthy of further exploration (Harris et al. 2003; Liebermann & Miller 2001; Ovando & Ramirez 2007; Robinson et al. 2008).

In the context of accountability for student achievement, principal instructional leadership and performance appraisal systems for teachers come to the fore. Ovando & Ramirez (2007), in referring to this context, highlight the need that has emerged for more specific research studies that could “illuminate the principal’s actions within teacher performance appraisal systems” (p. 86). Reasons include, for example, the growing complexity of the principalship caused by a lack of time to perform effective teacher appraisals; the effect of principals’ actions in appraisals; and the need for training regarding effective teacher appraisal techniques. As stated by Davis et al. (2002), “School-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can extend beyond its ritualistic traditions to improve teaching and learning” (p. 288).

Principals’ voices have, to a great extent, been absent from the discourse regarding the implementation of teacher appraisal systems (Honig 2006; Kraft & Gilmour 2015; Ovando & Ramirez 2007). Despite an abundance of research on principal leadership, few studies have conceptualised or empirically examined connections among principal leadership, professional learning and school
organisation conditions that may influence instructional quality (refer Blasé & Blasé 2001; Blasé & Kirby 2009), and the relationship between principal leadership and its effects upon teacher performance appraisal systems for improving the instructional program of the school (Youngs & King 2002).

Additionally, although educational researchers have recently investigated the political behaviours and activities behind change processes (e.g. Blasé 2005), to date there has been little research about these processes in Australian schools or the experiences and perceptions of school principals (Starr 2011, p. 647). The current research focuses on principals’ lived experiences as they manage and lead teacher appraisal processes in their schools, such processes representing major change. It is considered that this study has the potential to provide:

1. Insight into the lived experiences of principals as they negotiate the planning and implementation of appraisal processes. It will provide stories that will be of interest to other principals as they seek to influence the development of teachers for the benefit of student learning outcomes.

2. Further insight into specific leadership practices that support teacher growth within a school. Such information will assist in the leadership training of principals.

3. Further understanding of the value of types of processes of appraisal and the possible combinations of approaches that resonate with teachers and are seen to be beneficial in their effects on student learning.
4. Insight into how a staff can work together for change and improvement in their own learning and that of their students.

1.7. Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 — The Context of Educational Policy in Australia

In this chapter, a historical perspective on the determination and promotion of teacher effectiveness is provided with an overview of responses to this in the form of teacher appraisal. Approaches to promoting teacher effectiveness in Victoria, where this research took place, are included. The impact of globalisation on education and the changing educational and political landscape are considered. Numerous changes in education can be interpreted as a response to globalisation. A tension between a neoliberal emphasis on ‘market values’ and a neoconservative attachment to ‘traditional values’ is proposed, with recognition given to the increase in government control over schools through centralised curricula, national testing and standards, increased accountability, assessment and emphasis on teacher quality.

Chapter 3 — Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is varied, but relates predominantly to providing clarification and determining the direction of the inquiry undertaken. As the research will involve the application of grounded theory, the framework in the review is intended to serve the interpretation of the lived experiences and perceptions of principals in implementing appraisal schemes. Part of the reviewing
took place before commencement of this research, as a result of my interest in the
topic of teacher appraisal in the 1990s. This earlier reviewing provided a rationale for
the potential contribution of the current research, as outlined in the research
proposal submitted. This earlier reviewing also provided direction for the research.
Further reviewing of salient work and perspectives of key thinkers, has been
undertaken as key categories evolved throughout the research process. This
reviewing has formed part of the data in the analysis.

Part 1

This section of the literature review discusses the distinction between
formative and summative appraisal, giving consideration to the concept of ‘teachers
as professionals’. Specific methods of appraisal, and a selection of combinations of
appraisal processes, are outlined and discussed.

Part 2

Central conceptual and theoretical issues are clarified to provide a focus for
the research and inform interpretations of the experiences of the principals involved
in this research as they have negotiated the formulation and implementation of
appraisal processes in their schools. This recognises that appraisal processes cannot
be viewed in isolation of the school context. They must be grounded in an
understanding of appraisal as part of whole school improvement, and the impact of
leadership and management processes. Consideration also needs to be given to how
a learning community can be established with a climate and culture supportive of
professional growth, and the extent to which management of change plays a role in the introduction of an appraisal process. Research directly on principals’ experiences with appraisal is included.

Chapter 4 — Methodology and Research Design

As this study has sought to examine the lived experiences of the principal participants in the implementation of teacher appraisal, the research is considered to be both descriptive and exploratory. Hence, the qualitative paradigm has been considered relevant to this research. Specifically, a grounded theory approach was decided upon, recognising the relevance of this approach in education, as it has to do with the identification of research problems from professional practice. With the explicit aim of generating theory from data, no ‘up-front’ theory has been proposed and no hypotheses formulated for testing. Theory has been understood to evolve during the research process as a product of the interplay between data collection and analysis of that data. I have chosen to apply Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist approach, which places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources. I have sought to study how and why the principal participants in this study construct meanings and actions in their school situations. Constructivism fosters reflexivity on the part of the researcher to avoid bringing preconceived ideas into the work; I have been conscious of this matter, having been in a similar position to the principals involved, concerning the implementation of teacher appraisal. Interviewing through structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews has
been undertaken, as well as document analysis of the appraisal processes used in the schools.

Ethical and political considerations are dealt with in this chapter, in particular: the focus of the research; why and for whom the research was undertaken; how the data was collected; who was asked to participate; how participants’ confidentiality has been protected; and what feedback the school principals involved received.

SECTION 2: FINDINGS

Chapter 5 — Introduction to the findings

A prelude is provided to place the findings in perspective, recognising that phenomena discovered are interconnected. Four key themes or core categories have been drawn from the data. The distinctions are artificial but have been applied for the purposes of clarity in the thesis. Each of the ensuing chapters on findings concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 6 — Findings – Methods of Appraisal

This chapter provides a school by school summary of the appraisal methods and key details on training provided, provision of time, Standards referencing, and method of reporting. In the second part of the chapter, the methods and interview findings are discussed pertaining specifically to: self-reflection; goal setting; peer coaching, mentoring and feedback; classroom observation; student feedback; and indications
of influence on student learning outcomes. Details in this chapter provide a background for Chapters 7 to 9 on the core categories/ key themes.

Chapter 7 — Findings – Purposes of Appraisal

This chapter aims to elucidate what the principals in this research considered to be the purposes of having an appraisal scheme in their school. Subcategories involve: student learning outcomes; continuous learning and growth for teachers; aligning professional learning with the appraisal process; aligning personal professional learning with school goals; providing feedback to teachers; and satisfying state and national requirements.

Chapter 8 — Findings – Clarity of Purposes and Integrity of Processes

In this chapter I give voice to the principals’ experiences with how significant clarity of purpose is in the winning of trust of the teachers and the importance of providing processes that are seen to have integrity and take into account the teachers’ sense of professionalism and the demands of their teaching responsibilities. Subcategories on clarity of purpose include: mandated requirements; reference to the Standards; and clarity that the appraisal does not involve ‘performance management’ (refer to definition on p. 31). For validation of purposes, the subcategories include: the importance of involving staff in the planning process; and the need to take time to build trust, to have teachers learn the skills and to ensure their capacity to use the processes.
Chapter 9 — Findings – Community of Learners

This theme gained prominence during the research process, as it provided an overarching concept to draw together the intentions of the principals with their approaches to appraisal and professional learning. Key aspects involve: alignment with the school vision; the significance of the principal and senior staff demonstrating leadership in appraisal processes undertaken; the development of leaders amongst the staff; supporting continuous improvement; encouraging collaboration; and respecting and encouraging the professionalism of teachers.

Chapter 10 — Conclusions

In this chapter I first reiterate the aims of this research and reflect on the broader context involving research confirming a direct relationship between teacher quality and student learning, and the growing emphasis on teacher appraisal being seen as a link in the chain leading to desired student outcomes. I reflect also on the context of accountabilities in education with resultant pressure on principals to appraise their teachers to show proof of improvement in student performance in their schools. I contend that, in doing so, they have been caught up in common approaches to appraisal and have relied upon traditional approaches to leadership creating complications in “power relations”.

In drawing together the discussions in the preceding chapters and the themes that have emerged, I have used my terms of ‘enhancers/supports’ and ‘detractors/barriers’ to head the sections and reflect the third research question that
brings together the three research questions. The issue of evidence or lack of evidence of student learning outcomes is taken up as a key issue.

I consider what has been learnt from the research outcomes and draw together my conclusions from the research findings and the key literature. Consideration is given to how principals can best support the professional growth of their teachers and their impact and influence on the learning of their students.

In the final part of the chapter, I review the purpose and aims of the research to determine if these have been attained; I make recommendations for further research; and I present a personal reflection on the research process.
CHAPTER 2

The Context of Educational Policy in Australia

2.1. Introduction

Recapping from Chapter 1, this chapter begins with a historical perspective on the determination and promotion of teacher effectiveness to provide a broader context for how approaches to appraisal of teacher effectiveness have developed in Australia and, specifically, in Victoria— the focus of this study. The chapter broadens to a discussion on the impact of globalisation on the changing educational and political landscape with increased government control over schools, for example, through national testing, teaching standards and an emphasis on teacher quality.

2.2. Determination and promotion of teacher effectiveness — a historical perspective

Developments in teacher appraisal in Australia and Victoria, wherein current research has taken place, have been influenced by conceptions of teacher effectiveness and the determination of methods to gauge such effectiveness. Johnson (1997) makes the observation that — whether explicit or implicit, coherent or incoherent — most, if not all, “teacher evaluation policies are predicated on some working definition of effective teaching” (p. 70). However, there has been much disagreement over decades about what constitutes effective teaching and how it can be measured (Centra & Potter 1980; Covina & Iwanicki 1996, Darling-Hammond
Research into teacher effectiveness was stimulated in the early 1950s, when the American Educational Research Association formed a committee on Criteria of Teacher Effectiveness. This early research predominantly involves a search for attributes and methods to differentiate good and poor teachers (Ryans 1960; Coleman et al. 1966; Buck & Parsley 1973) and for teaching performance variables that correlated with student engagement in tasks (Rosenshine 1977) and student achievement (Centra & Potter 1980). Part of the focus of the research encompasses notions of the evaluation of teaching and teachers.

Darling-Hammond (1986), in referring to the “process-product” studies of teacher effectiveness, indicates the difficulty in identifying single teaching performance variables as essential for effective teaching. Only different patterns of teaching performance which contribute to learning could be identified, but these are considered not to be universally applicable to all grade levels, subject areas and teaching situations. Centra & Potter (1980) conclude that many teaching behaviours leading to increased achievement on standardised tests are opposite to those that increase complex cognitive, problem solving and creative abilities. Darling-Hammond (1986) reports that there are different variables again which encourage independence, curiosity and positive attitudes towards school, teacher and self. If different teaching behaviours lead to equally desirable divergent results, it would be appropriate to conclude that there is no way we can identify a single construct called
“effective teaching”. Darling-Hammond (1986) is of the opinion that the more complex and variable the educational environment is seen as being, the more one must rely on teacher judgment and insight to guide activities of the classroom. She questions the conversion of teacher effects research findings to rules for teacher behaviour and these then being used as a cornerstone of many “performance-based teacher evaluation models” (pp. 217-218).

Other research would indicate that dismissal of the process-product research would entail a rejection of some useful findings. Medley (1979) advises that the process-product research should concentrate on teacher competencies instead of teacher traits and the effects of these competencies on pupil learning is reinforced by Scriven (1986), who warns against the subjectivity in judging teacher traits.

Covino & Iwanicki (1996) indicate that, if the summaries of process-product correlational and experimental studies are combined, an excellent description of what an effective teacher does emerges: “the effective teacher concentrates on academics, presents lessons systematically, manages and allocates time to maximise time on task, monitors both whole class and individual instruction using good questioning techniques, homework checks and reviews” (pp. 328-329). However, recognising that concentrating on just what effective teachers do would be insufficient, they indicate that we must also examine the cognitive aspects of effective teaching in order to learn how effective teachers decide what to do in the first place.
Covino & Iwanicki (1996), in drawing together earlier models of teacher effectiveness, formulate a model based on the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and apply this model to their research comparing novice and experienced or expert teachers’ opinions on what they believe important to their own teaching effectiveness. Through two surveys, they identify constructs supported by the teacher effectiveness literature, which include: the importance of monitoring students’ understanding; adapting teaching to students’ learning styles; motivating students; using a variety of instructional materials and techniques; providing opportunities for problem solving; using appropriate information to assess students’ learning needs; and encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. The second survey results highlight teachers’ responsibility to analyse and seek to improve their own teaching as well as sharing teaching knowledge and skills with colleagues.

The content of this research is of particular interest in that it is based on teachers’ opinions on what they believe is important, providing a basis against which judgments of teacher performance may be able to be made. Further clarification was still needed, however, on which teaching behaviours would actually influence student achievement, and other measures of successful teaching.

Amongst earlier research, for example that of Johnson (1997), I note differing conceptions of teacher effectiveness across organisational roles, which further highlights the difficulties in attempting to find a tidy, compact and generalisable definition of teacher effectiveness. Categories of effective teaching
which surface in the descriptions are: 1) the teacher as a person; 2) the teaching process; and 3) the teaching product. Teachers are in greater agreement among themselves than principals as to what constitutes effective teaching, while principals are in greater agreement than board members (p. 76). It is important to note that there are also differences in emphases between roles — the school board placing more emphasis on product, and principals and teachers more emphasis on process. Johnson’s findings regarding opinions of school board members reflect a “reductionist view” of teaching with an emphasis on student achievement and teacher personal characteristics, which in the long run could prove detrimental to enhancing student learning and the professionalisation of teaching (p. 82). The tendency for board members to make more simplistic, causal assumptions regarding linkages between teachers’ processes and products, and the extent to which these can be manipulated, is noted (p. 84). Johnson (1997) points out: “… in terms of substantive content, the descriptions provided by those individuals working at the technical core of the school provide the point of departure for identifying the key components of effective teaching. Engaged on a daily basis with the task of teaching, it is these individuals who, as a result of their appreciation of the complexities and uncertainties of teaching, can provide evaluators with the thick, rich descriptions of the teaching and learning process” (p. 82).

Kyriakides et al. (2002), in an extensive research undertaking to generate criteria for measuring teacher effectiveness through self-evaluation, analyse two conceptual problems of teacher effectiveness in the research literature. These
involve the limited conceptions of teaching, and a disconnection from teachers’ professional development. Whilst recognising the importance of student academic outcomes in defining the quality of education, measuring student progress can be criticised as a one-sided quantitative approach for defining the characteristics of an effective teacher. They state:

The existing approaches result in a list of traits of the effective teacher which are mainly focused on his/her abilities in teaching students, without taking into consideration other important elements of the teacher’s behaviour and performance, which might contribute to students’ development and progress across many dimensions. Schools in the 21st century are expected to perform a wide range of functions to support the new rapidly occurring developments that are seen in individuals, local communities, societies and international relations. As a consequence, teachers are expected to adopt expanded roles and responsibilities such as curriculum developers, action researchers, team leaders and staff development facilitators. All these roles suggest that the traditional conception of teacher effectiveness focused exclusively or mainly on the teaching performance of individual teachers in the classrooms, has its limitations and cannot meet the needs of the school as a whole. There is a need to develop a multimodal conception of teacher effectiveness (Cheng & Tsui, 1999). It is therefore important to identify criteria and
characteristics of teacher effectiveness which are in line with the complex and multiple teacher roles in modernised systems (pp. 299-300).

Drawing on what is considered to be the ‘collective wisdom’ of teachers, and involving them in the formation and evaluation of their own school policy on effectiveness, and giving the teachers ownership of the development of the process (p. 302), Kyriakides et al. (2002) undertook a case study in one school and tested the results with a nationally representative sample of Cypriot teachers. The outcome provides criteria that help to provide an initial framework for developing a policy promoting teachers’ professional development which may contribute to the improvement of school effectiveness. The process with the teachers did result in increased awareness of the need for improvement. The eight clusters of 51 characteristics of the effective teacher provide a comprehensive overview of the breadth of teachers’ functioning.

Also of particular interest amongst the eight clusters of the 51 teacher-generated characteristics is the inclusion of Professionalism (including commitment to professional development in the teachers’ subject(s) and their pedagogy), Collective Responsibility (development of a collegial school climate through collaboration with colleagues and clients [parents]), and Responsiveness to Change (commitment to innovation, taking initiative and being creative; taking part in action research projects, thereby contributing to the implementation and evaluation of school-based curriculum initiatives), (pp. 306-309).
The recognition of teachers being the best judge of what good teaching is, and their opinions needing to be taken into account, is a belief that receives strong emphasis in the case for standards put by Ingvarson (1998). Ingvarson states that “the profession has the capacity to lay down its own long-term directions and goals for the professional development of its members (p. 1006) and that the development of teacher defined standards is central to the evolution of teaching as an accountable profession and schools as professional communities (p. 1027). Recognising the limitations in the usual lists of criteria in most managerial models for teacher appraisal and evaluation, Ingvarson stresses that we need to find professional forms of control and accountability. The heart of the Standards based model is finding evidence of growth in those areas of professional knowledge and skill that are critical to a school’s effectiveness. In his opinion, standards can enhance accountability within the profession by clarifying reasonable targets for professional development. Standards based on professional knowledge may protect teachers from arbitrary, inconsistent and invalid evaluations of their performance (p. 1028).

Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2004) caution against the absence of standards that adequately explicate the work of teaching — what it is that teachers can be expected to know and be able to do in specific domains of practice, which necessarily lead to “a weak technical core of teachers’ knowledge and skills”. They add that “it is now widely accepted that comprehensive, congruent, domain-specific standards provide the only credible basis for making useful judgements of teacher competence” (p. 32). Added to this it is noted that gathering multiple sources of evidence about
teacher practice meets the needs for accuracy and fairness of the evaluation process, taking into account the complexity of what a ‘good’ teacher should know and be able to do (Danielson 1996, 2007; Peterson 2000, cited by Isore 2009, p. 20).

OECD research (Isore, 2009) supports the need for a fair and reliable evaluation scheme to include criteria and standards to evaluate teachers relative to what is considered as ‘good’ teaching (p. 11). The concept of “good teaching” is distinguished from “successful teaching” by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005); the former focuses on the quality of opportunities provided for student learning in classrooms relative to teaching standards, the latter being a measure of pure performance, with consequent lack of reliability due to there being no certain relationship between teacher quality and students’ achievement on standardised tests, as raised by Ingvarson et al. (2007).

Having a broader conception of teacher effectiveness has been similarly reinforced by the research synthesis of Goe et al. (2008). This comprehensive synthesis resulted in the formulation of a five-point definition of effective teachers:

- Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures, or by alternative measures.
- Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to
the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behaviour

- Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; monitor student progress formatively, adapting instruction as needed; and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence
- Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness
- Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure (p. 8)

The intention is stated as focusing measurement efforts on multiple components of teacher effectiveness and providing a means of clarifying priorities for measuring teacher effectiveness (p. 8). Most measures of teacher effectiveness (in the context of the USA) focus on either student achievement gains attributed to the teacher or on classroom performance as measured with observation protocols (p. 9).

The first point above directly addresses student achievement gains on standardised tests; the other points focus on teachers’ contributions that may ultimately improve student learning, albeit indirectly. The lack of research on the latter components is noted (p. 9). Such findings do, however, recognise the broader
role of teachers and their professional responsibilities, reinforcing developments in creating standards for teachers.

The need to tie any system for teacher appraisal to a clear set of standards and competences is raised by Looney (2011). Recognising that there is no single, widely accepted definition of teacher quality, which is “perhaps a reflection of the complexity of teaching and learning” (p. 441), Looney draws together key research conclusions showing what effective teachers are like and what they put into practice.

In summary:

- They are intellectually able with verbal skills being particularly important
- They have good knowledge of the subject area(s) and competences they are teaching as well as a broad repertoire of teaching methods and strategies to meet diverse student needs
- They develop positive relationships with their students and recognise the crucial role of motivation and emotions in learning; they have an understanding of the students’ perspective, feelings, needs etc., showing care and setting challenging goals for learning
- They have strong classroom management skills, including clarity in presentation of ideas, well-structured lessons and appropriate pacing
- They are skilled assessors, using assessment ‘formatively’ to monitor students and provide specific, timely feedback. They use this to guide
students to improve performance and meet learning goals and they adapt teaching to better meet identified learning needs (p. 441)

Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) refer to the large body of evidence over many decades concerning how specific teaching practices influence student learning gains. They indicate that there is considerable evidence that effective teachers:

- Understand subject matter deeply and flexibly
- Connect what is to be learned to students’ prior knowledge and experience
- Create effective scaffolds and supports for learning
- Use instructional strategies that help students draw connections, apply what they are learning, practice new skills, and monitor their own learning
- Assess student learning continuously and adapt teaching to student needs
- Provide clear standards, constant feedback, and opportunities for revising work
- Develop and effectively manage a collaborative classroom in which all students have membership (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005)

Hattie (2012) provides further indicators of teacher effectiveness in capturing what “powerful, passionate and accomplished teachers do that can lead to
sustained improvement in student achievement” (i.e. the practices that are effective). Such teachers:

- Focus on students’ cognitive engagement with the content of what it is that is being taught
- Focus on developing a way of thinking and reasoning that emphasises problem-solving and teaching strategies relating to the content they want students to learn
- Focus on imparting new knowledge and understanding, and then monitor how students gain fluency and appreciation in this new knowledge
- Focus on providing feedback in an appropriate and timely manner to help students to attain the worthwhile goals of the lesson
- Seek feedback about their effect on the progress and proficiency of all of their students
- Have deep understanding about how we learn
- Focus on seeing learning through the eyes of the students, appreciating their fits and starts in learning and their often non-linear progressions to goals; these teachers support deliberate practice, providing feedback about errors or misdirections and caring that students achieve goals and share the teacher’s passion for the material being taught (p. 23)
Concerning the gauging of the impact of these seven key foci, Hattie (2012) emphasises that teachers gather defensible and dependable evidence from many sources, and hold collaborative discussions with colleagues and students about this evidence, thus making the effect of their teaching “visible to themselves and to others” (p. 23). Hattie (2012) emphasises that both teachers and school leaders need to be critical evaluators of the effect that they are having on their students (p. 5).

2.3. Developments in appraisal of teacher effectiveness in Australia

The process, over time, of trying to determine what “effective teaching” is, is reflected in developments in approaches concerning how teachers can be appraised. Lokan & McKenzie (1989) observe that informal appraisal and professional development planning have generally been part of the teaching profession in Australia. The debate becomes sharper with suggestions that teacher appraisal should be mandatory or that the outcomes should be used for personnel decisions.

Masters (2005) highlights a major shift in educational thinking that occurred in the 20th century, which had important effects on ideas about schools’ performance and accountability. The shift involved a change in focus, from what was being taught and how, to whether and how students were learning. This change has meant, according to Masters, the end of the days where teachers could take comfort in only having taught — or ‘covered’ — a syllabus or course of study. In the 21st century, he says, schools and teachers will know and take individual and collective responsibility for the extent to which students have learnt what has been taught. In Masters’ words:
It was an important shift to put student learning at the heart of the education process. From the point of view of accountability, it was no longer sufficient to know that teachers had taught the syllabus (input); the more important question was what progress students had made (output) (Masters 2005, p. 1).

Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2007) acknowledge that extreme caution is required in this field. They state:

Experience has shown, and research has demonstrated, measuring teacher and school effectiveness according to student achievement is not nearly as easy as it appears. Many variables affect what students learn, apart from teachers, and it is always the case that students’ learning results from the work of not one teacher but many. Sometimes the influence of one teacher may not be apparent for a number of years... and students learn from television, films, books, the Internet and their peers. The influence of home, family and the students’ own interests and abilities have all been shown to be significant factors in learning ... the fact remains, however, that improving student learning and achievement is the core business of schools. This calls for quality teaching (p. 15).

Whilst acknowledging that many things influence students’ learning, Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2007) reinforce that teachers and schools need to know
and to be accountable for what they contribute — what has been called ‘added value’ — to students’ learning:

Schools that can justly claim to have improved the learning of a majority of their students, independently of background and other variables, can claim to be ‘strongly performing’ schools. In such schools, teachers collectively and individually accept responsibility for what and how their students have learnt and are able to give an account — to be accountable — for that learning and how they have helped to bring it about ... such schools can legitimately lay claim to possessing a ‘professional learning and performance culture’ (p. 16).

In recent years, there has been much emphasis on investigating ways of combining professional learning with accountability in order to improve the performance of individuals and schools and to provide public guarantees that teachers are working effectively in accordance with both school goals and those of the education system (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007). However, Jensen & Reichl (2011), in the Grattan Report, cite statistics on teacher feedback on appraisal in their schools that indicate this is largely a bureaucratic exercise and not linked to teacher development or improved classroom teaching:

4 These statistics are drawn from the OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (2009) which sought feedback from lower secondary teachers.
63% of teachers report that appraisals of their work are done purely to meet administrative requirements; 91% say the best teachers do not receive the most recognition and reward; and 71% say that poor performing teachers in their school will not be dismissed. Instead, assessment and feedback are largely tick-a-box exercises not linked to better classroom teaching, teacher development or improved student results (p. 3); 61% report that appraisal of their work has little impact on the way they teach in the classroom (p. 7).

This presents a challenge for all schools (both government and independent), as they aim to improve student learning, to research and consider thoroughly what approaches to appraisal could be of benefit to their teachers.

2.3.1. Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

In the broader national context of Australia, a further significant development has been the creation of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the establishment of a nationally-shared understanding of what constitutes teacher quality. A key element of this reform agenda has been the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

In the preamble to the AITSL outline (February 2011) of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards), it is stated that “the Standards reflect and build on national and international evidence that a teacher’s effectiveness has a powerful impact on students (Hattie 2003) with broad consensus that teacher
quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement (OECD 2005). With reference to the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality (Council of Australian Governments, 2011) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2011), it is stated that “improving teacher quality is considered an essential reform as part of Australia’s efforts to improve student attainment and ensure it has a world class system of education ... developing professional standards for teachers that can guide professional learning, practice and engagement facilitates the improvement of teacher quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession”.

It is stated that “the Standards and their descriptors represent an analysis of effective, contemporary practice by teachers throughout Australia”. Their development included a synthesis of the descriptions of teachers’ knowledge, practice and professional engagement used by teacher accreditation and registration authorities, employers and professional associations. Each descriptor has been informed by teachers’ understanding of what is required at different stages of their careers. It is indicated that “an extensive validation process involving almost 6,000 teachers ensured that each descriptor was shaped by the profession” (p. 1). However, despite such “consultation”, the process of development of the Standards has very much been government driven.

In the explanation of the purpose of the Standards, indication is given of the Standards contributing to the “professionalization” of teaching and raising the status
of the profession. It is also indicated that they could be used as the basis for a professional accountability model (Yinger and Hendricks-Lee 2011), helping to ensure that teachers can demonstrate appropriate levels of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. Organised into four career stages, Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead, the Standards are intended to guide the preparation, support and development of teachers (p. 2).

Reported by the OECD (2013), the Standards are described as being integral to ensuring quality learning and teaching in Australian schools. They provide consistent benchmarks to help teacher assess performance, identify further professional learning opportunities, and offer a way of identifying and recognising teachers who excel against the National Standards. The Standards are said to enable more fluid and flexible movement of teachers across the country and serve as a quality-assurance mechanism to ensure that Australian teachers and school leaders have the required competencies to be effective educators.

The OECD report (2013) draws together the link between such standards and teacher appraisal. Recognising that teacher appraisal systems are “still a work-in-progress in most countries”, it is stated:

Developing teacher-appraisal systems may be costly and challenging to implement, but it is critical to reconcile the demands for educational quality, the enhancement of teaching practices through professional development, and the recognition of teacher knowledge, skills and competencies. The
expectation is that engaging in reflective practice, studying his or her own teaching methods, and sharing experience with peers in schools become a routine part of a teacher’s professional life. Research highlights the importance of systematic approaches to teacher appraisal that support continuous learning for individual teachers throughout a career and for the profession as a whole. Such appraisal needs to be based on shared understanding of good teaching and be part of well-aligned procedures for teacher preparation, registration or certification, induction and mentoring, support structures and professional learning opportunities (p. 11).

Although it could be considered that the Standards provide consistent terminology upon which teacher appraisal can operate, and a platform from which a school learning community can operate (Partridge & Debowski 2007), a more definitive indication of the potential benefits of the Standards is needed. In January 2013 a longitudinal evaluation of the Standards was contracted to the University of Melbourne (Centre for Program Evaluation). The purpose of the evaluation has been to determine the usefulness, effectiveness of implementation and impact of the Standards.

Jensen & Reichl in The Grattan Report (2011, p. 37) on teacher appraisal, although acknowledging the value of the Standards in creating a common language and understanding of effective teaching, caution that the Standards are not a “tool”

\[\text{Refer } \text{http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.ed.au/Evaluation} \] The evaluation findings to date demonstrate varying levels of implementation across the stakeholder groups as well as differing levels of readiness to implement, findings considered to be expected given the early phase of the Standards reform (p. 1).
for appraising teachers. While it is expected that the Standards will be linked to performance management processes in schools (AITSL 2011), it is unclear how they will be used for appraisal purposes.

### 2.3.2. The Australian Performance and Development Framework

The emphasis on “quality assurance” has continued with the release in August 2012 of the Framework, the work of AITSL, combined with key education stakeholders. It outlines the critical factors for creating a performance and development culture in schools, characterised by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes. “The Framework aims to promote genuine professional conversations that improve teaching and minimise the risk that administrative and bureaucratic requirements will become the focus” (Reference is made to the OECD (2009) survey, referred to on p. 46, indicating that 63% of Australian teachers report that appraisal of their work is largely done to fulfil administrative requirements). Significantly, it is pointed out that “there is strong evidence that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance (p. 2).

The Framework links the work on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, indicating that to focus on improving teaching, it is necessary to have a clear vision of what effective teaching looks like. The Standards provide this vision with the elements of effective teaching organised around the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. They provide the
basis and a common language for coming to a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like in a particular school at a particular time (p. 3). The Framework focuses on the factors that need to be in place for a performance and development culture to flourish: focus on student outcomes; clear understanding of effective teaching; leadership; flexibility; and coherence. These factors are intended to be focused on in a Performance and Development Cycle involving: reflection and goal setting; professional practice and learning; and feedback and review (p. 5). The Cycle is intended to provide a structure for appraising, developing and refining teaching practice, and “recognises the entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support” (p. 5). Essential elements for schools are expressed as:

- All teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high quality professional learning
- Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance, including through full review, should come from multiple sources and include as a minimum: data showing impact on student outcomes; information based on direct observation of teaching; and evidence of collaboration with colleagues
- All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher (pp. 6-7)
It is stated that schools with an effective approach to teacher performance and development have a commitment to ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching built into their culture. Timely, frequent and improvement focused feedback supports teachers’ efforts to improve their practice, guides choices about professional learning, and informs reflection on and revision of performance and development goals (p. 7).

Despite the government policy directions, ultimately follow-through with desired directions has depended on local capacity, context and will (Kimball & Milanowski 2009). Implementation of the Performance and Development Framework has not been straightforward as schools have tried to get the balance right between developing teachers or evaluating them. Dinham (2013) makes the observation that many measures advocated and poorly implemented in the quest to improve teaching and learning were seen to be “done to teachers and without their involvement” reducing potential positive outcomes (p. 94). Implementation highlights the significance of time for thorough planning and training in the processes.

Following debate over the 2014-2015 performance cycle in Victoria, Elliott (2015) highlights what was seen by teachers as an over-emphasis on ratings and rankings, and there being a need to focus the Performance and Development Framework more on developing teachers and less on evaluating them (p. 110).
2.3.3. The Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (the Charter)

Released in August 2012 by AITSL, and reported as being premised on a strong body of research evidence that emphasises the importance of professional learning in changing teacher and school leader behaviour in order to improve student outcomes, the Charter provides clear messages about the types of professional learning that are most likely to lead to sustainable change (p. 2).

The Charter defines professional learning as “the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice, and a school’s collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing. At its most effective, professional learning develops individual and collective capacity across the teaching profession to address current and future challenges” (p. 2). The Charter articulates the expectation that all teachers and school leaders actively engage in professional learning throughout their careers.

A significant part of the Charter involves a clear message about a “strong professional learning culture” that it will include a “commitment to evaluating professional learning”. Engaging in professional learning is expressed as needing to be “matched by an understanding of which types of professional learning are most likely to be effective in improving pedagogical practice and student outcomes”. Referring to OECD research with teachers from around the world (2011), the Charter indicates that observation, practising new approaches and feedback are more
effective methods than discussion, lectures and field trips to other schools. High quality professional learning is reported as being most effective when it is relevant, collaborative and future focused, and when it supports teachers to reflect on, question and consciously improve their practice (p. 4).

It is acknowledged in the Charter that “the professional learning undertaken will vary to suit the context and priorities of teachers, leaders, schools, systems and sectors, but the imperative to engage actively in high quality professional learning remains the same. The Charter unequivocally defines effective professional learning as “a shared responsibility that must be taken up at all levels of the education system — by teachers, school leaders, system leaders and policy makers” (p. 6).

The issue for each school is to develop an approach for teacher learning and accountability that can arise from their cultural context and not be perceived as an imposed approach with government minimum requirements.

2.4. Developments in appraisal of teacher effectiveness in Victoria

In the Victorian context, it is of interest to note developments over time in the appraisal of teacher effectiveness. In reviewing performance management systems in place by 2003, the Boston Consulting Group (2003, p. 24) found that although many of the right components were considered to be in place, in practice the systems did not work successfully in most schools. The processes were seen to be “cumbersome and low value”, and many teachers did not see them as constructive. It is stated that, “very strong teachers tend to characterise the process
as a waste of time, while less strong teachers may question the school leader’s ability to provide them with effective feedback”.

Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2007, p. 18) report that most teachers and school administrators did not believe that processes were making any significant contributions to teachers’ professional learning, or that the processes provided more than basic guarantees of competency. “The main emphasis appeared to be on setting up reasonably efficient systems and on making the contact between reviewee and reviewer as easy, ‘comfortable’ and ‘unthreatening’ as possible, within the limits of meeting the education system’s expectations for compliance” (p. 18). They note an emphasis more on “compliance” than on “encouragement of commitment” and a failure to “understand what teachers know and do” (p. 19).

2.4.1. Establishment of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and the Professional Learning Framework for Victorian Teachers

Preceding formulation and publication of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the VIT worked with the teaching profession in Victoria to articulate, through standards, the professional knowledge and practice of teachers. The standards were claimed to provide a common professional language for teachers and to assist them to reflect on their teaching and learning to build and maintain practice. Within the three domains of professional knowledge, practice and engagement are eight standards denoting teacher professional practice, which focus on teacher effectiveness in approaches to promote student learning and the responsibility of teachers to improve their knowledge and practice. The significant
role of the teacher in student learning (Hattie 2003; Hattie 2005) is focused upon. Placing standards of professional practice within a broader framework of professional learning allows the expectation of continuing professional learning by teachers throughout their careers to be acknowledged and supported (Cosgrove 2007, p. 3).

The establishment of the VIT is described by Cosgrove (2007) as “a move to acknowledge the professionalism of teachers across all school sectors, through the process of registration, and to regulate for consistent standards within the profession ... all teachers registering in Victoria are required to meet standards in terms of qualifications, English language and fitness to teach” (p. 1).

The Professional Learning Framework outlines the regulatory processes that teachers are required to undertake, how these develop professional practice and the support that teachers will be given to meet and maintain the standards of professional practice. Within the Framework there are three points at which standards apply to registered teachers:

- On graduation from approved pre-service training courses
- When applying for full registration
- When renewing registration every five years

The Framework ensures that continuing professional learning is embedded in the practice of teachers from the beginning of their careers. Central to the Framework is the notion that teachers constantly reflect on their teaching, using
professional standards to consider student learning and to identify strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and practice. Through the processes for renewal of registration, it has been intended that teachers would have the means to evaluate professional learning undertaken within the framework of the standards and in the context of their teaching practice, considered by Cosgrove & Mildren (2007) as “acknowledging teachers as professionals with responsibility for their own learning” (p. 5).

The challenge for the Institute over recent years has been to move beyond a general acceptance by the profession of the principles of continuing professional learning, which are enshrined in the professional learning framework for Victorian teachers, to ensuring that these are embedded as integral aspects of teacher practice. Clarity of the rationale behind processes required by the Institute, and the support provided for teachers to meet and maintain the standards, were noted by Cosgrove (2007, p. 13) as key to improving teachers’ practice in a consistent and comprehensive manner.

The establishment of the VIT and its procedures for the registration of teachers has not been without some contention. In 2005, it was mandated that teachers had to produce evidence that they had engaged in ongoing professional learning. Cullen (2005), reflects on the change from an original positive response from teachers concerning the development of the notion of ‘best practice’ and improvements in the public perception of the teaching profession to one of dissatisfaction with the VIT as their representative body. He comments that teachers
have willingly undertaken professional learning throughout their careers (e.g. upgrading qualifications at their own expense, and attending in-service courses), a core understanding of being a professional. Cullen (2005) raises the potential of the VIT being viewed as “little more than another bureaucratic organisation engaged in adding to their demanding workload”, and claims that what teachers were not seeing is “the link between demands for evidence-based practices” and, what he sees as “the broader neoconservative influences on education” (p. 45).

With the introduction of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, teachers’ professional learning is now referenced against these Standards.

2.4.2. The Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

Established under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the VRQA commenced operation in July 2007. Amongst its various functions, it is responsible for the registration of both government and non-government schools, the setting of minimum standards for their operation and monitoring the compliance to these standards, the provision of public information on providers and their compliance with minimum standards. All schools are reviewed at least once every five years. The minimum standards for registration include the areas of curriculum and student learning (curriculum framework, student learning outcomes, and monitoring and reporting on students’ performance), areas that involve the responsibility of principals for the maintenance of suitable standards for the functioning of the teachers employed in the school.
2.5. The impact of globalisation on educational policy in Australia

Recent educational policies and programs have brought teacher appraisal to the fore in efforts to improve teacher quality and raise student learning outcomes.

Within the contemporary period, numerous changes in education can be interpreted as a response to processes of globalisation. The Levin Institute (2015) defines globalisation as “a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical wellbeing in societies around the world”. Such global forces need to be taken into account, together with local influences, to understand the restructuring of education that has occurred.

Cullen (2005, p. 41) adds to this complexity the need to understand the emergence of two contradictory ideological stances, neoliberalism⁶ and neoconservatism⁷. Apple (2006, p. vii) similarly raises a tension between a neoliberal emphasis on ‘market values’ on the one hand and a neoconservative attachment to ‘traditional values’ on the other, in seeking to understand what he refers to as

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⁷ Defined as a political philosophy developed in the 1970s and 1980s, advocating the active use of government power in pursuit of conservative domestic and foreign policies — American Heritage Dictionary.
‘conservative modernisation’, perceived as being in the driver’s seat in terms of educational policy and practice.

Smyth et al. (2000) make the observation that within the dramatically changed circumstances of globalisation, “schools are being required to act as if they were private businesses driven by the quest for efficiency, pursuing concrete specified outcomes, and operating in a supposed atmosphere of marketization and competition with each other for resources, students, reputation and public support for their continued existence” (p. 1). This observation is similar to that of Ball (2012), in the higher education context, where he uses the term “performativity” to capture what he refers to a “moral system that subverts and re-orientates us to its ends”, making us responsible for our “performance” and for the performance of others. He refers to two technologies at play turning us into “governable subjects — a technology of agency, and a technology of performance” (Davies & Peterson 2005, p. 93, cited by Ball 2012, p. 19). Ball elaborates on this, indicating that “performativity” is:

... a powerful and insidious policy technology that is now at work at all levels and in all kinds of education and public service, a technology that links effort, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output. Within the rigours and disciplines of performativity we are required to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do rather than doing it (Ball, 2001, 2003, cited by Ball, 2012, p. 19).
Observing the ascendancy of a hegemonic alliance between the combined forces of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, Apple (2006, p. ix) presents an argument that the social democratic goal of expanding equality of opportunity has lost much of its political potency and that ‘panic’ over falling standards, illiteracy and the destruction of traditional values has had a major effect leading to questioning of teachers and increasing support of marketisation and tighter controls through centralised curricula and national testing. He notes a shift in the debate on education to the terrain of traditionalism, standardisation, productivity, marketisation and economic needs.

The observations of Rowe (2003) are similar in his highlighting of increasing policy activity related to issues of accountability, assessment, monitoring, performance indicators, quality assurance and school effectiveness in Australia and the extent to which economic and industrial issues surrounding school effectiveness and teacher quality became sensitive ones in the latter stage of the 20th century and early 21st. This is seen as partly resulting from the level of consensus regarding the importance of school education as an essential element in both micro and macro-economic reform and in meeting the constantly changing demands of the modern workplace (refer to earlier analyses, e.g. OECD 1993).

A significant part of the debate is that of standards; critical in this debate is who should determine them, where they come from, how they are to be used and what counts as meeting them. Apple (2006) warns about the potential fallacy of believing that having standards and testing them rigorously will lead to higher
achievement. Cullen (2005, pp. 41-42) emphasises the economic benefits of education and the need for the international competitiveness of Australia on the one hand, and neoconservative forces leading to national testing programs and national curriculum on the other — an orientation towards an interventionist and regulatory state. Potential consequences of this in Australian education are noted in comparative rankings and increased scrutiny of teachers’ work in terms of processes and outcomes.

The OECD report (2009), *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments*, provides results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the first internationally comparative perspective on the conditions of teaching and learning. In the Foreword to the report the aim of “helping countries review and develop policies to make the teaching profession more attractive and more effective” is stated and recognition is given of continuing intensification of the challenges facing education systems and teachers, as the demand for high-level skills continues to grow substantially in knowledge-based economies, requiring many countries “to transform traditional models of schooling, which have been effective at distinguishing those who are more academically talented from those who are less so, into customised learning systems that identify and develop the talents of all students”. It is stated that “this will require the creation of “knowledge-rich”, evidence-based education systems, in which school leaders and teachers act as a professional community with the authority to act, the necessary information to do so
wisely, and the access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change”.

The Australian government’s response to international competitiveness and comparisons is reflected in the establishment of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) under an act of federal parliament in 2008, an independent statutory authority responsible for the overall management and development of a national curriculum, the National Assessment Program (NAP) and a national data collection and reporting program. ACARA’s work sits around the three pillars of curriculum, assessment and reporting for school education between Foundation (the year prior to Year 1) and Year 12. ACARA took on responsibility for developing Australia’s first national curriculum, implementing key assessment programs, and national reporting on school performance.

[www.nap.edu.au/about/about-acara.html]

Within ACARA’s published information 2012, it is stated: “Improving the educational performance of Australia’s children and young people is critical for the nation’s future social and economic prosperity. A quality education gives students the skills they need to participate as productive, creative and responsible members of society”. Within the expressed rationale for having access to assessment data is the monitoring of gains in student performance and supporting improvement. Significantly, the My School website was established to provide nationally comparable data on schools “to assist parents, schools, governments and the wider community to better understand the performance of students in schools” —
including data on educational outcomes (including the results of national literacy and numeracy testing).

Australia is also amongst a number of OECD countries that implement large-scale national examinations (in Australia, the National Assessment Program [NAP] in literacy and numeracy; sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, information and communication technology literacy; and participation in international assessments). The aim of participation in the latter assessments is indicated as “measuring progress towards the agreed outcome for schooling that: Australian students excel by international standards” (ACARA 2012)8.

The influence of the OECD and international testing regimes is captured by Meyer (Teachers College Record 2014), in his claim that the rise of OECD and PISA illustrate the emergence of a new power in educational policy and arguably signify a new era in public education. Meyer (2014) states:

Although the OECD is an organisation whose mission is to further the growth of market economies, it is fast becoming a powerful global educational authority rivalling and sometimes outdoing in influence the various national governments in whose domain it operates (Breakspear, 2012; Ertl, 2006; Martens & Jakobi, 2010; Martens & Niemann, 2010) … the new accountability regime pivoting on OECD and PISA represents a shift in the balance of power

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8 Australia currently participates in four international student assessments: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS); Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS).
and control of public education — from democratically constituted national
governments to an international policy organisation that seems to many
beyond the reach of democratic control (p. 1).

Meyer et al. (2014) highlight the financial resources and political clout of
OECD in claiming such potential to shape the “accountability” agenda in ways that
rival and even overshadow the influence of national policy makers.

The Australian government’s response to the international testing regime is
evident in the introduction to the ‘Australian Teacher Performance and Development
Framework’ (referred to in section 2.2.2), where acknowledgment is given that
Australia has a high performing education system that fares well on international
comparisons, achieved “in large part through the efforts of highly skilled and
motivated teachers and school leaders over generations”. Significantly, the
introduction continues, “however, the rest of the world is not standing still …
Australia aspires not to be among the best in the world, but to be the best”.

The data from international tests are generally not used to evaluate
individual teacher performance, but rather for school-level accountability and to
identify areas for school improvement. Certainly, trends in the results can influence
expectations on teachers concerning the effect of their teaching, resulting in an
indirect impact on appraisal processes chosen (Looney, 2011, p. 447). One needs to
consider whether such external assessments may lead to a narrowing of curriculum,
particularly in high-stakes environments (e.g. with publication of assessment results [Koretz 2005; Popham 2002, cited by Looney 2011, p. 447]).

Jensen & Reichl (2011) in The Grattan Report, Better Teacher Appraisal and Feedback: Improving Performance, reinforce the current stance on competitiveness:

Australia is lagging in vital areas of school education. On the latest figures, student performance has stagnated in mathematics and fallen sharply in reading. Nearly a third of Year 9 students have only basic writing skills ... all studies show that more effective teachers are the key to producing higher performing students ... but at present Australia’s systems of teacher appraisal and feedback are broken, and students are suffering as a result. It is time for change (p. 3).

Principals are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the best possible student learning outcomes; as they create favourable conditions that promote teacher learning and create structures to enhance teaching and learning, the topic of appraisal of teacher effectiveness comes to the fore. Similarities in pressure to appraise teachers to improve student outcomes, and associated difficulties in justifying methods, is noted in developments in appraisal in the United States (Hallinger et al. 2014; Ovando & Ramirez 2007) and the United Kingdom (Forrester 2011; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson 2004; Moreland 2012).
However, the choice of how a principal ensures and encourages the best possible teacher performance and student academic performance must rest with the principal in his or her own school community. Awareness of international directions and sensitivity to macro-political forces are essential, but functioning within the micro-politics of a school — the staff, their interrelationships, the culture (Halverson, Kelley, Kimball 2004) — is the challenge for any principal to work through.

The importance of professional learning for the benefit of student learning is well recognised in the independent school sector. Accountability for such learning as part of teacher registration is considered to be part of the professionalism of teachers. Similarly, the development of well-structured National Standards to guide professional growth and the solid research base of the Australian Performance and Development Framework would be considered to be valued in the independent sector. These provide a resource to guide developments in this school sector, as schools seek improvement and recognise the part teacher quality plays in this. At the same time, it is understood that — as independent schools — each will determine the most beneficial and suitable approach to the development and appraisal of its teaching staff. This stance is acknowledged in the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders with the statement: “the professional learning undertaken will vary to suit the context and priorities of teachers, leaders, schools, systems and sectors”. Additionally, Jensen & Reichl in The Grattan Report (2011) state: “schools should have the responsibility and autonomy
to appraise and provide feedback to their own teachers ... principals and teachers must lead it (p. 3)”.

The task for schools in the independent sector in Australia, and specifically in this research, in Victoria, is to determine the balance between directives given to the government system concerning approaches to teacher appraisal, and their scope as independent schools to tailor a process that suits the needs of their particular school environment. Despite the ‘top down’ approach of the government and pressure to prove and improve across all schools and school systems, independent schools have their own accountabilities to their school communities and are well aware of the competitive arena in which they function, the need to maintain enrolments and to provide evidence of the highest possible student learning outcomes.

The aim of this thesis is to capture the realities ‘on the ground’ for a group of independent school principals seeking to promote quality teaching in their schools for the best possible student learning outcomes, and the role that teacher appraisal plays in this.
CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

The imperative of teacher appraisal has spanned three decades as conceptions of teacher effectiveness have been researched and schools and school systems have sought to devise ways to determine the extent to which teaching practices are effective and positively impacting student achievement. This thesis considers the development and analysis of processes of teacher appraisal over these three decades, exploring and critiquing the salient work and perspectives of key thinkers and researchers in the field. Examples are drawn predominantly from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand. As it has been considered of value not to lose sight of earlier relevant findings, I have included a selection of research findings from the 1990s, with an emphasis on research from 2000 onwards.

In Part 1, I provide a review of major approaches to teacher appraisal to inform analysis of the finding on methods that the principals involved in this research have chosen. Consideration of the purposes of teacher appraisal is discussed in choices involved in undertaking either summative or formative methods.

In Part 2, I place appraisal processes in the context of the broader functioning of a school. If one is to conceptualise appraisal as a positive catalyst for teachers’ professional growth and change, the formation of the methods and
outcomes must be grounded in an understanding of the role of appraisal in: whole
school improvement; leadership and management processes; the establishing of a
learning community with a climate and culture supportive of professional growth;
and change processes. These concepts are reviewed to add depth to the analysis of
the findings. This part concludes with details on research with principals on their
experiences with and perceptions of teacher appraisal processes.
PART 1 PURPOSE AND METHODS OF APPRAISAL

3.1. A consideration of what appraisal aims to do — the distinction between formative and summative appraisal

A fundamental element in the appraisal literature on the choice of approaches is the distinction drawn between summative and formative appraisal. Clarity concerning this distinction is essential in ensuring that teachers undergoing appraisal understand and are confident in the purpose and aims of the procedures undertaken in their schools.

Teacher appraisal has two major purposes: on the one hand, it is aimed at ensuring that teachers perform at their best to enhance student learning, an “accountability” approach; on the other hand, it seeks to improve the teacher’s own practice by identifying strengths and weaknesses for further professional development (Papay 2012; Stronge 2006; Zepeda 2013). These two approaches refer to “assessments” of a different nature, respectively, summative and formative (Isore 2009, p. 6).

These two broad purposes suggest that summative appraisal and professional growth are essential for student achievement and overall school improvement. However, it is also reported that, given the critical attributes of these two types of appraisal, each aims at different outcomes. The incompatibility of approaches connected with summative appraisal and those concerned with professional growth is well supported in the research literature since the early stages
of development of approaches to teacher appraisal (Williams and Mullen 1990; Tomlinson 1992; Taylor and O’Driscoll 1995; Hutchinson 1997; Wilson and Wood 1996; Danielson & McGreal 2000). Danielson & McGreal (2000, p. 8) distinguish summative approaches as having “the purpose of making consequential decisions” (i.e. for “quality assurance”) and formative approaches as being “for the purpose of enhancing the professional skills of teachers” (i.e. for “professional development”).

A further perspective is that of Tucker & Desander (2006) who affirm that “most legal references on personnel evaluation use formative practices to indicate the developmental process of collecting and sharing information on the teacher’s performance and summative to indicate the final synthesis of the documentary material for the personnel file” (p. 71).

3.1.1. Summative appraisal

Hutchinson (1997, p.79) describes the summative approach as one which is directed towards extending and maintaining “managerialist control and accountability”. Since the individual is essentially regarded as functionary, it is concerned with identifying and remedying individual deficiencies in performance. Training is based on a deficit model of performance and is directed towards equipping staff with the skills needed to complete the prescribed tasks. However, it is stated by Isore (2009):

Assuming that the quality of teachers and the quality of teaching matter, an evaluation process should ideally be directed towards both educational efficiency — ensuring that teaching meets the academic standards for
students to live in knowledge societies — and educational equity — ensuring that attainment opportunities are accessible to all students regardless of their background. Thus, summative evaluation of teaching is a way to assess that teachers are adopting the actions and ‘best’ practices which improve student outcomes (p. 10).

Within the context of summative appraisal, the formulation of a process for personnel decisions, i.e. the “making of consequential decisions concerning the teacher being evaluated” could occur in the opinion of Isore (2009, p. 7). In presenting this argument, Isore (2009) cites Avalos & Assael (2006), who indicate that “most forms of evaluation are justified either because diagnostic information is needed or because they provide evidence for decision-making”. Isore (2009) considers that evaluating teachers in relation to specific criteria makes comparisons possible, the latter being useful for hiring and tenure decisions, promotion opportunities or — under particular conditions — responses to ineffective teachers. Summative evaluation of teacher performance can also be used as a basis for recognition and celebration of a teacher’s work. The US National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is cited in this regard with professional standards set for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do as a basis for a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards. Since its creation in 1987, more than 64,000 American teachers have been celebrated for their outstanding performance (Isore 2009, p. 7).
Important clarification is provided by Smith (2005) that “evaluation is only conclusions drawn in comparison with standards and criteria, and that responsibility lies with evaluators concerning thoroughness and transparency:

The quality of conclusions drawn, the quality of the evaluation carried out, depends on the number, quality and authenticity of performances and documentation collected in the assessment process. Our responsibility as evaluators of teaching is therefore to make sure we base all decisions about teachers and their careers on as much and as authentic evidence of teaching performances as we can possibly collect. How we go about doing this, for summative evaluation purposes, needs to be transparent to all stakeholders, and foremost to teachers themselves (p. 111).

3.1.2. Formative appraisal

In contrast to the summative approach, formative appraisal aims to encourage, rather than check on and compare. Formative appraisal refers to a qualitative appraisal on the teacher’s current practice, aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing adequate professional learning opportunities for the areas in need of improvement. The performance improvement purpose relates to the personal growth dimension and involves helping teachers learn about, reflect on, and improve their practice. This improvement function generally is considered formative in nature and suggests the need for continuous professional growth and development, to increase the capacity of teachers rather than simply assigning merit
to their performance (Danielson 2012; Looney 2011; Marzano 2012; Stronge & Tucker 2003; Young et al. 2015).

It could be considered that teachers value the freedom to examine their own practice and that effective appraisal processes can support the natural drive for teachers to increase their competence (Graham 1995). Further, Danielson & McGreal (2000) state that, “as teachers consider the wording of different components of teaching and their elements and compare their impressions and practices with one another, they trade techniques and learn new strategies from their colleagues. These conversations are rich — focused on the quality of teaching and contributing much to the professional learning of those participating” (p. 27). Such an approach emphasises a shared commitment to improvement: the individual shares with others ultimate responsibility and, hence, accountability for the improvement of practice (Hutchinson 1997), and teachers can set their own agenda (Ingvarson 1998).

3.1.3. Could summative and formative approaches be brought together?

Arguments raised in response to this question predominantly involve the issues of the purpose of the teacher appraisal undertaken and the instruments or processes used. Some researchers indicate a potential reciprocal and complementary relationship with ongoing assessment providing the basis for summative evaluation, and summative evaluation informing the professional learning opportunities needed to assist with formative development (Zepeda 2006). Smith (2005) suggests that formative aspects of assessment of teaching, collecting and presenting information
essential for enhancing professional growth, are “the core of evaluation of teaching” and precede any type of summative evaluation:

Teachers, who are supported and empowered when engaging in ongoing self-assessment, self-criticism, and continuous learning — on-job as well as off-job — are teachers who more confidently face the many challenges inherent in the complex task of teaching. The stronger the formative functions of teacher evaluation, the better the chances are that summative teacher evaluation meets required standards (p. 111).

However, tension between formative and summative approaches has been evident from the early stages of research on appraisal. For example, Glickman et al. (1998) concluded that “unless the procedure for direct assistance (supervision and professional growth) are made clearly distinct and separate from evaluation (formal contract and renewal and judgment of competence), one can talk until one is blue in the face about supervision as helping a formative process, but teachers will not believe in it” (p. 216). Ovando (2007) similarly explains that, if the evaluator is performing dual functions — formative evaluation and summative evaluation — this may create conflicts in the development of effective teaching through collaboration, staff development and training (p. 89).

The OECD report (2013), Teachers for the 21st Century, highlights teachers’ potential response to the purpose of appraisal. Indication is given that combining the
improvement and accountability functions into a single teacher-appraisal process is not straightforward:

When the appraisal is oriented towards improving teaching practices, teachers are usually prepared to reveal their weaknesses, in the expectation that conveying that information will lead to more effective decisions on developmental needs and training. However, when teachers are confronted with potential consequences of appraisal on their career and salary, the inclination to reveal weaknesses can be reduced, thereby jeopardising the improvement function (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). (p. 17)

Although the above OECD report emphasises that, to ensure all students are taught by capable teachers, teacher appraisal should provide a mechanism to identify weaknesses and ensure that underperformance is adequately addressed, acknowledgment is given to the fact that some argue that appraisal to identify underperformance should be a separate process from appraisal for performance development, as evaluating to identify underperformance may create tension and fear among teachers, which may jeopardise the formative function of appraisal and inhibit teachers’ creativity and motivation (Klinger et al. 2008).

The comprehensive review of research undertaken by Hallinger et al. (2014) indicates that scholars and practitioners have found it difficult to reconcile the conflict between administrative efforts to intensify teacher performance evaluation,
while engaging in development-oriented instructional supervision and development. They state:

A deep and recurring theme in the instructional supervision and development literature emphasizes the potential costs of intensifying the focus on performance evaluation. Emphasizing the summative function of teacher evaluation may not only impede efforts to motivate change in teacher behaviours, but also participation in complementary strategies aimed at building collaboration and community (pp. 18-19) ... in the words of Showers (1985): “Nothing could be farther from the atmosphere of coaching than is the practice of traditional evaluation. The norms are antithetical and should be separated in our thinking as well as in practice. By definition, evaluations should not be undertaken concurrently with coaching (p. 46).

Even in systems that have teacher professional growth as a primary emphasis, studies suggest that there is difficulty in reconciling the tension between organisational goals (for example, maintaining high quality instruction) and accommodating individual teachers’ desires and preferences (Kimball 2002; Milanowski & Heneman 2001).

Concerning instruments, processes or methods used, OECD research (Isore 2009) indicates that typical methods used for appraisal may be applied to summative and formative processes. Concerning what Isore refers to as “sources of evidence”, she clarifies:
Instruments such as student outcomes, teacher tests, questionnaires and surveys completed by parents and students, and classroom observations are more summative in nature, whereas interviews with the teacher and documentation prepared by the teacher are generally more useful for formative purposes ... when the purpose is to help teachers improve their practices and provide them with professional growth opportunities, qualitative and customised instruments and criteria are preferred. For a formative purpose, adapted collection of evidence is more adequate than one set of standards to fit all possible situations. It must allow both to identify domains of strength and weakness in teaching and to give the teacher a constructive feedback including possible ways of improvement, according to the teacher’s level of experience and the school context (p. 20).

Although it is acknowledged that it is difficult for principals to separate the formative and summative purposes of teacher evaluation (Conley & Glasman 2008; Looney 2011), a formative approach is considered by some researchers to hold more promise in helping teachers to analyse their work, take risks and experiment (Conley & Glasman 2008), seek feedback from peers (Hirsch, 2013), share teaching skills with others (Collinson & Cook 2007), target professional development to enhance their practice (Culbertson, 2012; Maslow & Kelley, 2012) and encourage teachers to be engaged in continuous improvement (Danielson 2012; Marzano 2012). I note a lack of comparable empirical evidence in support of a combined summative-formative approach to achieve the above outcomes (refer, for example, to Hallinger et al. 2014).
(As you will see from the findings of this research, the principals interviewed placed more faith and credence in formative methods of appraisal [see Chapters 7 and 8]).

3.1.4. Teachers as professionals

In attempting to pinpoint the most critical differences between the “summative model” and the “formative model”, the following aspects should be raised: (1) the impact of the process on teachers’ view of themselves as professionals, i.e. a consideration of the psychological issues (Conley & Glasman 2008; Sinnema & Robinson 2007); and (2) the interpretation by teachers of the ultimate purpose of the process, i.e. a consideration of the political issues, such as the use of findings for personnel decisions (Isore 2009).

From the early stages of development of approaches to teacher appraisal, it has been recognised that there must be a reliance on most teachers being self-motivated and responsible professionals who want to develop as professionals and refine their ability to teach effectively. The success or failure of appraisal is closely bound to a recognition and encouragement of such a sense of teacher professionalism combined with awareness of and sensitivity to the above two factors; in turn, teacher professionalism is validated by commitment to professional growth (Ponticell 1995).

In further earlier research, Darling-Hammond (1988) — writing on the notion of compliance — points out that compliance is a feature of ‘bureaucratic’ rather than ‘professional’ accountability and that holding teachers responsible only
for compliance is unsatisfactory because it removes from them all responsibility for developing their knowledge about teaching. It also removes from them their responsibility for being genuinely and directly accountable for the learning and welfare of the children they teach (p. 11). In the opinion of Fullan & Hargreaves (1991), approaches to leadership, administration and professional development must respect, support and build upon teachers’ capacity “to make informed, discretionary judgments in the rapidly shifting environment of the classroom”. Approaches which regiment, regulate and constrain undermine teachers’ professionalism and the moral principles on which it is based (p. 19).

On the matter of compliance and what Conley & Glasman (2008) contend to be an intensification of public, political, bureaucratic and market accountabilities in education more recently, their research on fear of teachers concerning evaluation reveals a potential “politics of maintenance” (p. 73) and fear of evaluation even when teachers may not fear the consequences of evaluation results. This may occur, for example, even when results are not tied to job tenure, salary, dismissal or reassignment. Conley & Glasman (2008) claim that the sources of teachers’ fear have widened; namely, “teaching standards are mandated, threatening teachers’ control of what and how they teach and the performance feedback they receive” (p. 73). Such bureaucratic accountability is seen to stand in direct conflict with teachers’ professional accountability (Glasman & Glasman 2006).

Taking into account the professionalism of teachers, involvement by them in the determination of the purposes and processes to be applied in an appraisal
scheme would logically follow. In the OECD review of teacher evaluation (Isore 2009), it is indicated that teachers should be consulted on the strengths and flaws of the system, from its design to its full implementation and review:

Teachers must agree with the framework which defines the standards of the profession ... all teachers must be supported in understanding what the evaluation expects from them to be recognised as good teachers and in preparing adequately for the evaluation process. This requires both transparency on the methods used and coaching towards empowerment evaluation ... teachers should also be provided with opportunities to express their perceptions and concerns on the evaluation process after the system is installed (p. 20).

From the arguments presented above, the complexity of the distinctions between formative and summative appraisal can be seen. It could be argued that, if one takes a stance of respecting and supporting the professionalism of teachers, one would expect that accountability for the quality of one’s teaching would be understood. It is perhaps clearer to use the term “accountability” separately from the arguments on summative or formative procedures and intentions. Even if a summative evaluation is avoided, this does not preclude requiring accountability for the undertaking of processes for formative appraisal, that is, for determining areas of strength and weakness and planning professional learning to improve areas of weakness to ensure the best possible impacts of one’s teaching on the students in one’s care. Improving student learning and achievement can be considered to be the
core business of schools. This calls for quality teaching. Teachers and school leaders accept responsibility and are prepared to be accountable for the extent and nature of the improvements they effect in learning and teaching (Kleinhenz & Fleming 2007, p. 15). Teacher appraisal needs to promote teacher capacity to inquire into and strengthen the relationship between their teaching and their students’ learning, that is, into the particulars of classroom practice (Hattie 2009, 2012). This may involve confronting long-held assumptions about preferred teaching styles to determine whether they are having the intended impact on students (Sinnema & Robinson 2007, p. 338).

In summary, it is important that tools and processes for teacher appraisal, whether conducted by the school leader or peers, are valid and reliable and criteria for appraisal are linked to clear standards on teaching. This is particularly true for summative evaluations that have an impact on the teachers’ record and career prospects. Validity of teacher evaluation means that the instruments and processes for evaluation meet their intended purposes. Reliability means that evaluators’ judgments are consistent across repeated observations (Looney 2011, p. 445).
3.2. Methods of appraisal of teaching practice

The overall application of methods in schools has been varied, and research over the last three decades has not come up with a model which is unvaryingly successful. Goe et al. (2008) argue that deciding how teacher effectiveness should be measured is not necessarily the sole purview of policy makers, researchers and bureaucrats. “Given that teacher contexts vary widely, it is essential that local input is considered when decisions are made about what to prioritise in a composite measure of teacher effectiveness” (p. 48). Another consideration is that teacher contexts differ greatly across subjects and grades and some types of measures may be more suitable for certain types of contexts (p. 49). Goe et al. (2008) advise “clear consideration of the purpose of evaluation” before deciding on the measures to apply (p. 52). This reinforces the point that an appraisal scheme must suit the needs of the particular school context and there must be clarity of purpose in the choice of methods of appraisal to be used.

Considering the Victorian context in which the current research has been conducted, Jensen and Reichl (2011) in the Grattan Report, *Better Teacher Appraisal and Feedback: Improving Performance*, advise that principals and teachers should choose the mix of methods appropriate to their school (p. 12). In combination they should provide an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher, creating the opportunity to recognise effectiveness and establish individual development programs (Douglas & Douglas 2006; Gates Foundation 2010; Jacob & Lefgran 2008; King 2002; Marzano 2003; Rockoff & Speroni 2010).
The following are common forms of appraisal cited in this research. Arguments concerning the application of methods for formative or summative purposes are included where applicable. Developments over time are included when relevant to enable a clearer understanding of current practices.

3.2.1. Self-appraisal and the setting of individual professional learning goals

As defined in early research on teacher appraisal, self-appraisal basically involves teachers identifying those areas in their professional performance which need to be enhanced or modified or about which they might learn from colleagues. It is very much an internal process and a process which the evaluatee controls (Bednall 1989, p. 49). However, Bednall, in this earlier research, raises concern about serious sources of error in self-evaluation: “We cannot be so honest with ourselves that we can identify everything that is wrong in our performance with confident ‘objectivity’. The challenge is to enlist the moderating support of a participating colleague” (p. 51).

Poster and Poster (1997, p. 76) point out, that the growing influence from the 1970s onwards of humanistic psychology on management theory and practice has promoted the recognition of the value of individuals within organisations and their autonomy and self-actualising potential. Hence, individual teachers take more responsibility for managing their own career progression, determining their goals within an organisation and assessing their own development needs. However, few people are wholly capable of judging their own capacities, strengths and weaknesses without some form of catalyst, which echoes the earlier findings of Bednall (1989).
The research of Ross & Bruce (2007) provides insights into the use of a self-assessment tool as a mechanism for facilitating professional growth. The tool was found to facilitate growth by: (1) influencing the teacher’s definition of excellence in teaching and increasing ability to recognise mastery experiences; (2) helping the teacher select improvement goals by providing him/her with clear standards of teaching, opportunities to find gaps between desired and actual practices, and a menu of options for action; (3) facilitating communication with the teacher’s peer; and (4) increasing the influence of an external change agent on teacher practice. It is important to note the conclusion by the researchers that providing a self-assessment tool is a constructive strategy for improving the effectiveness of in-service provided if it is bundled with other professional growth strategies: peer coaching, observations by external change agents, and focused input on teaching strategies (p. 146).

This study highlights the impact of teachers’ self-efficacy on whether change in practice will or will not occur. Ross & Bruce (2007) suggest:

Teachers who under-rate their performance or who accurately appraise themselves as low performers are unlikely to change due to the depressing effect of negative self-assessment on teacher efficacy. Teachers with low self-efficacy are less likely to implement new teaching ideas (Ross 1998). Teachers who accurately self-appraise a need for change but have no support for implementing it are unlikely to be able to do so (Ross, McDougall et al. 2002) (p. 155).
These findings run counter to indications from the OECD (2013) on the importance of the privacy of self-evaluation. It is stated:

In order for self-evaluation to be valuable for teachers, and for the profession, it is essential that teachers be able to have confidence in the self-evaluations and for those self-evaluations to be conducted in private. Otherwise, it is unlikely that teachers, even if they were accurate in their self-evaluation (which is by no means assured), would be honest (p. 18).

Although this suggests that self-evaluation is not a valid evaluation for summative purposes, one should not assume that it has no value. Value is claimed in potentially promoting professional development and teacher self-efficacy (e.g. MacBeath 1999).

A balance between the above two stances on the need for support to change as opposed to maintenance of privacy, is presented by Cranton (1996):

In order for educators to engage in transformative developmental activities, self-directed learning needs to be a component of the process. Explicating one’s assumptions about practice, questioning those assumptions, and possibly revising them can only be conducted by the educator himself or herself. This is not to say ... that professional development is a solitary activity or is not stimulated by direction from others, but rather that the process is
finally directed and controlled by the individual (p. 73) ... critical reflection is the central process in transformative learning (p. 74).

Further, Cranton (1996, p. 76) indicates that if educators are to develop their practice, a process including both personal and professional growth, then critical reflection on practice will be central to the learning. Although instrumental and communicative learning about teaching are part of becoming an educator, development requires moving beyond the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding, into questioning our existing assumptions, values and perspectives. Danielson & McGreal (2000), whilst recognising the value of “self-assessment” in providing the basis for selection of areas of practice/goals to work on, also recognise that such self-assessment would need to be guided for novice teachers or for those unaware of areas to work on (p. 25).

The research of Kersten & Israel (2005) reveals that goal setting contributes to richer discussions between the evaluator and teacher, aids the development of personal staff development plans and encourages teachers to be more reflective. The synthesis of research on goal setting by Latham & Locke (2006) provides further insight into the conditions under which goal-setting can be effective: capacity to meet goals; commitment to goals; and setting specific and unambiguous goals. On processes involved, Latham & Locke (2006) summarise key elements from their synthesis of research: goals create a discrepancy between current and desired action or outcomes; they motivate persistent goal-relevant behaviour; and they assist in focusing attention and effort.
Robinson (2007) elaborates that goal-setting increases performance and learning. It also has positive psychological consequences by providing a sense of priority and purpose and thus solving the problem of “everything feeling equally important and overwhelming” (p. 12). Robinson (2007) suggests that this increased focus and sense of purpose increases enjoyment of tasks and willingness to take on challenges. However, she cautions also about the need to set relevant learning goals, and to encourage openness to learning from mistakes and robust critique of goals and strategies for reaching them.

The issue remains of how the self-appraisal, critical reflection and goal setting can be suitably built upon in a supportive growth environment with interaction with others — an issue I take up in the following section.

3.2.2. Peer appraisal/feedback

The view that much can be learned from interaction with peers, to make sense of the teaching/learning process, and that reflective practice can be facilitated through promoting peer feedback and collaborative partnerships for developing practice, is well supported in the research literature (Danielson & McGreal 2000; Darling-Hammond 1996; Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Fullan & Ponticell 1995; Gimbel et al. 2011; Hargreaves 1991; Ingvarson 1989; Looney 2011; Showers & Joyce 2002; Smith 2005; Zepeda 2008).

Fullan & Hargreaves (1991) emphasise that collaborative efforts must ultimately affect the nature or degree of student development. Such collaboration,
in their opinion, would need to flow from a genuine desire to encourage, motivate and support one another. They warn against contrived collegiality — a set of formal, specific bureaucratic procedures, formally scheduled and mounted just for specific projects. In their opinion, this can lead to the proliferation of unwanted contacts among teachers which consume already scarce time.

Further insight from earlier research can similarly be gained from Hutchinson (1997) who stresses that appraising of a colleague involves the critical interpretation and application of professional ethics and values. Openness, trust, empathy and critical respect are vital. The level of trust can affect whether appropriate feedback is given and whether a teacher is able to respond to the feedback (Townsend 1995).

Each school would need to determine the level of collegiality in existence and gauge the potential for encouraging this further. Steinberg (1998) finds that traditional structures in schools with basic organisation into independent units (classrooms) can be a fundamental and formidable obstacle to collaboration. However, Ponticell (1995) confirms through a professional growth project she conducted in a school that "increased substantive and structured interaction with peers changed the professional relationship among teachers" (p. 15). Professional isolation was broken. Teachers perceived a free flow of ideas amongst them and a nonjudgmental response to ideas. They valued the exchange of ideas and their awareness of the need for adequate time for frequent exchanges increased as the
project progressed. This constructivist approach was considered to make appraisal a productive part of professional development.

Danielson & McGreal (2000) claim that “experienced practitioners argue that professional dialogue about teaching, in a safe environment, managed and led by teachers, is the only means by which teachers will improve their practice” (p. 9). They elaborate on this in emphasising that a colleague’s perspective on a situation is a little different from one’s own and that this different view offers possibilities that one’s own view alone does not. They consider that “collaboration offers the possibility of a more balanced and more accurate interpretation of practice” (p. 25). The finding that peers could provide constructive feedback on another’s teaching is also supported by the research of Munson (1998) with teachers. A further positive indication from this research is that such processes for feedback helped to build collegiality. Such collegiality and collaboration is similarly reported on by Hargreaves (1997), with indications that such collaboration can produce greater willingness to take risks, learn from mistakes and share successful strategies with colleagues that lead to teachers having a positive sense of their own efficacy, a belief that their children can learn, and improved outcomes (p. 68).

This is also supported by the research of Joyce & Showers (2002) into the process of development of specific teaching skills. Joyce & Showers describe how teachers go through an iterative process of learning, experimenting and reflecting as they develop new skills in their classrooms. They have also studied how the developmental process of learning to enact new skills can be supported by skilled
coaching in peer support groups that allow teachers to explore, develop, strengthen, and refine teaching skills together. “Both the feedback and the collegial nature of the process appear to stimulate reflection and greater skill development” (p. 380). There is also growing evidence that teacher collaboration and peer learning have a strong impact on improved student achievement over time (Gimbel et al. 2011; Jackson & Bruegmann 2009; Smith 2005).

In analysing who evaluates teaching, Smith (2005) indicates how colleagues provide an important source of information about the quality of teaching, mainly for professional development purposes, and the main function of evaluation by peers is therefore formative: “In schools with an empathetic and supportive atmosphere, colleagues provide teachers with information essential for improving teaching within a specific context” (p. 101).

The research of Gimbel et al. (2011) adds further weight to the value of such peer feedback with findings that teachers indicate that having a “mentor” is the most supportive factor in their growth. The suggestion is made that principals should look for effective teachers to serve as mentors and provide training for them to serve as role models for their peers: “The quality of teacher mentor, the mentor-protégé relationship, and how the mentor is trained, all contribute to the professional growth of the teacher” (p. 29).
The value of feedback, specifically on priorities for instruction and informal dialogue to improve teaching, is supported by teacher responses to the OECD’s *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS 2009).

### 3.2.3. Classroom observation

Classroom observation has become a prominent method of teacher appraisal, serving both developmental and accountability purposes. Various approaches are taken, particularly in regard to who does the observing, e.g. the principal, a trained evaluator, other teachers or students. Classroom observations are the most common source of evidence of teacher practice in OECD countries, whether American, European or Asian Pacific (which includes Australia) (Isore 2009, p. 13). This process permits to observe if the teacher adopts adequate practices in his/her usual workplace: the classroom (UNESCO 2007, as reported by Isore 2009, p. 13).

Insights from earlier research indicate contrasting findings concerning the value of classroom observation. On the one hand, there are indications of teachers acknowledging that classroom observations lead to changes in practice (Kyriacou 1995); on the other hand, findings on bad practice in classroom observation and its artificial nature are evident (Williams & Mullen 1990). Value was found in colleagues regularly visiting one another’s classroom and providing a follow-up after observations (Williams & Mullen 1990), the increased substantive and structured interaction with peers following observation improving the professional relationship among teachers and breaking down the professional isolation of the classroom.
The significance of teachers being instrumental in designing and taking charge of the choice of activities for such interaction stands out (Danielson & McGreal 2000; Ponticell 1995;).

The question of who appraises whom is also significant. In peer reviews involving classroom observation, there is an advantage in peers from a similar context being able to take into account variables such as student characteristics, actual local resources and current expectations. With knowledge of the situation, specific and practical suggestions for improvement could be given (Smith, 2005). However, difficulties can arise if observation occurs for summative purposes — for example, inhibition in teaching style when observed (Miujs 2006), or a better performance than normal being put on (Miujs 2006; Papay 2012), or a reduction in openness in discussion — diminishing the opportunity for feedback and professional learning (Santiago & Benavides 2009). There needs to be confidence and trust in the capacity or expertise of the observer (Conley & Glasman 2008; Danielson & McGreal 2000; Looney 2010), and clarity concerning the purpose of the observation (Smith 2005).

In the OECD report (2013, p. 38) it is indicated that for classroom observations to be useful, each school must have the capacity to conduct them effectively. This requires training in conducting observations and in engaging in constructive discussion with teachers. A need for training is supported by the research of Taylor and Tyler (2012) conducted in Cincinnati, Ohio, a study on practice-based assessment relying on multiple, highly-structured classroom observations conducted by experienced peer teachers and administrators. Taylor and Tyler (2012)
indicate that individualised, specific information about performance is especially scarce in the teaching profession, suggesting that a lack of information on how to improve could be a substantial barrier to individual improvement among teachers. Results of the study indicate that the concept of “teacher effectiveness” should not be seen as fixed after the first few years on the job. They found that teachers are more effective at raising student achievement during the year when they are being evaluated than they were previously, and even more effective in the years after evaluation (p. 83). Post-evaluation improvements in performance were largest for teachers whose performance was weakest prior to evaluation, suggesting that rigorous teacher evaluation may offer a new way to think about teacher professional development (p. 80). The gaining of new knowledge and development of new skills, combined with increased opportunities for self-reflection and for conversations regarding effective teaching practice, are seen to be key factors (pp. 83-84). Additionally, the simple incentive to try harder and having more effective teacher peers improves a teacher’s own performance. If the process is done well, they conclude that it can be an effective form of teacher professional development (p. 84); the study highlights advantages in teachers learning from one another.

To systematise classroom observation, there has been the development of “objective instruments” to enable easier and quicker recording of observations and instructional data, such as how frequently a teacher checks understanding (Waters 2011, p. 33). Although taking observations beyond the limits of human judgment of what is occurring in the classroom, and adding to impartiality in understanding
teachers' strengths and weaknesses, limitations are still noted. The data are still
being recorded by a human being (Waters 2011, p. 33).

A further example of such systematisation is found in the research of Fox
(2014). In his research on effectiveness of classroom observations as an instructional
strategy over two years with 85 school administrators, district administrators,
teachers and county office of education personnel in California, Fox reports on the
use of a 3-stage approach to observation of a lesson with participants provided with
a list of sample, research-based strategies for the classroom. Sources include, for
example, Danielson (2007); Marzano (2007); Marzano & Pickering (2001); and
Schmoker (2011).

The 3-stage division of a lesson involved (1) opening the lesson, (2) delivering
the lesson and (3) closing the lesson, observation of each section guided by 20
strategy statements. Participant observers focused on only three strategies during
each stage of the lesson. In summary, there was consistency of results across schools.
In particular, it is of interest to note that research-based strategies were observed in
less than 60% of observations for six of the targeted nine strategies; closing of lessons
was found to be weakest (e.g. reviewing the lesson’s learning goal and providing an
opportunity for students to summarise or reflect on their learning). The importance
of clear learning goals was reinforced and the results were seen to be able to initiate
a constructive discussion of teaching strategies. Such studies reinforce the value of
teachers’ mastery of research-based strategies for classroom practice.
In addition to classroom observation referred to, walkthroughs are also used by some principals. These are short and unannounced classroom observations that may be conducted at various times prior to a longer observation. These observations tend to be informal and open-ended in order to capture what takes place in the classroom on a daily basis (Ovando & Ramirez 2007, p. 98). In the research of Ovando & Ramirez (2007) on instructional leadership by principals in the context of performance appraisal of teachers, the principals involved consider this action as a necessary and relevant step in the teacher evaluation process in order to arrive at a true picture of the teacher’s performance in the classroom. It is noted that this is in the context of summative evaluation before a final summative conference (p. 98).

An unannounced visit would avoid only a “glamorised lesson” being prepared for a major classroom visit, masking less impressive day-to-day performance (Marshall 2012, p. 20). Marshall (2012) recommends avoidance of what he calls the “dog-and-pony show”, by replacing one announced full lesson observation with more frequent unannounced short visits. Follow-up conversations and feedback remain essential, whichever method is used for potential improvement in practice, which in turn raises the issue of time for the principal and teachers (Marshall 2012). Responses to walkthroughs are mixed. However, in the research of Marshall (2010) and Garrett (2011) support by teachers was found with indication of a “holistic” picture of teachers’ classroom practice being gained, plus this method is seen to avoid the time expenditure with extended observations.
In contrast to findings of Ovando & Ramirez (2007), Marshall (2010 & 2012) and Garrett (2011), Holland and Garman (2001) indicate that there is little evidence to support the claim that supervisory visits to classrooms support instructional improvement. A similar conclusion is drawn by Camika and Matthew (2009), following review of the Philadelphia Teacher Appraisal System, leading to the creation of a formative process to guide professional growth which is informed by evidence-based teaching standards and involving multiple data sources (p. 12).

Waters (2011, p. 33) raises the potential benefits of technology in increasingly freeing classroom observation from human limitations. There is perhaps scope to consider that certain digital tools could improve teacher evaluation systems, the suggestion made that their real value may lie in the information they can provide for teachers themselves for self-reflection and professional growth (p. 33).

Determining how to carry out classroom observation in any given school is key, as well as ensuring that discussions can follow which will be beneficial for a teacher to reflect on elements of practice (Taylor & Tyler 2012).

3.2.4. Student feedback

As reported by Isore (2009, p. 14), student ratings of teacher performance are relatively rare (four countries noted in 2009 and generally for applications for promotion, and no existing case in compulsory teacher evaluation schemes. The need for more research studies on the use or reliability of such surveying is noted (p. 14).
Student ratings have been used particularly in higher education. Much research has been carried out to determine the validity of these (e.g. Abrami, d’Apollonia & Cohen 1990; Marsh 1987; Marsh 2007; Ory, Braskamp & Pieper 1980;). As much as objective question items are considered to be good for gauging overall instructor competence, biasing characteristics must be controlled (e.g. student ability, class size and grading standards) and caution needs to be exercised when interpreting rating results — especially for making promotion and tenure decisions.

In earlier research into student rating questionnaires, for example, that of Hutchinson (1997), findings indicate that they did not meet user validity standards, they tended to ask face-invalid questions, they had little effect on those who did not value student views and provided nothing which was not already known. He claims that their use could potentially damage morale and trivialise the process of improvement (p. 81). Similarly, Peterson et al. (2000) believe that caution should be taken as students are not teaching experts and may value qualities that do not necessarily enhance their learning.

Such views have not held over time, as further research indicates. Smith (2005) suggests that it is impossible to ignore what she considers to be “the expert opinion of the pupils” (p. 102). She claims that this audience owns essential information about teachers’ class behaviour, affective and didactic skills, and teachers interested in improving their teaching depend on this information which needs to be elicited. Hence, pupils’ input into teachers’ reflections for formative professional development purposes cannot be ignored. Smith states:
Pupils, who are major stakeholders of education, constantly observe teaching and have essential information to be used in the evaluation of teaching. Eliciting information from pupils can be done informally by teachers asking for oral and written feedback. Advantages are that the feedback is spontaneous, immediate and pupil-oriented, and pupils volunteer feedback on issues they choose using their own language (p. 107).

However, Smith (2005) acknowledges that this direct and unedited form of feedback can be a threat to teachers who are less confident about their work. It is suggested that a more formal, teacher-controlled way of eliciting feedback from pupils is by means of a questionnaire designed for the specific context in which teaching takes place. Such a questionnaire is recommended to focus on four parts:

- Part 1 examines quality of good teaching, core elements of good teaching in a specific school (designed jointly by pupils and teachers)
- Part 2 relates to good teaching of specific subject matter or with a certain age-group (designed by members of staff teaching the same subject or age-group)
- Part 3 relates to the individual teacher (with statements designed by the individual teacher) for feedback on issues the teacher finds problematic or would like to improve
- Part 4 consists of open questions in which the pupils are invited to suggest ways of improving the interaction between them and the teacher (p. 108)
Such a design suggests that questionnaires used to elicit information on teaching from pupils are not standardised for all teachers — not even for all teachers in a specific setting. Smith (2005) suggests that the information collected is best used by teachers themselves for professional development purposes, and not for management and administration decision-making purposes (p. 109).

Looney (2011) reports on a student feedback survey in Jordan in 2006, noting evidence in this that younger students may provide effective feedback on the quality of their learning experiences and what they value (here, the nurturing of their curiosity, development of thinking skills and encouragement of active participation in class) (p. 445).

Indication of potential value of student feedback is also provided by Hattie (2009) who — whilst noting that the use of student ratings has been hotly contested — indicates the majority of studies (e.g. Marsh 2007) show that they are reliable, trustworthy and valid (p. 116). He notes that students generally provide accurate feedback regardless of the quality of the evaluation tool used. They observe teacher practices on a daily basis, and are clearly well placed to comment on the teacher’s impact on their learning. Hattie (2009) is of the opinion that the lack of use of student evaluations in elementary and high schools should be a major concern. As he states:

The stakes are too high to depend on beliefs that quality is high, or that the students are too immature to have meaningful judgments about the effects of teachers on their learning. A key is not whether teachers are excellent, or
even seen to be excellent by colleagues, but whether they are excellent as seen by students — the students sit in the classes, they know whether the teacher sees learning through their eyes, and they know the quality of the relationship. The visibility of the learning from the students’ perspective needs to be known by teachers so that they can have a better understanding of what learning looks and feels like for the students (p. 116).

A useful example of recent research is that of The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010), wherein student perception surveys are included. It includes the Tripod student survey, developed by Ferguson of Harvard Graduate School of Education for use in public schools\(^9\). Ferguson (2012) indicates that well-crafted student surveys can play an important role in suggesting directions for professional development and evaluating teacher effectiveness. However, he expresses caution concerning measurement error — hence the recommendation that, if the outcome is for summative purposes then, “multiple measures, multiple times, over multiple years” should be used (p. 25). Ferguson concludes, “we are learning that well-constructed classroom-level student surveys are a low burden and high-potential mechanism for incorporating students’ voices in massive numbers into our efforts to improve teaching and learning” (p. 28).

\(^9\) Tripod refers to content knowledge, pedagogical skills and relationships.
3.2.5. Parent feedback

Parent feedback may be considered as broadening the view of teacher performance and providing the perspective of the parent who has unique knowledge about their child (Peterson et al. 2003). It can allow teachers to reflect on how they relate to both students and parents, and may strengthen collaboration between parents and teachers (Jensen & Reichl 2011, p. 20). Jensen and Reichl (2011) suggest parent surveys are best used in conjunction with other data sources and, recognising that parents’ views are shaped by their children’s views of their teachers and schools, they consider it important that surveys ask parents questions about their child’s learning that is directly observable. Additionally, weighting of survey items should be carefully considered and agreed upon (p. 20).

3.2.6. Student achievement data

In the United States, with ongoing concern about the value of current teacher evaluation systems doing little to help teachers improve or support personnel decision-making (Darling-Hammond et al. 2011; Kowalski & Dolph 2015), new approaches to teacher evaluation are being developed and tested. There is growing consensus that evidence of teachers’ contributions to student learning should be a component of teacher evaluation systems, along with evidence about the quality of teachers’ practice (Darling-Hammond et al. 2011).

Value-Added Models (VAMs) have been developed to look at gains in student achievement by using statistical methods that allow the measuring of
changes in student scores over time, while taking into account student characteristics and other factors often found to influence achievement. Measured student achievement gains are assumed to reflect the teacher’s “effectiveness”. However, Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) indicate that research reveals that a student’s achievement and measured gains are influenced by more than the individual teacher. Other factors include:

- School factors such as class sizes, curriculum materials, instructional time, availability of specialists and tutors, and resources for learning (books, computers, science labs, and more)
- Home and community supports or challenges
- Individual student needs and abilities, health, and attendance
- Peer culture and achievement
- Prior teachers and schooling, as well as other current teachers
- Differential summer learning loss, which especially affects low-income children
- The specific tests used, which emphasise some kinds of learning and not others, rarely measure achievement that is well-above or well-below grade level (pp. 1-2)

Indication is given that VAMs are highly unstable; teacher ratings are significantly affected by differences in the students who are assigned to them and VAM ratings cannot disentangle the many influences on student progress (Darling-
Hallinger et al. (2014) note the limitations of having just two levels of analysis applied (i.e. teachers and students) as opposed to three levels (i.e. teachers, students and schools), the latter including variance in student achievement that is due to the organisational structure of schools (e.g. school academic and social organisation, the non-random grouping of students within classrooms and classrooms within schools [p. 11]). Goldhaber (2002), reported estimates of variance in student achievement across student, classroom and school levels, about 79% accounted for by student characteristics, about 8.5% due to differences among teachers, and roughly 12.5% accounted for by differences in the conditions presented by school organisation and capacity.

Hallinger et al. (2014), whilst concluding that empirical findings on VAM/standards-based teacher evaluation present “a pattern of weak, inconsistent, and unstable results of the relationship between such evaluation and student learning gains across subject areas, grade levels, and intervals of time”, note that all but one of the studies analysed in their review (the Gates Foundation funded Measures of Effective Teaching Study 2010) were conducted at elementary level. This is considered not surprising since structural complexity makes it difficult to apply and validate VAM teacher evaluation models for use in secondary schools (p. 17).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) indicate it is concluded by most researchers that value-added modelling is not appropriate as a primary measure for evaluating individual teachers. However, they are useful for looking at groups of teachers for
research purposes (e.g. to examine how specific teacher practices or measures of teaching influence the learning of large numbers of students [p. 10]).

Papay (2012, p. 134) concurs, suggesting principals can use evaluative data to identify broader areas of instructional strength and weakness in the school. They can then target resources appropriately and leverage existing teachers who have had success in certain areas to share their knowledge. Using value-added data in this more systematic manner can help build organisational capacity. However, it is stressed that policy makers, administrators and teachers should spend sufficient time gaining an understanding of the key assumptions behind these measures and should make informed decisions about these important analytical choices. Also, there is a need to invest in personnel who can help teachers make sense of ratings and use the data to inform instructional practice (p. 136). Data by itself is not evidence of anything until concepts, criteria, theories of actions and interpretive frames of reference are utilised to make sense of it (Brinson & Steiner 2007).

Hargreaves (2007, in Stoll & Seashore Louis 2007) also raises the need to manage and coordinate the vast and complex body of information that comprises the data system, with a person in a designated position and outside technical support to interpret the data intelligently. Additionally, Hargreaves (2007) emphasises “reduced overload and improved effectiveness in analysing data to improve the quality of teaching and student learning also depend on the data being accessible and usable in real time, within the teaching and learning process, and not just in chosen or imposed, added on time, at the end of it” (p. 186).
As with any feedback, providing it as soon as possible can ensure the teacher and principal will recall specific actions and details, making the information more relevant for the teacher. As such, any form of teacher evaluation should be part of a process, not an event (Goe 2013, p. 29). Goe (2013) cites Goggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt & Drill (2011) with the observation that teachers are continuously improving their craft and looking for information to help guide that process, so timely feedback is generally welcome. They also make the observation that younger teachers particularly value frequent feedback.

3.2.7. Standards-based appraisal

In Chapter 2, reference has been made to the large body of research indicating what effective teachers do (i.e. what good teaching is) and the integration of this research knowledge into the development of professional standards for teachers.

In the development of an appraisal scheme, Jensen and Reichl (2011) indicate that, while learning and student performance should be of paramount importance, many schools begin the discussion of what constitutes effective teaching with reference to teacher standards in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which cover all aspects of a teacher’s role: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. Such application of standards and recognition of standards-based evaluation, creating a consistent definition of good teaching, is supported by the research of Danielson (2012), Darling-Hammond
et al. (2012), Kimball & Milanowski (2009), Looney (2011), and Papay (2012). Looney (2011) states: “Standards set the bar for the teacher workforce. Teacher evaluation, as a formative process, will be most effective when it measures current teacher performance against defined standards and competences for high quality teaching, and then identifies strategies and development needs to help teachers meet standards” (p. 449).

However, it is cautioned that Standards not be seen as a ‘template’ or ‘tool’ for teacher appraisal and feedback, as teachers already report assessment of their teaching is a bureaucratic exercise (Jensen & Reichl 2011). Simply applying the seven Standards to teacher appraisal and feedback would only exacerbate the problem in the opinion of Jensen & Reichl (2011). What matters are the methods used to assess teacher performance. As they state:

There is a danger that if the Standards are adopted directly as a framework for teacher appraisal, the process would become unwieldy and time consuming. Adopting the Standards as an appraisal framework would require teachers to address all 37 descriptors of their career stage. This information is valuable but if used incorrectly can harm the teaching profession and school effectiveness. Every school is different. It is therefore important that teachers and principals discuss what the national Standards mean for teaching at their school (p. 37).
Smith (2005) similarly expresses concern that standards could decrease teacher autonomy and creativity, harming the teaching quality (thereby education in general), if standards are used for uniform evaluation of teachers, disrespectful of the teaching context and the purpose of evaluation (p. 112). She advocates an intelligent use of standards and evaluation which appreciates individuality and uniqueness in teaching and empowers teachers in a publicly transparent environment.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) indicate that use of standards combined with incorporation of classroom evidence of student learning, produces ratings of teachers which are more stable than value-added models (which are discussed in 3.3.6). An example of a performance assessment cited asks teachers to document their plans and teaching for a unit of instruction linked to the standards, adapt them for special education students and English language learners, videotape and critique lessons, and collect and evaluate evidence of student learning (p. 11). The combination of evidence including observation of teaching, along with teacher pre- and post-observation interviews and artefacts (e.g. lesson plans, assignments and samples of student work) is seen to provide a more reliable rating of teachers and the relationship of this to student gains on standardised tests. The role of frequent feedback in relation to application of standards is noted.
3.2.8. Interviews with the teacher

Apart from feedback from peers in an appraisal system, as referred to in 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, individual interviews with a more senior member of staff or the principal are often used to foster reflective discussion. This usually follows on from the individual teacher setting performance objectives (or goals) for a given period of time in agreement with the school management (OECD 2013, p. 33). It is suggested that it is possible to design a system where teachers and school leaders meet and agree on specific goals for student learning and ways to assess student progress towards these goals. Such a system would encourage teachers to work with their colleagues and school leaders to identify measurable learning and performance goals for the entire class as well as groups of students (OECD 2013, p. 35).

Although in-depth interviews can seem threatening and are a large demand on teachers’ time, they enable the interviewer to probe and are likely to lead to a deeper understanding of meaning and reasons for teachers engaging in certain classroom practice, the underlying beliefs and thought-structures (Muijs 2006).

Direct principal involvement in such interviews highlights the time demands. The research of Rowe (2000) indicates consensus over the fact that much time is needed to sit, meet and discuss professional growth plans with teachers. This process, coupled with routine administrative responsibilities, can become overwhelming at times (p. 32). In particular, in the context of more intense evaluation of teachers by principals, for example, in classroom observation, the demands on
time and energy are increased. Hallinger et al. (2014) indicate that “an unrealistically wide span of control already limits the total amount of time for principals to engage in classroom supervision activities” and with this limitation in mind, researchers find when principals do engage in instructional learning, they tend to focus on school-wide rather than classroom-specific strategies (p. 20).

Whilst acknowledging time and pressure on principals, Hallinger et al. (2014) — drawing on their synthesis of research on teacher evaluation (predominantly in the USA) — indicate that research suggests school administrators will achieve success in enhancing instructional quality if they allocate their direct efforts with teachers into non-evaluative channels. Four domains are indicated as receiving considerable support from empirical research: providing actionable feedback to teachers; creating professional communities in which teachers share goals, work and responsibility for student outcomes; offering tangible support for the work of teachers; and forging systems that give teachers the opportunity for ongoing professional learning (p. 22).

3.2.9. Teacher portfolios

The use of portfolios as a method of appraisal has received much positive response from researchers and teachers from the early stages of implementation of appraisal approaches, particularly because the method goes beyond simple conceptions of student outcomes and observation checklists and can provide more complex evidence of teacher performance (Ingvarson 1998).
Ingvarson (1999) provides a case study example of a teacher undertaking certification through the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) in the US. Quoting the words of a teacher that this was “the most profound learning experience” they had ever had, Ingvarson reinforces the vision that NBPTS was promoting “valuing the capacity of teachers to be explicit about what they do and why and their ability to learn from reflection on practice” (p. 56) and is of the opinion that the study illustrates how the power of professional recognition depends on standards and assessment methods that teachers regard as valid, challenging and professionally acceptable.

Isore (2009) notes support from research on portfolios, their being seen as particularly adequate instruments for teacher self-reflection because the proper decision made by the teacher to include particular artefacts (lesson plan, videotape of lesson, sample of student work and narrative comment), instead of others is a judgment that requires determining how the features of one artefact are superior to others (p. 14). Combined with other evaluators’ review, documents prepared by the teacher may be used for summative purposes, but the formative purpose is seen as predominant since the reflection process enables the teacher to be aware of his/her own strengths and weaknesses, and to identify needs for improvement, professional development or coaching (Danielson 1996, 2007; Zepeda 2008).

This process involves the benefits of peer interaction and mutual support, encourages self-assessment, self-evaluation and self-regulation. It can also produce content that will improve an aspect of a teacher’s functioning and, if needed, provide
content to an evaluator on professional progress — a substitute for formal observation and evaluation. Importantly, the process allows an emphasis on improving — not proving — how good you are. The use of portfolios has been a comprehensive element of beginning teachers’ evaluation in Victoria to gain full registration under the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

If portfolios are undertaken, there is the need to consider the impact of the process on teachers’ time. Teachers sometimes consider the requirement to develop a portfolio as a burden that takes time away from their core work of teaching (OECD 2013, p. 34). The suggestion is made that systems that rely on portfolios should thus encourage teachers to design their portfolios in such a way as to reflect a “natural harvest” of the teacher’s work. For example, planning documents could describe a unit or lesson that the teacher is actually teaching.

3.2.10. Combinations of approaches to appraisal

In order to achieve a more comprehensive interpretation of teacher effectiveness and to take into account the broad range of roles and responsibilities of teachers, various combinations are used.

Derived from use in business, a “balanced scorecard” (Kaplan & Norton 1996) approach recognises all aspects of a teacher’s role which reflect school and teacher objectives that build on what each school defines as effective teaching and learning in their school. Jensen & Reichl (2011) report that this approach could enable a broader perspective on teachers’ functioning with the setting of goals that
encompass personal professional goals for highly effective teachers, team and leadership goals, professional learning goals and contributions to the school; linking individual and team goals; setting targets for each goal and including strategies to achieve them. Selective data sources are chosen to help determine success. The development of teaching strategies to achieve goals and selection of data sources is said to be an especially valuable process conducted in the team environment (p. 11).

A more recent model from the business sector, also being applied to education, is that of 360-degree feedback. It is one which seeks information from various stakeholders. An evaluation survey reflecting the competencies of a position (the duties and roles) is devised and responses are then sought. While there is limited research on the use of 360-degree feedback in schools, there is considerable broader evidence that the process works in providing constructive appraisal and feedback (Jensen & Reichl 2011; Mahar & Strobert 2010).

For teachers, this model could present a comprehensive appraisal requiring feedback from a range of sources (e.g. the principal, senior teachers, peers, students and parents) to develop a professional growth plan (Danielson & McGreal 2000; Morgensen et al. 2005). Morgensen et al. (2005) indicate that this model can increase formal and informal feedback, goal setting and skill development and can open up candid conversations about performance.

Mahar and Strobert (2010) sought to understand the perception of teachers in K-12 education on the quality of feedback they received from a multi-source
feedback process, compared with traditional feedback (mainly from the administrator). They conclude that 360-degree feedback shows promise as a viable option for school leaders to consider in wishing to improve student achievement. Value is seen in the use of several data sources — including feedback from students, parents and colleagues — to guide professional growth goals and identify professional development needs (p. 157).

Use of multiple measures finds support in the research of Cantrell & Kane (2013) who found that classroom observation, student perception surveys and student achievement data, when used together, provide the best predictors of teachers’ classroom effectiveness. Further support for using a variety of measures is found in the research of Danielson & McGreal (2000), Garrett (2011), Looney (2011), and Young et al. (2015) Zepeda (2013).

Muijs (2006) contends researchers need to take into account the multiple and expanding roles of teachers, and there is need for the development of measures and studies that can more accurately reflect these different roles and factors that may lead to differential teacher effectiveness in different subjects, areas and domains.

### 3.2.11. The role of reporting

Some reporting of the outcome of methods applied to determine the effectiveness of teaching and discussions on the outcomes would, by most professionals, be seen to be an essential part of an orderly and constructive appraisal
process. However, the ownership and confidentiality of these need to be discussed in each school setting and an agreement reached between the teachers and administration as to who should have access to them. If teachers are left with some questions in mind regarding how appraisal results will be or could be used in the near or distant future, it is possible that some teachers will become sceptical about the benefits of the system for their self-development (Vanci-Osam & Aksit 2000, p. 263). The real objectives and goals of the appraisal need to be clarified through briefings without leaving any ambiguity in the minds of the teachers.

Timperley & Robinson (1998) highlight the potential tension between accountability and professional development where reporting on outcomes is involved. Reporting to a superior (e.g. the principal or an outside authority) can threaten collegiality and confidence if exposure of individual teachers’ competency occurs. Townsend (1998) raises an important related issue involving disclosure of negative findings to the appraised person. She is of the opinion that the appraised person must make the choice about his or her right to, and capacity for, personal information.

The overriding element is the need for clarity about what use will be made of any written records at the end of the process. It is one thing to have negotiated that records will be kept for a particular purpose (e.g. a record of progress); it is another to then have the records used for a different purpose (e.g. for promotional or dismissal purposes).
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Appraisal processes cannot be viewed in isolation to the school context. If one is to conceptualise appraisal as a positive catalyst for teacher professional growth and change, the formation of the methods and outcomes must be grounded in an understanding of the place of appraisal in: whole school improvement; leadership and management processes; the establishing of a learning community with a climate and culture supportive of professional growth; and change processes. Consideration is also given to the role of feedback in bringing about change in teaching practices, and research on principals’ experiences with the management of appraisal processes is included.

3.3. Appraisal in the context of whole school improvement

Appraisal within the context of whole school improvement provides for a more comprehensive approach which takes into account a school’s strategic plan, long-term goals and priorities. It has been suggested school systems need to evaluate their teacher appraisal processes in order to bring them into alignment with their mission, vision, values and goals, as well as to provide a meaningful exercise for both principals and teachers (Maher & Strobert 2010). Such a process of school self-evaluation involves a broad view of performance across ‘key areas’: curriculum, learning and teaching, support for pupils, ethos, resources, management, leadership and quality assurance (p. 147).
Appraisal of staff within such a context would gain more validity as part of the ongoing evaluation of the whole school’s aims and objectives and would not then be an ‘event’, but a continuous process which permeates management practice and acts as an umbrella for coordinating the review process of a school (Arguinis 2009). A means would be provided whereby staff can identify the gaps between existing and potential practice, create plans for individuals which would be both personally satisfying and of benefit to team and school targets, and provide a forum for monitoring and evaluating progress towards such targets (Principal Leadership 2007, pp. 41-43).

Methods of appraisal that can take into account developmental needs of teachers within the broader framework of a school’s strategic plan, would appear to involve more pragmatism and practicality and provide a perspective for teachers against which they can determine their own role and growth plans and a means of identifying and measuring an individual’s performance in accordance with the organisation’s goals (Aguinis 2009).

The importance of an overall strategy to achieve greater success in helping teachers to be more effective is stressed by Fullan (2014). Such a strategy would include placing primary emphasis on capacity building, collaborative efforts, pedagogy and “systemness”, and the integration of accountability, human resource policies, technology and specific policies (p. 38).
3.4. Leadership and management of teacher appraisal

The role of leadership in the context of appraisal and professional learning is paramount. Responsibility is placed on principals to interpret and act on educational policies to guarantee ongoing improvements in student achievement (Ovando & Ramirez 2007). Leadership contributes to organisational learning, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school — the teaching and learning. It influences the way teachers organise and conduct their instruction, their educational interaction with students, and the challenges and expectations teachers place on their pupils (Mulford & Silins 2003, p. 183). Principals play a critical role in “sustaining a focus on learning” in the school (Hallinger 2010, p. 94) and being an instructional resource and active participant and leader of teaching and learning (Robinson & Timperley 2007; Robinson et al. 2008). Part of the leader’s job is to build capacity within a school by “developing the intellectual and professional capital of its staff” — this includes leadership potential (Timperley et al. 2007, p. 193).

In the instructional context, Leithwood et al. (1999) refer to an approach to leadership that emphasises the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students. Such an approach is focused and specific. They identify a number of core leadership activities:

- Setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus and the development of high performance expectations)
• Developing people (includes the provision of individualised support, intellectual stimulation and the modelling of values and practices important to the mission of the school)

• Organising (culture-building, where colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering shared decision-making processes and problem-solving capacities)

• Building relationships with the school community (p. 39)

The stance of Elmore (2000, p. 14) reinforces Leithwood’s findings in his specific suggestion that the skills and knowledge that matter in leadership are those that can be connected, or lead directly, to the improvement of instruction and student performance. Similarly, Youngs & King (2002), drawing together research studies in the ten years prior to writing which show that principal leadership does influence student achievement through the conditions of school organisation they create as well as the instructional quality of their schools, further suggest that instructional quality can be strengthened when principals create internal structures and conditions that promote teacher learning. Such actions include establishing regular meeting times for teams of teachers to plan instruction and reflect on their practice, aligning school-wide professional development activities with school goals, promoting social trust among staff members and practising distributed leadership (p. 644).

In answer to the question of where principals should put their focus in order to develop the school’s capacity to have a positive influence on student learning,
Hallinger (2010) refers to the meta-analysis of Robinson et al. (2008) that suggests the principal’s support for, and participation in, the professional learning of staff produced the largest effect size on learning outcomes for students. This was followed by the setting of goals, expectations and planning, before coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.

The concept of ‘leadership for learning’ (Hallinger 2003; Heck & Hallinger 2009; Mulford & Silins 2009), a synthesis of conceptualisations proposed by various researchers — inside and outside of education — over the past several decades, has come to subsume features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and shared leadership, and provides a “wide angle lens” for viewing the contribution of leadership to school improvement and student learning (Hallinger 2010; Horng & Loeb 2010).

3.4.1. Distributed Leadership

Harris et al. (2003) take a view of “leadership premised upon the leadership capability of the many rather than the few... centrally concerned with building the capacity for organisational growth and change”. This is a form of leadership that is distributed, instructionally-focused and ultimately, teacher-owned. Harris et al. (2003) argue effective leaders in schools will be those who are able to build collaborative cultures by fostering positive relationships. They endorse the view that effective leaders are those who build the capacity for improvement through working
collaboratively and through building professional learning communities within and between schools (p. 2).

The view that authority to lead need not be located in the person of the leader but can be dispersed within the school, is well-supported in the research literature (Blasé & Kirby 2009; Day et al. 2000; Gunter 2005; Harris 2002; Lambert 1998; Sergiovanni 2009; Timperley et al. 2007). Viewing leadership as a group activity linked to a practice, rather than just an individual activity linked to a person, helps match the expertise we have in a school with the problems and situations we face. In the opinion of Sergiovanni (2009), including group activity liberates leadership and provides the framework we need for widespread involvement in improving schools (p. 189). In referring to the research of Spillane, Halverson & Diamond (2001, p. 24), Sergiovanni (2009) highlights distribution of leadership among both positional and informal leaders.

Gunter (2005) indicates the need to look beyond the functions of tasks, knowledge and skills of a role-incumbent towards the location and exercise of power, and so, what is distributed is not just the technical aspects but possibly the authority, responsibility, and hence legitimacy, to do or not do the work, and the very act or process of distribution is dependent on power sources and interactions. Distributed leadership is characterised as authorised (involving delegation to and empowerment of others by the head teacher/principal) and dispersed (enabling the pursuit of interests, consensus building and bottom-up initiation) (p. 51).
The value of supporting informal teacher leadership is reinforced by Blasé & Kirby (2009). With reference to the study of emergent leadership (Blasé & Blasé 2006), Blasé & Kirby note how teachers provide significant support to colleagues, building trust, consulting about the formal knowledge base, helping colleagues plan and organise for learning and modelling classroom behaviour. Outcomes of such informal teacher leadership include the use of effective teaching and learning strategies and teachers’ ability to meet diverse student needs, as well as increases in teachers’ efficacy and continuing commitment to professional growth (p. 63).

Referring to the term “leadership density” of Smith and Ellett (2002), Davis, Ellett & Annunziata (2002) link leadership to teacher evaluation, noting schools embracing that type of leadership foster “teacher assessment, evaluation and professional systems, designed to improve teaching and learning in schools”. School personnel, including school leaders, promote the use of “teacher performance evaluation systems” that can encourage collaborative group engagement, define and discuss processes for improving student achievement, create greater program coherence and build strong professional relationships that strengthen leadership density (p.299). They add that professionals value their own judgment to determine the best course of practice. This is part of maintaining autonomy and control of their own professional practice within the everyday life of their schools (p. 295). Evaluation and professional growth systems provide important and rich opportunities for school professionals to focus specifically on the core of their professional practices (p. 297). Supporting the value of “leadership density” is the research findings of Seashore
Louis et al. (2010), wherein — at the school level — collective leadership that focused on instructional improvement had a significant positive impact on teachers’ working relationships and on student achievement.

Moreland (2012) contends if the school is one where the views of all stakeholders are taken into account in decision-making, and data from “performance management” (UK terminology for “appraisal”) is valued and applied, then the value the senior team place on “performance management” is likely to be significant. She states that, “the relational trust and loyalty within the senior team are very important in driving the school and its vision” (p. 759).

Distribution of leadership may, however, not be straightforward. Timperley et al. (2007) cite findings of studies indicating teachers sometimes feel uncomfortable about taking on the role of “expert”. Their discomfort made them diffident about identifying areas that needed attention when giving feedback (Adey 2004). Timperley et al. conclude that “distributed leadership may be a highly desirable goal but it is not without its own set of difficulties” (p. 196).

Training for leadership within an appraisal initiative is essential. Cheng et al. (2007), in the context of implementing change initiatives — especially processes linked with human resource initiatives — highlight the problematic nature and potential barriers to change, particularly if there is a lack of adequate training and senior management commitment/support.
3.5. The significance of a ‘professional learning community’ in supporting teacher learning and appraisal.

In this section, I highlight findings from research that reinforce the impact of the functioning of a “professional learning community” in supporting ongoing teacher refinement of practice, the sharing of such practice and appraisal of the impact of elements of teaching practice.

3.5.1. Defining a professional learning community

Stoll and Louis (2008), in exploring how professional learning communities are currently defined, state the following:

There is no universal definition of a professional learning community, but there is a consensus that you will know that one exists when you can see a group of teachers sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way (Mitchell & Sackney 2000; Toole & Louis 2002). An underlying assumption is that the teachers involved see the group as a serious collective enterprise (King & Newmann 2001). It is also generally agreed that effective professional learning communities have the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of professionals in a school with the collective purpose of enhancing student learning (Louis et al. 1995; Bolam et al. 2005) (p. 2).
In summary, Stoll and Louis (2008) indicate that the term “professional learning community” suggests the focus is not just on individual teacher’s learning, but (1) on professional learning, (2) within the context of a cohesive group, (3) focusing on collective knowledge, and (4) occurring within the ethic of interpersonal caring that permeates the life of teachers, students and school leaders (p. 3).

Timperley et al. (2007), in their synthesis of research on professional development, indicate variable accounts of professional communities and associated outcomes, partly accounted for by a lack of shared understanding among those who write about them. They note that work in the early 1990s focused on how professional communities were formed and functioned, from the perspective of participating teachers. It became apparent that while teachers found professional communities a source of support, they typically had little impact on the learning of their students (King 2002, pp. 243-257), so the focus moved to identifying the qualities of communities that promoted professional learning. As a consequence, a new rationale for such communities — one that went deeper than mutual support — was found in theories of distributed cognition and the need for shared expertise to navigate the complexities of teaching (p.202). This perspective is articulated by Newman (1994):

It (teaching) usually requires information, expertise and support far beyond the resources available to the individual teacher working alone in an isolated classroom. Teachers who collaborate with their colleagues are more likely to
be effective with students, because they will benefit from expanded resources (p. 1).

3.5.2. Encouraging collaboration and building the collective efficacy of a staff

Blasé and Blasé (2001) list seven assumptions guiding collaborative professional development in creating a climate supportive of teacher learning, one that respects and draws on the expertise of all members of a learning community: the principal is a guide or facilitator for staff development; everyone can improve; change comes from realising that something is not quite right or not as good as it could be; change is challenging and emotional; teachers can teach each other; staff development will take many forms; and all educators engage in action research (pp. 78-80).

In support of enhancing practice and performance, further insight is gained from the research of Timperley et al. (2007) who raise two key features of professional communities that promote teacher and student learning:

1. Participants were supported to process new understandings and their implications for teaching, wherein:
   - Dialogue challenged problematic beliefs and tested the efficacy of competing ideas
   - Expertise external to the group brought new perspectives and assisted in developing these dialogical norms
2. Focus was on analysing the impact of teaching on student learning, wherein:

- Artefacts representing student learning helped ground discussions
- Teachers had high, but realistic expectations of students and believed they could make a difference
- Norms of collective responsibility for students replaced teacher-focused norms of individualism and autonomy (p. 202)

It is reported that in order to make a difference to student outcomes, teachers found themselves having to engage in learning that typically seemed a major challenge. Mutual trust and respect were seen to be very important if a professional learning community was to offer support to its participants. The connection between effective teaching and effective learning was taken as a given, and priority was made of enhancing the ability of teachers to respond to students’ learning needs (Timperley et al. 2007, p. 203). Timperley et al. (2007) add to these findings an indication that for teachers to benefit from the enhanced expertise and resources that professional learning communities can offer, it appears essential that they should have some room to exercise professional discretion (p. 205).

The question of what helps promote an understanding of engagement with the idea of practice of professional communities remains (Stoll & Louis 2008, p. 6) and how professional learning communities can be stimulated by promoting self-
evaluation, reflective inquiry, dialogue, collaborative learning and problem solving (Stoll et al. 2006). Stoll & Louis (2008) ask the critical question of what it is that opens up the “thinking together” and, indeed, “learning together” rather than a perspective of “this is how you should do it better”. They suggest that the same question can be asked about aspects of professional learning communities, such as the role of culture and distributed leadership: *What is it that makes these concepts tick?* (p. 6).

Mulford & Silins (2003) throw some light on these questions in stressing the importance of the collective efficacy of a staff and their ability to engage in organisational learning, suggesting that success (in school reform) is more likely where people “act, rather than always reacting, are empowered, involved in decision-making through a transparent, facilitative and supportive structure, and are trusted, respected and encouraged” (p. 186). Further important elements are cited by Mulford & Silins (2003) as:

Being a professional community which involves shared norms and values, including valuing differences and diversity, a focus on continuous enhancement of learning for all students, de-privatisation of practice, collaboration, and critical reflective dialogue, especially that based on performance data. The final element relates to the presence of a capacity for learning. This capacity is most readily identified in an ongoing, optimistic, caring, nurturing professional development programme (p. 86).
Robinson & Timperley (2007) add to research understandings the importance of strong norms of collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and wellbeing. The “accountability” links to the role of appraisal in determining how teachers demonstrate their impact on student learning (p. 252).

3.5.3. Principals as shapers of school climate

Further insights can be drawn from the research of Drago-Severson (2004) involving a comprehensive study of 25 principals from independent, public and Catholic schools in the US. Principals saw themselves as “climate shapers”. They acknowledged the various challenges of their work (e.g. time, resistance, and the complexities of teaching, learning, and leading) and they also spoke powerfully of how they support teachers and their learning by shaping school cultures in several ways. For example, they respect and involve teachers in shared decision-making; encourage them to offer and accept feedback; invite them to reflect on how they translate the school’s mission; and ask teachers to contribute to the school’s vision (p.39).

A learning model involving ‘Four Pillars’ was seen to be effective amongst the principals: (1) teaming or partnering with colleagues within and outside the school; (2) providing teachers with leadership roles; (3) engaging in collegial inquiry; and (4) mentoring.

Drago-Severson (2004) notes variations in the application of the ‘Four Pillars’ according to the circumstances and particular philosophies of the individual schools,
but stresses — in the growth and development of any school — it is the growth and development of people that makes a difference. She also emphasises the need for principals to develop an understanding of how adults learn:

Merely acquiring information or learning new instructional skills, while important, can never satisfy teacher growth. Support for adult learning and growth must include efforts to improve their capacities for managing the complexities of work and life (p. 175).

Also referred to as a “community of practice” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Sergiovanni 2001), this concept is understood to be critical for school improvement. If leadership is seen as ‘ideas based’ — that is, the source of authority for leadership is located in the quality of ideas rather than position or role as ideas and common commitments are shared in the school — then teachers, parents and students share the responsibility for school development and change (Harris et al. 2003, p. 2).

Building on the conception of ‘ideas-based’ leadership, Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) raise the importance of ongoing inquiry by teachers in their own classrooms and into other systematic and practical sources of knowledge for addressing critical problems of practice. They state, “in this conception, communities of practice play a central role in developing and transmitting knowledge from practice to research and back again” and such a conception “poses an image of the teacher as
a member of a professional community and as a life-long learner, focusing upon collegial, career-long development” (p. 383).

Cole (2005), in referring to the work of Du Four (2001) indicates “the most significant contribution a principal can make to developing others is creating an appropriate context for adult learning. It is context — the programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for a given school — that plays the largest role in determining whether professional development efforts will have an impact on that school”. The term ‘professional learning culture’ provides a shorthand way to describe this desired context (p. 6).

The factors that can impede school-based professional learning are indicated by Cole (2005): teachers are reluctant to volunteer to train colleagues or demonstrate good practice; teachers are reluctant to ask colleagues for assistance or feedback; they do not see it as their role to contribute to the training/learning of other colleagues; they do not have the time to participate in or contribute to teacher facilitated training (p. 6).

One would not want to consider that such factors, if present, would not be surmountable. Encouragement of staff to overcome such resistance would make for a more optimal professional learning workplace where learning is considered to be part of one’s ongoing work (Cole 2005, p. 6). Cole suggests strategies for building staff interaction and cooperation — ones that can be entered into at the discretion of
teachers and are more ‘input’ focused than outcome focused — like team planning, learning teams, teaching teams, team teaching, and mentoring.

Further approaches are suggested, including: teacher designed and teacher-run training sessions; ‘commissioned’ instructional research (where a small group is given the responsibility for researching a specific teaching practice); a ‘good ideas’ program (giving staff the encouragement and licence to offer suggestions for improving staff and student performance); and a pedagogy audit (on frequency of use of particular strategies and when they are most effective).

Additionally, moving to the next level, Cole (2004) suggests strategies that tend to be more confronting for staff as “they are more likely to result in an examination of — and feedback on — one’s actual teaching effectiveness”. If undertaken, however, these strategies can contribute to a strong professional learning culture:

- Coaching — the coach is responsible for participating in regular discussion sessions with the teacher and for suggesting strategies designed to improve their performance
- Teacher observation — in-class observation of a specified element of teaching and the provision of feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching performance
• Teaching demonstration — provision of a ‘model’ lesson with a prior
discussion to clarify purpose, expectations and desired outcomes and a
debriefing sessions to review the lesson and its outcomes

• Walkthroughs — instructionally-focused ‘walkthroughs’ using observers
who visit numerous classrooms for short periods of time to observe how
a particular practice is being implemented and pool their individual
observations to provide the leadership team with a report (Cole 2005, p. 7)

• Making professional learning plans public (e.g. posting them in the
staffroom to assist a culture that is open to sharing and assisting one
another in trying out new teaching approaches within their classrooms)
(Cole 2005, p. 12)

These methods bring the interplay between teacher appraisal and
professional learning more to the fore and represent the areas that can be of most
challenge to teachers as they are encouraged to improve student learning outcomes.
Cole (2005) adds that, when reviewing a teacher’s performance, the question to be
asked about professional learning is not whether the teacher participated in
professional development but whether she met her target to improve one or more
specific aspects of her teaching and the impact this has had on student learning outcomes.

Hargreaves (2008, p. 183) cautions against a growing over-emphasis on
data-driven instruction and, as he perceives it, professional learning communities
being seen more so as add-on teams that are “driven by data in cultures of fear that demand instant results”. He contrasts this with professional learning communities “intelligently informed by evidence in deep and demanding cultures of trusted relationships that press for success” (p. 183). As he states:

Originally professional learning cultures created structures, cultures and leadership that promoted rich conversations and stimulating, challenging, rewarding relationships among teachers, throughout the work and life of the school, about how best to improve the learning, lives and achievements of students ... they drew on all kinds of inside and outside evidence, on multiple sources of data and new cultures of evidence-informed inquiry, in order to locate how best to improve the quality of that learning (pp. 182-183).

Hargreaves (2008) states that professional learning communities rely on organisational learning — the collective ability of people, in an organisation, to learn their way out of trouble and forward into the future (Louis 2006; Mulford 1998). He sets the challenge:

Sustainable professional learning communities develop and depend on shared learning and leadership for achievement and improvement ... they are not just bunches of teams that sit down and analyse data together after school is over. They are a way of life that changes the entire school culture as leaders come forward from every part of the school in communities that
inquire into teaching and learning practice, then create improvements which benefit all students (p. 186).

Requirements associated with this are: (1) analysis and management of data concerning student learning and achievement, integrated technically and culturally into the ongoing life of the school with a person designated responsibility within the school to manage and coordinate the data system, and possibly with outside technical support to help interpret the data intelligently, and (2) having the data accessible and usable in real time, within the teaching and learning process (p. 186).

Hargreaves (2008, in Stoll & Louis 2008) adds that sustainable professional learning communities attend to their ‘soft’ relational side as well as their ‘hard’ data-based side:

The backbone of a strong and sustained professional learning community is trust. The pursuit of improvement, management of change and rectification of under-performance all create difficult emotions of anxiety, fear, threat, and loss (Marris 1974). Confrontations with disturbing data that challenge people’s sense of their own effectiveness magnify these feelings. Successful change efforts do not eliminate these difficult emotions and anxieties, but create a holding pattern for them so they do not become unbearable or flood the teacher so he or she is unable to cope (Heifetz & Linsky 2002). The heart of this holding pattern is a web of trust (Meier 2002) (p. 187).
Hargreaves (2008) adds to this that trust takes time to build and needs to be reaffirmed through many small and repeated actions (p. 187).

From her work on appraisal in New Zealand, Townsend (1998) also emphasises the significance of trust and the involvement of teachers in planning for appraisal. Involvement provides for ‘ownership’ and helps to build trust. As she states:

Trust is an important component in achieving the developmental goals of appraisal; namely, the effective and efficient management of educational institutions leading to learning of students and the personal and professional development of staff at all levels. To achieve these goals, a climate of trust within a culture of cooperation and collaboration is an environment sine qua non (p. 47).

Townsend (1998, p. 47) cites Jones & Mathias (1994, p. 130) who describe “trust”, and concomitant feelings of “ownership”, as the essential element of a quality culture within which any model of appraisal must operate, “the best way to satisfy the sometimes conflicting demands of individual development, institutional growth and public accountability”. In an environment of “trust”, Townsend sees the potential development of a “community of purpose” — which binds everyone — one in which every individual regards himself or herself as a learner, where learners “should expect to learn from each other in a reciprocal arrangement”. It is such reciprocity that she espouses for appraisal (p. 53).
Trust, referred to as “relational trust”, is similarly reinforced by Fullan (2014). This pertains to feelings that the culture supports continuous learning “rather than early judgments about how weak or strong you might be”. He claims principals who help build collaborative cultures do so by establishing conditions of “non-judgmentalism” (by offering feedback primarily for growth) and transparency (by being open about results and about practice). Fullan is of the opinion that teachers grow in these conditions and in a culture of healthy pressure (high expectations) and support (both technical and emotional), and peers help each other grow (2014, p. 75).

3.6. Managing change in the context of teacher appraisal and professional learning

The challenge of encouraging change in schools has been the subject of debate and research for decades (Barth 2007; Claudet 1999; DuFour et al. 2008; Fullan 1991, 1993; Powell & Kusuma-Powell 2015; Spillane et al. 2002; Starr 2008, 2011). The difficulty of change is aptly summarised by DuFour (2008):

It will always be easier to quit and return to the familiar than to persevere in the face of challenges, reversals and disappointments. Therefore, the key to success in implementing professional learning concepts is demonstrating the discipline to endure at the hard work of change rather than retreating to the comfort of traditional practices (p. 421).
How long transformation of a school into a professional learning community will take is difficult to gauge. Kruse & Louis in Stoll & Louis (2008) express their discouragement by “the transformation of the concept (of a professional learning community) from a basis in deep cultural understanding of how schools function to produce effective instructional settings to a ‘program’ that can be implemented in a short period of time” (p. 106). They see helping teachers beyond comfort positions as a long-term proposition. They state:

The relevance of time is related to the usual litany of factors that are hard to remove: a preference for small group discussions of curriculum and instruction with trusted colleagues in the same school and discipline/grade, an attachment to practices that have been honed over the course of a career, the ‘never enough time’ problem that occurs even when more time is allocated, and the sheer complexity of considering the intersection between scope and sequence of content, assessment of student learning, and instructional strategies. These factors undermine many efforts to create school-wide, deep conversations about teaching and learning much less the effort to initiate cross-school conversations (p. 115).

In the Australian school context, Starr (2011) highlights the difficulties of principals’ management of change associated with major matters of policy that impact on educators’ work, one of these being performance appraisal, which is increasingly tied to measurable school improvement (p. 646). Specifically, teacher resistance to change is examined through the experiences of principals. ‘Resistance’ is
understood as ‘negative’ actions and non-action, ill-will and resentment, and defensive and confrontational dispositions (p. 647). Elsewhere, Starr (2008) indicates that what needs to be avoided is teachers being “acted upon”, not being “co-sponsors of change”. She states:

Top-down mandatory change which assumes a straight-forward, logical, predictable implementation with prescriptive timelines and procedures, fails to grapple with the complexity and dynamism of school life. An unintended consequence is that it often takes time and focus away from teaching and learning (p. 15).

Amongst the findings from their research on intentions and perceptions of appraisal in an English-language teaching environment, Vanci-Osam & Aksit (2000) emphasise that any teacher appraisal system demands quite extensive time and effort on the part of the appraisee in order to work to reach the targets that they have set for their professional self-improvement. Therefore, when teachers are asked to participate in an appraisal scheme on top of their usual responsibilities (e.g. lesson preparation, homework, examination marking, examination and material production and actual classroom teaching), their initial reaction could be negative. Even though some are not against the idea, and think that it is beneficial for them in order to improve professionally, such worries related to the time constraints may make them develop negative ideas about the system, which may eventually decrease their productivity (p. 263).
McLellan & Ramsay (2007), from their experience in school consultancy, are of the opinion that many schools would have no interest in appraisal if it were not for the fact that they are legally obliged to have some process in place that gives credence to professional standards. This “compliance base” adds to the complexity of changes needing to be made. They contend that educational leaders are most attracted to changes that have a direct impact on students, for example, new approaches to literacy or updating the use of Information Communications Technology. Appraisal is an issue “once removed from students; it is about encouraging the development of teachers that will, hopefully, flow on to better student experiences” (p. 2). They stress avoidance of the risk of setting in place attitudes, expectations and emotions that can lead to appraisal being seen as an imposition with no real purpose, and with terms like ‘feedback’ and ‘observation’ becoming tainted, and unhealthy attitudes to management developing.

Even acknowledging ‘legal’ obligations, there is scope for schools to create their own version that suits the size of school, and the characteristics and talents of the people available. McLellan & Ramsay (2007) recommend using the people with the most to share — those already capable and respected, recognised as gifted teachers from whom others can learn and who can develop managerial abilities whilst engaged in the appraisal processes; providing training for the drivers, those appraising, to be able to give ‘edible’ feedback, ask powerful questions and manage difficult conversations. In essence, they are able to cope if teachers become protective about their classes and defensive about their practice.
Drago-Severson (2004), drawing together the challenges faced by principals in her study of how they support adult learning, cites that adults’ “resistance” and “fear of change” — apart from resources: financial, human and time — are the most common challenges by far (p. 164). Indicating that there is no panacea for professional development quandaries, Drago-Severson states: “every school must consider its particular characteristics when it decides to adopt a culture that can better support the learning and growth of all its members” (p. 163). She cautions that, within any school context, adults will be making meaning of their experiences in developmentally different ways. Attention and mindfulness to this kind of developmental diversity can help to make schools even better places of learning (p. 28).

Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) emphasise the importance of teachers developing “adaptive expertise” (p. 365). This involves the ability to learn from others. As they point out, “lifelong learning often involves the kinds of changes (innovation) that require giving up old routines and transforming prior beliefs and practices”. This is much easier said than done. A major part of the vision for future teachers must involve efforts to help them see that being a professional involves not simply ‘knowing the answers’, but also having the skills and will to work with others in evaluating their own performances and searching for new answers when needed, both at the classroom and school level. “Helping teachers learn to work in teams where they learn from one another is therefore extremely important... when
teachers have learned to develop their teaching in collaborative contexts, they welcome rather than avoid feedback” (p. 365).

Timperley et al. (2007), whilst acknowledging the complex nature of teaching and the need for sensitivity to this, indicate what is needed is the engagement of teachers in understanding “their own underpinning theories of action” and examining what is tacit and routine so that these theories and practices can be evaluated and decisions made about what should be changed (p. 198). They cite the research of Robinson and Lai (2006) on the importance of engaging teachers’ prior understanding in any change situation. According to Robinson and Lai (2006), teaching practice can be thought of as a problem solving process: how to manage and engage students, how to teach particular content, and how to do it all within the available time and resources. These problems are resolved — usually on the run — in accordance with an integrated theory of action based on a coherent set of beliefs, values, and practical considerations. This problem solving is mostly tacit and routine, not conscious and deliberate.

Attempting to inject messages about change and improvement into this is complex. Without engaging teachers in such thinking, new learning may not be integrated or some adaptations of new practice may simply end up layered on top of existing practice superficially without changing the core of existing practice (Timperley 2007, p. 199). Where resistance to change occurs, this may result from competing theories about how to be effective or from teachers taking theory testing as “a personal or professional attack” (p. 200). Spillane et al. (2002) explain this
response partly as a strategy for preserving self-esteem. “Professionals want to believe that they have performed well in the past and are hesitant to concede that their efforts may have been misdirected. This is most likely to happen when particular practices are central to their professional self-concept” (p. 415). Similar understanding is expressed by Danielson (2010) in the context of professional learning:

A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be “fixed”, but rather because teaching is so hard that we can always improve it. No matter how good a lesson is, we can always make it better. Just as in other professions, every teacher has the responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice (p. 37).

Long-held beliefs and established routines may need to be altered and time and effort expended to create new thinking (Powell & Kusuma-Powell 2015; Strebel 2006). Caution, constraint or even subversion may result (Barth 2007). Fullan, writing on the complexity of change (2001) states:

...complexity keeps people on the edge of chaos. It is important to be on that edge, because that is where creativity resides. But anarchy lurks there too ... effective leaders tolerate enough ambiguity to keep the creative juices flowing, but along the way (once they and the group know enough), they
seek ‘coherence’ (with the culture and mission of the school, establishing structures that can be sustained over time) (p. 6).

Robinson’s research on school leadership and student outcomes (2007) reveals — while few studies have examined the issues of sustainability of changes in practice to support student learning — it appears to be dependent on: (1) whether teachers acquired an in-depth understanding of underlying theoretical principles, so they could use their learning flexibly in their classrooms, (2) whether they learned how to inquire accurately into the impact of their teaching on students (p. 17).

Sustaining processes to support teachers in the appraisal of their work and avoiding anarchy are challenges for principals with their leadership as they seek to encourage continuous growth on the part of teachers in their teaching practice for the benefit of their students’ learning.

3.6.1. The role of feedback in appraisal in supporting changes in teacher practice

Recognising feedback is most often given during teacher appraisal after classroom observations, including walkthroughs, during peer reviews and sometimes within the context of coaching, Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) contest that this leaves out the teacher’s cognitive capital. The latter defines the inner resources of a teacher, which frames thought and shapes reflection before, during and after practice — key measures of quality instruction (Costa, Garmston & Zimmerman 2014).
When school leaders foster a school culture that supports emotional resourcefulness and transparency, cognitive capital increases and individuals are better able to receive, interpret and apply feedback to improve professional practice (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014, pp. 37-38). Promoting a culture that has learned how to receive and apply feedback in order to build collective wisdom is worthy of promotion in the opinion of Roussin & Zimmerman (2014). As they state:

How each person responds to feedback reveals much about the degree of trust and the value placed on continuous improvement and learning within a school culture. Lipton & Wellman (2012) emphasize that feedback is just the beginning of a conversation that explores and improves practice. When leaders are skilful, the culture begins to value and engage in data-driven, inquiry-based conversations between colleagues about improving practice … school cultures that practice the art of applying feedback tend to build robust and thoughtful models of instruction (p. 38).

Fullan (2014), building further on the significance of trust in the school culture and value placed on continuous improvement, indicates that in building a strong, collaborative culture (i.e. social capital), formal feedback becomes a lot easier and much of the effective feedback becomes built into “the day-to-day purposeful interactions of the culture at work” (p. 74). In his opinion, most teachers want constructive feedback to get better and he acknowledges that all feedback is in a sense evaluative, but when delivered primarily for growth, its result is improvement (p. 75).
Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) emphasise a focus on mastery, not just performance, and promote a growth mindset that encourages innovation, creativity, experimentation, and learning from failure. This is seen as being in contrast to a situation in which feedback focuses only on external performance and judgment, resulting in reinforcement of a fixed mindset. A danger in the latter context is a potential message of ‘do it the right way’ or ‘don’t make mistakes’ or, more deeply embedded, a message of ‘someone else knows better’. This approach can often activate for sensitive individuals an anxiety about not being good enough and, most damaging of all, reduces teacher efficacy (p. 38).

To overcome this, Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) indicate that an evaluator must find opportunities to engage with the teachers’ beliefs and values and expand the feedback conversation to focus on the teachers’ thinking and perceptions. This requires an understanding of the obstacles to receiving feedback: basing feedback on a thin slice of performance that may not be a true representation of the teachers’ abilities and talents; having an imbalance of power in a superior/subordinate relationship which can cause the teacher to feel a sense of disempowerment (leading to, for example, defensiveness or anxiety); and not understanding the impact of mindsets about receiving feedback, whereby the feedback is rejected as it is not coherent with an individual’s perception of his or her identity.

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By adopting agreed protocols or procedures and emphasising mastery, not performance, and all as equal learning partners (Stone & Heen 2014), cognitive capital and reciprocity can be built, and a valuing of feedback as an important aspect of human growth and learning which can lead to new learning. Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) draw on the work of Stone & Heen (2014) in reminding us that feedback is a lifetime habit developed in part by our nature (how sensitive we are) and by the models we observe. Each person learns to calibrate feedback as positive, negative or neutral — and interpretations can vary widely (p. 39). The goal of feedback is to promote a growth mindset that leads to mastery, increases cognitive capital and enhances one’s professional capacity (p. 39).

How feedback is both received and applied is the cornerstone of any system for improving teacher performance and insight into the impact of their teaching practices on student learning (Hattie 2009, 2012; Roussin & Zimmerman 2014).

3.7. Research on principals’ experiences with and perceptions of teacher appraisal

Despite the extensive research undertaken on teacher appraisal over decades, principals’ experiences with and perceptions of teacher appraisal have not been extensively researched (Ovando & Ramirez 2007). Similarly, despite an abundance of research on principal leadership, few studies have conceptualised or empirically examined the relationship between principal leadership and its effects upon teacher performance appraisal systems for improving instruction to promote
student learning (Youngs & King 2002), or how principals enact and interpret federal, state or local policies (Honig 2006; Kraft & Gilmour 2015).

Most of the empirical research on teacher appraisal is from the USA (Hallinger et al. 2014). I note in the context of the USA, the observations of Donaldson (2011) that, despite influential stakeholders, such as the Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation and the Aspen Institute launching human capital initiatives aimed at developing talent in public schools and districts, and states increasing their focus on the principal in large part due to Race to the Top and other funding priorities, there has been little research regarding how principals attempt to raise teacher quality (p. 27).

Halverson, Kelley & Kimball (2004), in their case study research with principals of 14 schools in a large school district in western USA, make reference to there being relatively little known about how local school leaders actually use comprehensive district standards-based evaluation systems in practice, and which features they select from given frameworks to emphasise in their evaluations. From their research, some insight can be gained into how the principals address the time demands by careful scheduling and investing of their personal time, but conclusions from the research indicate superficial evaluation reports that lack formative or critical feedback. A key intention in the district design had been to improve student learning. However, few principals and teachers viewed the evaluation process as having a direct relationship to student achievement, accountability goals or even as a pathway to significantly improving teacher quality (pp. 40-41).
Much of the research literature on principals’ opinions centres on problems and constraints (e.g. lack of time in light of other responsibilities) (Boyland et al. 2014; Donaldson 2013; Hill 2013; Moreland 2012), which impacts on the depth of feedback that can be provided even when principals viewed professional growth as a significant purpose of evaluation (Kersten & Israel 2005; Kraft & Gilmour 2015). Further, negative disposition on the part of principals is cited (Louis et al. 2010); lack of understanding of processes for classroom observation (Marzano 2012; Santiago et al. 2011); bias and subjectivity concerning (e.g. age, experience, gender and race) (Donaldson 2013; Tucker & Stronge 2005); and inadequate human and material resources (Coulter 2013).

An impact on the quality of potential feedback to teachers is highlighted in the findings of Donaldson (2012) on a mismatch between teacher expertise and the background of principals (e.g. content area expertise and grade level experience), and a finding of lack of training of principals to carry out evaluations of teachers, to conduct difficult conversations with teachers and to provide feedback outside their expertise, which narrows the focus of feedback to general pedagogical practices (Kraft & Gilmour 2015).

In the research of Kraft & Gilmour (2015) with principals in a US urban setting, where the principals’ instructional leadership is drawn on with multiple observations and feedback cycles, the conclusion is drawn that policy implementation is a slow process, even when local capacity, context and will are
aligned to success. The personal nature of teacher evaluation, combined with the resources it requires, are indicated as challenges.

The conceptual and theoretical issues included in this literature review, and findings from research that has been undertaken on principals’ experiences with teacher appraisal processes, assist in interpreting the experiences of the group of independent school principals involved in the current research with the choice of methods applied in their schools, the response of their teachers and the progress they have made in encouraging teacher learning that will impact on student learning outcomes. In the following chapter, the methodology applied to this grounded theory research undertaking is outlined.
CHAPTER 4

Methodology and Research Design

4.1. Method of inquiry chosen

This study has sought to examine the lived experiences of principals in the implementation of teacher appraisal schemes, and their observations and perceptions of factors that support or hinder successful implementation. The research is both descriptive and exploratory within each of the school contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Hence, the qualitative paradigm was considered relevant to this research.

Drawing further on the work of Miles & Huberman (1994) in validating the choice of the qualitative paradigm, they clarify that well-collected qualitative data “focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings”, so that we have a strong handle on what “real life” is like. They refer to their “richness and holism”, with strong potential for revealing complexity; such data provide “thick descriptions” that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader (p. 10).

Miles & Huberman (1994) state that “qualitative data with their emphasis on people’s “lived experience” are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives: their
“perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions” (Van Manen, 1977) and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them” (p. 10).

Marshall & Rossman (1989) likewise emphasise the value of qualitative research as research that “delves in depth into complexities and processes; it is both exploratory and descriptive and stresses the importance of context, setting the subjects’ frame of reference” (p. 46).

4.2. The choice of grounded theory

In my determination of an appropriate methodology for this research, I decided on a grounded theory approach, a widely used and popular qualitative research method across a wide range of disciplines and subject areas (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). First presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory was premised on a strong intellectual justification for using qualitative research to develop theoretical analysis (Goulding, 1999, p. 6).

In education, in particular, the relevance of this approach is noted as it has to do with the identification of research problems from professional practice, and from organisational and institutional contexts, involving new developments in professional practice or newly developed organisational contexts (Punch, 2009, p. 134).

Punch (2009) points out that grounded theory has as its explicit purpose the generation of theory from data. This raises the contrast between research that aims
to generate theory and research that aims to verify theory. In the grounded theory approach, no ‘up-front’ theory is proposed, and no hypotheses are formulated for testing ahead of the research. It starts with some research questions and an open mind, aiming to end up with a theory. Theory evolves during the research process itself and is a product of continuous interplay between data collection and analysis of that data. However, theoretical ideas emerge and theory generation depends on progressive verification. Grounded theory is essentially an inductive technique, but it uses deduction as well. It stresses induction as the main tool for theory development, but, in developing the theory, deduction will also often be necessary (p. 132).

The role of existing theory and its importance in sensitising the researcher to the conceptual significance of emerging concepts and categories is discussed by Glaser (1978). Knowledge and theory are inextricably interlinked and should be used as if they were another informant. Without this grounding in extant knowledge, pattern recognition would be limited to the obvious and the superficial, depriving the analyst of the conceptual leverage from which to develop theory (Glaser, 1978). Goulding (1999, p. 7) stresses that, contrary to popular belief, grounded theory is not ‘atheoretical’ but requires an understanding of related theory and empirical work in order to enhance theoretical sensitivity.

In analysing the development of grounded theory, a split into two camps is noted, on the one hand, Glaser’s emphasis on the interpretive, contextual and emergent nature of theory development (Glaser, 1978, 1992); on the other hand, Strauss’s emphasis on highly complex and systematic coding techniques (Strauss &
Corbin, 1990). Subtle, but distinct differences in perceptions of the method between the two original authors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are noted and the modification of the original description of grounded theory from its original concept of emergence to a densely codified operation by Strauss, an erosion of grounded theory (Goulding, 1999, p. 7; Stern, 1994).

In referring to a repositioned Grounded Theory Method, Bryant & Charmaz (2007) explain a middle ground being taken between realist and postmodernist visions, a move into interpretive conceptual frames and further away from deterministic variables. It seeks to recognise partial knowledge, multiple perspectives, diverse positions, uncertainties and variation in both empirical experience and its theoretical rendering:

A repositioned Grounded Theory Method bridges defined realities and interpretations of them. It produces limited, tentative generalizations, not universal statements. It brings the social scientist into analysis as an interpreter of the scene, not as the ultimate authority defining it. And this method acknowledges the human, and sometimes non-human, relationships that shape the nature of inquiry (pp. 51-52).

Grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them. In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, Charmaz (2006) assumes
that neither data nor theories are discovered. “Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We *construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 10). Charmaz’ approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it (Charmaz, 1995, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). Research participants’ implicit meanings and experiential views — and researchers’ finished grounded theories — are constructions of reality. Charmaz (2006) argues for building on the pragmatist underpinnings in grounded theory and advancing interpretive analyses that acknowledge these constructions (p. 10).

Constructivist grounded theory is described by Charmaz (2006) as lying squarely in the interpretive tradition. “A constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data” (p. 130).

Features of the interpretivist approach salient to this study are: First, thorough consideration is given to the holistic picture; “understanding the data in a broader educational, social and historic context” (Morrison, 2007, p. 27). Second, it emphasises openness to emerging explanations, serendipitous findings, and fresh perspectives through textual analysis rather than reliance on prior structures and limiting theoretical frameworks by ‘bracketing’ *a priori* theories, hunches and suppositions (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 5). Third, it allows for, with appropriate methods and analysis, the stories of research participants to emerge and be heard,
not reconstituted ... “in a language and culture determined by the researcher” (Bishop, 1997, p. 29).

I have understood that skill on my part as the researcher would be required in: interview strategies and other data collection methods, handling and finding order with often huge amounts of data, looking for and separating important information from unimportant details in what is collected, and the reformulation of questions as the study proceeds in light of unfolding understanding of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, pp. 133-134).

4.3. Implications of a constructivist approach

In seeking to study how and why the principal participants in this study construct meanings and actions in their school situations, I have done so as close to the inside of the experience as I can get, realising that I cannot replicate the experiences of the research participants. “A constructivist approach means more than looking at how individuals view their situations. It not only theorises the interpretive work that participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation” (Charmaz, 2006).

A further salient point in taking a constructivist approach is raised by Charmaz (2006). This is the need to learn how, when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger and, often, hidden positions, networks, situations and relationships. Similarly, awareness of one’s presuppositions and how they affect the research is essential. We can import preconceived ideas into the work if we do
not remain aware of our starting assumptions. Thus, constructivism fosters researchers’ reflexivity and their own interpretations as well as their research participants. As I have been in the position of principal and involved in the formulation and implementation of teacher appraisal processes, I have realised the need to maintain awareness throughout the research process of my own assumptions and not impose them on the interpretation of the principals’ experiences. Reflections following interviews have assisted in keeping check of any personal assumptions.

4.4. My assumptions

I considered it worthwhile to note assumptions or hunches that I began with in undertaking this research, to be able to refer back to them when reflecting on interviews conducted. These assumptions are drawn from my own experiences as a principal, from interchanges with colleagues over time, and from my reading of research on teacher appraisal.

Assumption 1

As a principal, one can unwittingly feel compelled to bring more formality and reporting into appraisal processes than is manageable for teachers to satisfy government “mandates” for annual appraisal of/feedback to teachers.
Assumption 2

Principals will prefer providing opportunities for professional learning and growth in teacher practice as opposed to devising summative evaluation of teachers’ capacity for salary, promotion or tenure decisions.

Assumption 3

Choice of appraisal methods is easily influenced by what other schools (either government or independent) are doing, hence, common approaches being repeated without due consideration of suitability for an individual school.

Assumption 4

Teachers will hesitate in undertaking and supporting appraisal processes if they have not had input into decisions concerning the type of appraisal processes to be undertaken or if they perceive judgment or undue criticism of their practice.

4.5. Choice of research design

Research design situates the researcher in the empirical world and connects the research questions to data (Punch, 2009, p. 112). I decided to follow Punch’s guideline for a basic plan for a piece of research, the research design including four main ideas: the strategy; the conceptual framework; the question of who or what will be studied; and the tools and procedures to be used for collecting and analysing empirical material.
4.5.1. The strategy

In seeking to explore the topic of teacher appraisal through a grounded theory approach, I undertook a comparative study of the experiences of a purposely-selected set of principals from the independent school sector in Victoria. The general objective was to develop as full an understanding as possible of the experiences of the principals in these sample independent school contexts in the formulation and implementation of teacher appraisal schemes.

The method in the first phase involved in-depth and semi-structured interviews, which each took one and a half to two hours. The main purpose was to explore themes and questions arising in the context of the management of teacher appraisal processes in their schools, specifically to explore the enhancers and detractors to successful appraisal processes. These interviews were undertaken in two stages. I began with five principals and, as I began to explore the data, and discussed my progress with my supervisor, it was considered that there would be value in increasing the number of principals to provide for wider comparison. A further seven principals were invited to consider being part of the second group of interviewees and agreed to take part. The approach to interviewing was virtually the same for each one, just slight variations in the order of the questioning occurring as I became more experienced with the interviews and was able to respond to the responses and build on key ideas surfacing.
The second phase of the process involved exploration with a number of the principals of substantial themes emerging from analysis of the interviews and ideas from the extensive literature search I was undertaking concurrently with the interviewing. This stage involved follow-up with semi-structured interviews on the key themes to enable in-depth consideration and elaboration of the major elements surfacing in the analysis, in order to bring clarity to the interpretations. Due to location and time constraints, these interviews needed to be conducted by telephone and email.

A third phase involved intermittent contact by email or telephone to clarify, in particular, elements of the appraisal processes to ensure accuracy in the school by school summary prepared (which is outlined in Chapter 8).

A fourth phase, towards the end of the analysis and writing up of the research, involved the conducting of a focus group with six representatives of the schools, four principals and two senior staff who had been approved by their principals for the first stage of interviewing and asked to represent them at the focus group. The aim of the focus group was to discuss the research findings and key themes and conclusions emerging. This stage was particularly helpful to add further depth to the conclusions.

In preparation for the first phase of interviewing, the key research questions and sub-questions (refer to 4.5.4) were sent to the participants not less than two weeks prior to interviewing to enable them to consider and confirm their
participation and to give thought to their responses. It was also requested that any relevant documents on their appraisal processes be provided which would help to inform my analysis. This first phase of interviews was recorded, with consent of the participants, and the recordings transcribed for greater ease of analysis and to ensure that important information was not lost. The transcripts were sent to the participants to make any necessary adjustments to and to approve. Two of the participants added some clarifications. The second phase with a selection of the participants was undertaken spontaneously and focused on areas that needed further clarification as my analysis proceeded.

Anonymity in use of the research findings was assured to participants throughout the process. For the focus group, an outline of questions was provided on the day, the purpose being to draw spontaneity in the responses. I sought particular consent for this exercise as, with principals and representatives involved coming together, they would no longer be anonymous. However, I once again gave reassurance of anonymity in the writing of the thesis.

4.5.2. The conceptual framework

While many qualitative studies proceed without a conceptual framework, Miles & Huberman (1994) explain that theory building relies on a few general constructs that subsume a mountain of particulars. Categories are the labels we put on intellectual “bins” containing many discrete events and behaviours. “Any researcher, no matter how inductive in approach, knows which bins are likely to be
in play in the study and what is likely to be in them. Bins come from theory and experience and (often) from the general objectives of the study envisioned. Setting out bins, naming them, and getting clearer about their interrelationships lead you to the conceptual framework” (p. 18).

Drawing on the responses in the first group of five interviews, my early stage of researching relevant literature and my own experience as a principal, major conceptual and theoretical issues began to emerge: the impact of globalisation on expectations placed on teachers; conceptions of teacher effectiveness; leadership and management processes; establishing a professional learning community; and management of change. These have been outlined in the literature reviews in Chapters 2 and 3.

4.5.3. The research participants

In selecting the twelve schools involved, I sought to have a representation of a range of independent schools, that were long-standing schools with membership of Independent Schools Victoria (the established peak body for independent schools in Victoria), and limited to Victoria, Australia. These schools included girls, boys and co-educational settings, a range of sizes of school and a mix of locations. Refer to Table 4.1 below. Ten of the schools were located within a fifteen kilometre radius of the city of Melbourne; two were located in outer suburbs. Eleven of the schools have both junior school and secondary school levels and a number of them support an Early Learning Centre. One of the schools is secondary only. Two of the schools have
two campuses overseen by the one principal. One school has two junior campuses. Years of experience in the role of principal amongst the group was ten years and more. Six of the principals had also been in this role in a previous school. Where nominees of the principal were involved, each was in a key senior leadership position, two in teaching and learning (a deputy principal and a director of teaching and learning) and one overseeing school compliance matters. In each case, the nominees played a major role in the development, implementation and coordination of their school’s appraisal processes. One of these staff was present with the principal at the initial interview. In the other two cases, I had an opportunity for further discussion in either the second phase or the focus group with their principal.

Table 4.1 Range of Independent Schools

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Inner — within 20km of Melbourne CBD
Outer — more than 20km from Melbourne CBD
EL — Early Learning, including pre-prep 3 & 4-year-olds
* 7-12 and one P-6 campus
** One P-6 campus
*** Pre-prep
4.5.4. The research questions

The following represents the questions used as an outline for the first semi-structured interviews. The sub-questions were modified in some interviews dependent upon the conversation that evolved following the responses of the participants. Major research questions and sub-questions:

1. What are the principals’ purposes, experiences and perceptions as they negotiate the planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools?

   1.1 What particular preparation was carried out before implementation of the scheme?

   1.2 What difficulties, if any, have you experienced in negotiating the planning of your scheme?

   1.3 What has worked well in the planning process? Why do you think this is so?

   1.4 What difficulties, if any, have you experienced in implementing the appraisal processes?

   1.5 What has worked well in the implementation of the appraisal scheme? What has supported this?

2. What do principals do through methods of appraisal to encourage teachers to undertake meaningful professional development and
integrate it into their ongoing practice, and how effective do the principals perceive these to be?

2.1 What methods of appraisal have you chosen to use in your school?

2.2 What was the reason for each of these?

2.3 What do you see as the purpose of having an appraisal scheme in the school?

2.4 What role does potential benefit for student learning play in the choices you have made?

2.5 How is professional development aligned to these choices?/How is professional growth encouraged?

2.6 Has any alignment with the Victorian institute of Teaching standards or National Standards been taken into account in the choice of appraisal processes?

2.7 Do you have a particular means of monitoring the integration of learning from professional development undertakings into ongoing practice?

3. What do principals perceive as enhancers and detractors in the appraisal processes undertaken in their schools?

3.1 What do you consider to be enhancers of the appraisal processes you have undertaken?
3.2 How significant has the clarification of intentions of the processes been?

3.3 What elements of the processes have been seen to be most beneficial on the part of the teachers? Why do you think this is so?

3.4 How significant has collaboration of teachers been?

3.5 What have you experienced as detractors to the processes?

3.6 Have you perceived a clash of perceptions on the part of yourself and the teachers?

3.7 Where you have experienced resistance, what have you done to overcome this?

3.8 Why do you think teachers resist appraisal or certain elements of the process?

For the second phase of interviewing with a selection of participations, further exploration was sought on the following aspects:

1. The role of senior staff in enabling planning and implementation of the appraisal processes

2. The significance of clarification of intentions

3. Evidence of impact on student learning

The focus group explored further:
1. The motivation behind having an appraisal scheme
2. Leadership skills drawn on
3. The sustainability of the processes
4. Their ideal approach to promote teacher learning
5. The impact on student learning outcomes/means of proof

4.5.5. Tools and procedures

In line with the grounded theory approach being taken in this study, the method needs to be conducive to “...exploring the meanings, variations, and perceptual experiences of phenomena”, seeking to capture their “holistic or interconnected nature” (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 6). Silverman (2005, p. 4) notes that methods are neither true nor false in themselves. The consideration needs to be their usefulness in fitting the theories or methodologies being used.

Unlike other qualitative methodologies which acknowledge only one source of data, grounded theory research may be based on single or multiple sources of data. These might include interviews, observations, focus groups, life histories, and introspective accounts of experiences (Goulding 1999, p. 8). Goulding cautions on being too structured in the method of collecting information to enable the collection of first-hand information from the point of view of the “informant”. Nonetheless, the fact that this is easier in theory than in practice is acknowledged. Informants usually “want some guidance about the nature of the research and what information is sought”. Caution is expressed about totally unstructured interviews potentially
causing confusion, incoherence and resultant meaningless data. The art lies, therefore, in finding a balance which allows the informant to feel comfortable enough to expand on their experiences, without telling them what to say (Goulding 1999, p. 8).

**In-depth interview**

The method adopted in this study is what is commonly termed ‘in-depth interview’ (Patton, 1990) and elsewhere referred to as ‘interviews as conversations’ or ‘co-structured interviews’ (Bishop 1997, p. 32). The in-depth interview can be conceptualised as “... a constructed dialogue focused on a creative search for mutual personal understanding of a research topic (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 101), creating a “listening space” (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 89), based on mutual trust, openness and engagement to promote self-disclosure (Bishop 1997, p. 33). The in-depth interview seeks to tap into understandings of the participants’ knowledge, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions; giving them a ‘voice’ (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). It is a way of understanding the complex behaviour of people without imposing any a priori categorisation which might limit the field of inquiry (Punch 2009, p. 147). Charmaz (2006) indicates that, if carried out well, such interviews can empower the research participants to “choose what to tell and how to tell it” and “express thoughts and feelings disallowed in other relationships and settings” (p. 27).
**Perceived advantages**

There is a number of perceived advantages to the use of the in-depth interview. First, it enables people to talk about something in detail and depth. The meanings behind an action may be revealed as the interviewee is able to speak for themselves with little direction from the interviewer. Second, it allows for complex questions and issues to be discussed and clarified. The interviewer can probe areas suggested by the respondent’s answers, picking up information that had either not occurred to the interviewer or of which the interviewer had no prior knowledge. Third, the in-depth interview allows respondents to use their “unique way of defining the world” (Denzin 1971, p. 125) something unachievable in a traditional interview, “… where the interviewer’s role is confined to that of question-maker and recorder” (Tripp 1983, p. 34 in Bishop 1997, p. 33). Fourth, it provides the researcher with a range of interview types, from unstructured through to varying degrees of semi-structured, that can be used for “model-building or model-testing” across the overall research cycle or within a given interview (Wengraf 2001, p. 51).

**Possible shortcomings**

However, the in-depth interview can have limitations and pose particular challenges that need to be taken into consideration and worked with. Respondents can possess different interactional roles from the interviewer. There can be problems of ‘self-presentation’, especially in the early stages of the interview (Denzin 1971, pp. 133-138). It relies on the interviewer having particular questioning skill. The depth of
qualitative information may be difficult to analyse (for example, deciding what is and is not relevant). The interview itself can be a strategy controlled by the researcher and repressive of the position of the informant/participant (Bishop 1997, p. 31). It relies on a high degree of articulacy on the part of the respondents. And finally, in-depth interviewing can be particularly time-consuming including making arrangements, interviewing, transcription and analysis (Burns 2000; Gillham 2005). I have aimed to be cognisant of these potential misgivings during the conduct of the interviews.

*Instrumentation Design*

A key consideration in approaching the in-depth interview, according to Miles and Huberman (1994 p. 35), is the extent to which the researcher plans a lot of prior instrumentation or not. They argue that if you know what you are after, plan in advance the information that is sought as the use of an interview schedule brings focus, an avoidance of data overload, and can help in avoiding bias, all factors that impact on validity and reliability. However, if you desire a much greater degree of authentic ‘grounded’ response, where the narrative is valued in and of itself and context is important, then a much looser, unstructured instrumentation is appropriate. As this study required a combination of these elements, both semi-structured and more unstructured interviews have been used across the different stages of the field work.
Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are “...guided, concentrated, focused, and open-ended communication events that are co-created by the investigator and the interviewee(s) (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 19). That said, the focus of the interview is decided by the researcher with the objective being to evoke extensive and naturally expressed information from the respondents as rich texture and contextualisation are necessary if an adequate critique is to be mounted (Stenhouse 1978 in Wellington 2000, p. 83). In order to do this, a series of open-ended questions, that is, “the direction or character of the answer is open” (Gilham 2005, p. 70), are written in the form of a flexible interview guide (Burns 2000, p. 424). They are not predetermined to the extent that one would find in a questionnaire but rather develop around the critical themes arising from the study’s aims, the literature, and the emerging ideas from the data, with the content being adapted to each situation dependent upon response and direction (Leedy & Ormond 2005). They are designed to “provide answers that ultimately relate to the theoretical literature and yet are open to new meanings being made (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 97). In addition to the key questions, probes and prompts are used where “the interviewer judges there is more to be disclosed at a particular point in the interview” (Gilham 2005, p. 70). These seek to clarify, deepen the response, and gain further explanations, examples, implications and so on, and can take the form of ‘contrast question’, to clarify differences, ‘depth probes’ that utilise hypothetical questions, devil’s advocate questions, special incident probes, and posing the ideal, and ‘housekeeping probes’ seeking
elaboration, clarification, continuation and completion (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 98). Klenke, 2008, p. 128 explains that “this combination of producing a topic-initiating question and following up the interviewee answer with a follow-up question is the central way in which semi-structured interviews come off”.

In addition to the advantages already mentioned in terms of the in-depth interview method, the semi-structured interview provides a simple, efficient and practical way of getting data about things that cannot be easily observed while maintaining high levels of validity as a result of the participants talking about something in detail and depth.

Unstructured interviews

Unlike the more semi-structured interview, for unstructured interviews there are generally no written questions. Instead, the researcher has one or more topic areas that are probed whenever the opportunity arises during a given period (Crabtree & Miller 1999, p. 19), occasionally summarising or reflecting on what is heard while condensing and interpreting the flow of meaning (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 35). Denzin (1971, p. 125) offers three reasons for this unstructured preference: it allows respondents to use their ‘unique way of defining the world’, it assumes that no fixed sequence of questions is suitable to all respondents, and it allows respondents to ‘raise important issues not contained in the schedule’. The combined use of semi-structured interviews will avoid the sometimes problematic outcome for the interviewee about what is relevant (Silverman 2005, p. 92).
Administration of in-depth interviews

The choice was made to conduct the in-depth interviews face-to-face to enable me, as researcher, to have the ability to read the respondents as well as note their responses. Part of the agreement with those interviewed was that each interview would be recorded using a digital sound recorder. In doing so, I followed the advice of Charmaz (2006 pp. 69-70) that having full transcripts would reduce the missing of ideas or understandings from the interviews. I hoped for a deeper level of understanding by being able to work thoroughly with the full transcripts during the coding process. As an inexperienced researcher, I did not want to overlook key information.

In order to ensure the success of the interviews, a number of procedures were consistently followed for each interviewee. First, I approached potential participants personally, face-to-face, by email or by phone, most at least two months in advance of interviewing with confirmed consent obtained at least a fortnight in advance. This provided flexibility taking into account the time constraints on the principals involved. Second, all participants were sent details by email on the intent of the study and an outline of the key research questions and semi-structured interview questions. Third, for consistency during the interviews, I followed the interview guide for semi-structured questions and the key research questions, interspersing unstructured questions as needed to probe further. Fourth, eleven of the interviews were conducted at the principals’ school in the privacy of their study. One participant was on leave at the time of interview and came to my own school,
with privacy and quiet maintained in my own study. Fifth, following each interview, I arranged for the transcribing of the interviews and provided the transcript to each participant for validation and any necessary corrections. Finally, I recorded field notes using the helpful guideline of Mutch (2005, pp. 155-156) of reflective, descriptive and analytic type notes.

The first round of data collection took place in the early stages of my research in 2011 while I was still in the role of principal. Expansion of the number of participants occurred in 2015 when I was able to devote more time to the research following my retirement from that role.

All of the participants were known to me from my interaction with them over a number of years as principal. I had developed a trusting relationship with the participants over these years which I hoped would enable them to be open and to feel safe in the interview situation. Through my delving into approaches for this research, I became aware of the guidelines of Kelchtermans (1994) indicating that the relationship between the researcher and the respondent pervades every aspect of the research process; and the importance of respondents feeling safe and perceiving the trustworthiness of the research process.

I also applied the advice of Cole (1991, as cited by Kelchtermans 1994, p. 100) on the value of including relevant personal anecdotes during the interviews, and the importance of self-reflection by the researcher (Denzin 1970, p. 11) to aid in understanding the details shared by the respondents. Following each interview my
reflections were noted and referred back to, assisting understanding of the categories surfacing during the coding process.

4.6. Analysis of the data

4.6.1. Seeking a clear perspective on grounded theory approaches to analysis

In preparation for analysis of the interview data, I sought to develop an understanding of approaches in grounded theory. I noted that the basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to read and re-read the corpus of “field notes” and “discover” or label variables (called categories, concepts and properties) and their interrelationships. The ability to perceive variables is termed “theoretical sensitivity” (Punch 2009, p. 360).

Grounded theory analysis “aims directly at generating abstract theory to explain what is central in the data. All of its procedures are oriented to this aim, and from the start of its coding it recognises both the central role of conceptual abstraction and the hierarchical structure of theoretical knowledge.

Expressed succinctly, grounded theory analysis involves three steps, which are conceptually distinct but not necessarily sequential. The first is to find conceptual categories in the data, at a first level of abstraction. The second is to find relationships between these categories. The third is to conceptualise and account for these relationships at a higher level of abstraction. (Punch 2009, p. 183)
Coding is at the heart of grounded theory analysis — open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Punch (2009, p. 183) explains that these are not necessarily done sequentially — rather, they are likely to be overlapping and done concurrently. But they are conceptually distinct operations. Open coding (initial coding) finds the substantive codes. Axial coding uses theoretical codes to interconnect the main substantive codes. Selective coding isolates and elaborates the higher order core category (This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 4.2)

![Figure 4.2 Diagrammatic representation of grounded theory analysis (Punch 2009, p. 189)](image)

In the words of Charmaz (2006, pp. 45-46), “grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical analysis will assemble these bones into a working skeleton. Thus, coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis...coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data”.

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Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means. The codes take form together as elements of a nascent theory that explains these data and directs further data-gathering. By careful attending to coding, you begin weaving two major threads in the fabric of grounded theory: generalizable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analyses of actions and events (Charmaz 2006, p. 46).

### 4.6.2. Open or initial coding

Following Charmaz’ (2006) outline of initial coding, I aimed to remain open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities I could discern in the data. This initial step enabled me to move toward later decisions about defining core conceptual categories (p. 47). Through comparing data with data, I aimed to generate conceptual labels and categories for use in theory building, to expose theoretical possibilities in the data (Punch 2009, p. 185). I asked:

- What is this data a study of?
- What does the data suggest? Pronounce?
- From whose point of view?
- What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate? (Glaser 1978, p. 57)

Charmaz (2006, pp. 49-50) stresses making your codes fit the data you have rather than forcing the data to fit them, remaining open to what the material suggests
and staying close to it, keeping codes short, simple, active and analytic. When coding early in-depth interview data, you gain a close look at what participants say and, likely, struggle with. This type of coding can help with identifying implicit concerns as well as explicit statements. Similarly, having a credible amount of data that speaks to your research topic further strengthens the foundation of your study (p. 51).

4.6.3. Focused coding

Initial coding established some strong analytic directions that could be synthesised to explain larger segments of data (Charmaz 2006, p. 57). “Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. One goal is to determine the adequacy of those codes. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorise your data incisively and completely” (pp. 57-58).

4.6.4. Axial or theoretical coding

Axial coding was applied to relate categories to subcategories, to specify the properties and dimensions of categories (Charmaz 2006, p. 60). Axial coding has been understood as building ‘a dense texture of relationships around the “axis” of a category’ (Strauss 1987, p. 64), following the development of a major category, although it may be an early stage of development. I am using the term ‘axial coding’, whilst acknowledging the alternative term used by Glaser (1978) of ‘theoretical coding’, and ‘coding paradigm’ used by Strauss & Corbin (1990).
The purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesise, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding (Creswell 1998). Charmaz indicates that with a preference for simple, flexible guidelines and a tolerance of ambiguity, axial coding may not be used. However, the development of subcategories of a category and showing the links between them are essential to indicate how sense has been made of the data (2006, p. 61).

Axial/theoretical codes are integrative; they lend form to the focused codes you have collected. These codes may help you tell an analytic story that has coherence. Hence, these codes not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also move your analytic story in a theoretical direction” (Charmaz 2006, p. 63).

4.6.5. Selective coding

The third main operation, this term is used because, for this stage, the analyst deliberately selects one central aspect of the data as a core category, and concentrates on this. When this selection is made, it delimits the theoretical analysis and development to those parts of the data that relate to this core category, and open coding ceases. The analysis now proceeds around the core category, and the core category becomes the centrepiece of the grounded theory (Punch 2009, p. 188). Punch stresses that the core category must be a central theme in the data, and in order to integrate the other categories in the data, the core category will have to be at a higher level of abstraction. Selective coding deals with what is central in the data
analytically, not simply descriptively. Citing Glaser (1992), Punch indicates that in true grounded theory analysis, the core category will emerge from the constant comparisons that will have driven the earlier coding. Once the core category is clear, it is elaborated in terms of its properties, and systematically related to other categories in the data. Punch sums this up as “the systematic densification and saturation of the theory” (p. 188).

In my research undertaking, guided by the three original research questions, three core categories/themes emerged through the coding approaches described above. A further category is included, an objective, descriptive outcome of my seeking details on the actual appraisal methods used in the schools.

4.6.6. Use of transcripts of interviews

The taped interviews were re-configured onto the left-hand side of the page, to enable the noting of initial codes on the right-hand side of the transcript. Each transcript was re-examined to determine focused codes. As the coding process developed to axial coding, key findings were gathered into folders and significant sections of the transcript for inclusion in the writing up of the findings were highlighted on the transcripts. In capturing the participants’ own language, I aimed to add credibility to the findings (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

Throughout this process I wrote memos, following the advice of Glaser (1978, p. 83) to aid my thinking and assist in the comparison of the interview transcripts. Although I became aware that researchers make use of computer
programs, I preferred to carry out this task manually, as I found this easier to be able to sort and compare the interview content.

4.6.7. Theoretical saturation

As the core categories and their properties became clear and I reached the stage where no additional data was surfacing and the categories were being reinforced (Glaser 1978), I considered that theoretical saturation had been achieved.

4.7. Ethics and confidentiality

Following the normal procedure for a research inquiry, I applied for and was granted ethical clearance by the Deakin University Ethics Committee in 2011, in preparation for the commencement of interviewing in 2012. Concerning the principals involved in the research, following initial personal or telephone contact to provide an overview of the proposed research, I emailed the Plain Language Statement which formalised the invitation and provided further details on the purposes of the study (see Appendix A).

Together with the Plain Language Statement, a Consent Form was emailed, with a request for a signature on acceptance of participation and return of the form scanned or by hardcopy to me before commencement of the interviewing (see Appendix B). All of the principals willingly participated in the interviews and were aware that they could withdraw at any stage. A copy of the Revocation of Consent Form was also emailed to them (see Appendix C). Anonymity was ensured and there
is no reference to schools by name in the thesis. A letter designation was assigned to each school.

The issue of feedback throughout the process was recognised as essential as the research direction has evolved during the process and the research has extended over a significant period of time since the original interviews. This complicates the issue of “fully informed consent” (Howe & Dougherty 1993, pp. 18-19). With communication with the participants for further clarification during the research, I have taken the opportunity to re-affirm their consent for ongoing participation (Cornett & Chase, cited by Howe & Dougherty 1993, p. 19).

To ensure confidentiality of the participants, interview data and documents provided by them have been accessible only to myself and my supervisor. They have been stored appropriately, hardcopies being kept in a locked file, and computer files stored on my computer (only accessible by me with a password) to ensure ongoing confidentiality. Copies are labelled to be kept for five years after publication. With inclusion of a focus group towards the end of the research, I sought consent from each principal for participation, and reassured them of the confidentiality of their schools in the thesis writing with the use of a letter designation for each school.

Two data collection methods were used. The main one involved interviewing; the second involved collection of documents from the principals on the appraisal processes implemented in their schools. Although I knew each of the participants well, I was conscious of sensitivities and the “high ethical load” (Measor
& Sikes 1992, p. 223) of conducting the interviews with them, drawing on their experiences and perceptions in the planning and implementation of appraisal processes with their teachers.

At the conclusion of each interview, I provided scope for comment by the participants on the interview process and indicated that a copy of the transcript of the interview would be sent to them to sight and alter if they considered this necessary to clarify any responses, and to approve. A number of the principals expressed appreciation of the opportunity to take part in the research.

4.8. Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the method of inquiry and reasons for the choice of Grounded Theory, specifically to pursue the research guided by Charmaz’ constructivist approach which lies in the interpretive tradition. Through this method, I recognised that I would be able to research how and why the principal participants in this study construct meanings and actions in their school situations in relation to the processes of teacher appraisal. The fostering of reflexivity on the part of the researcher in this approach suited my inquiry, as I have been a principal and needed to remain aware of my own assumptions throughout the research process.

The various processes associated with this method (data collection, analysis, coding, memo writing, and theory development) have been outlined. The chapter has concluded with a consideration of ethics and confidentiality.
It is anticipated that the outline provided in this chapter prepares the reader for the ensuing chapters in which the key core categories/major themes and sub-categories are outlined, each followed by a discussion.
CHAPTER 5

Introduction to Findings

In my interviews with the twelve independent school principals involved in my research, I have been able to draw on a wealth of experience in the leadership of appraisal and professional learning. The interviews have been insightful, providing evidence of respect for teachers as a profession, deep commitment to the encouragement of their professional growth, and respect for the daily pressures that they are under. The ultimate benefit of professional learning for student learning outcomes underpins their directions in their schools in their undertaking of teacher appraisal. However, it is evident that, in encouraging the professional growth of their teachers and determining a suitable means of accountability for such growth, the principals have had to face obstacles, in particular, involving the psychological dimensions of change and the lack of resourcefulness on the part of some teachers to explore new approaches to teaching practice.

As I have analysed the interviews and documents provided, it has been evident that key similar phenomena apply across the schools. It is also the case that these phenomena are interconnected. From the coding process, I have drawn three core categories/key themes, that apply across all twelve schools, each with several components/sub-themes. While some sub-themes were mentioned by all respondents, I have also discussed those sub-themes mentioned by a majority of respondents (i.e. 75% and above). These distinctions are not discrete but have been
applied for the purpose of analysing the findings of this thesis. In reality, they are inexplicably interlinked. Additionally, specific methods of appraisal chosen across the schools have been summarised.

*Methods of Appraisal (Chapter 6)*

I provide details on the appraisal methods chosen in each school. In Part 1 context descriptions are provided together with table summaries for clarity. In Part 2 I discuss and compare the appraisal methods used in the schools and discuss the interview responses from the principals on the reasons for their choices. This chapter provides a background and important information to consider when reading the ensuing chapters on the core categories/key themes in Chapters 7 to 9.

*Purposes of Appraisal (Chapter 7)*

In the principals’ articulation of their understanding of the purposes of appraisal, the aim of improving student learning outcomes predominates, this linked to how continuous learning and growth can be supported and how professional learning is promoted and provided to influence student learning outcomes. This in turn is linked to how professional learning is aligned with achievement of school goals. The importance of providing feedback to teachers is also highlighted. The complexities of this with peer relationships and power differentials is included in Chapter 9.

*Clarity of Purposes and Integrity of Processes (Chapter 8)*
Even though principals will be committed to certain purposes in implementing appraisal with their teachers, even more important is how they clarify these purposes to their teachers to build trust and take into account the teachers’ sense of professionalism and the demands of their teaching responsibilities.

Government compliance requirements were raised directly by a number of the principals; others mentioned them in cursory ways in the first interviewing, but raised them more directly in the final focus group. Reference to the National Standards for Teachers and the Victorian Institute of Teaching Standards was more direct from the first stage of interviewing, value seen in these providing for deeper insight for teachers into areas for potential growth, although the pressure on principals to comply is evident.

The dominant aspect of clarification of purposes is seen to be the emphasis on formative processes and great lengths taken to assure teachers that their appraisal process had nothing to do with ‘performance management’. Regard for teacher sensitivity to terminology and the potential negative interpretation of the term ‘appraisal’ are taken up in my conclusions in Chapter 10.

In the section on Integrity of Processes, the principals’ emphasis on involving staff in the planning process and taking time to build trust and to ensure that staff have the necessary skills, for example, in classroom observation, giving feedback and coaching, to fulfil the processes, is outlined. Involving staff in turn links with building leadership density amongst the teaching staff.
The question of teachers’ level of openness to self-assessment and self-criticism surfaces as a key issue, and the extent to which principals need to engage teachers in understanding their own underpinning theories of action.

*Community of Learners (Chapter 9)*

This chapter reinforces key details in the preceding findings chapters and draws out critical aspects raised by the principals concerning how they have tried to support a culture of inquiry in their schools, seeking alignment of staff with the school’s vision, mission and strategies; the role of leadership and encouragement of distributed leadership; promoting an identification with the concept of continuous improvement; and encouraging collaboration between teachers.
CHAPTER 6

Findings — Methods of Appraisal

PART 1 APPRAISAL PROCESS SUMMARY BY SCHOOL

The following summaries draw together key elements of the appraisal processes, as described by the principals in interviews and outlined in the documents provided; they are presented for the purpose of clarity and comparison, informing the discussion included in Part 2 of this chapter (Discussion on Methods of Appraisal and Interview Findings) and the outline and discussion of themes in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Following the detailed school by school descriptions below, a concise summary of the methods applied in each of the schools is provided in Table 6.2 on pages 211-212, for ease of reference. A quantitative summary of appraisal methods used is provided in Table 6.1 below.
### Table 6.1: Quantitative Summary of Appraisal Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Appraisal Used</th>
<th>No. of schools (sub-type of appraisal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards referencing</td>
<td>7 (Formalised use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (General reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring by senior staff</td>
<td>11 (Formalised)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (Teacher choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer collaboration/coaching</td>
<td>10 (Teacher choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (Assigned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>3 (Compulsory, by senior staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 (Compulsory, by chosen peer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (Optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (Walkthroughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student feedback</td>
<td>6 (Compulsory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 (Optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance data</td>
<td>1 (Formal whole school approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 (General gauge from e.g. VCE results)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                                         | 5 (Teacher monitoring e.g. pre- and post-testing) |}

### SCHOOL A — Professional Learning Appraisal Structure

A new appraisal system for classroom teachers is in the planning stage. The current system involves goal setting on areas of practice to work on, not systematically structured or monitored. A new process has been applied to senior executive staff with the intention of using this with teaching staff in the next stage. The process is based on the concepts of Training, Experience and Learning needed to fulfil a designated role and will determine the type of professional learning required to support the role of classroom teacher. These concepts have been derived from the Harvard University Project Zero principals’ course ‘Leading Learning that Matters’. An annual process is proposed, time for which will be understood to be part of non-teaching time. An online system for record keeping of the process is proposed.
• Self-reflection – to inform areas of practice to work on

• Goal setting – used in previous system (varied application across the staff); setting goals for professional learning activities proposed

• Mentor role – will be by those in leadership positions

• Peer link – teachers working together; training in coaching for all staff proposed

• Classroom observation – being trialled teacher to teacher; proposed use of videoing to demonstrate good practice

• Student feedback – in the planning stage; use of an online system proposed

• Standards referencing – a resource to inform learning requirements

• Evidence of impact on student learning – ongoing tracking of individual student performance proposed

**SCHOOL B — Staff Appraisal Process – Professional Conversation**

A comprehensive process was set in place in 2009 and has been gradually modified to reduce time pressure on teachers and senior staff. Originally, a 2-year cycle was undertaken with teacher self-rating and rating by three colleagues and the direct report against the VIT Standards. Reporting to the head of department and the principal was undertaken at the end of the first year of the 2-year cycle and at the conclusion. In 2015 an annual system was introduced applying the Australian Standards and requiring a rating by the teacher, one colleague and the direct report.
Professional learning needs are aligned with personal, department and school goals. No release from teaching time is provided to undertake the appraisal process. Records of the process are kept online and accessible by the principal, for use in the annual interview. Sharing of learning in the process with colleagues occurs in incidental ways, on a needs basis.

- **Self-reflection** – self-rating against VIT Standards for Professional Knowledge, Practice and Engagement; change to rating against the Australian Standards in 2015
- **Goal setting** – Professional Learning Plan based on self-rating; aligned with faculty and school goals
- **Mentor role** – Head of Department; goal setting assistance; interviewing on self-rating and self-comment, peer rating and evidence of achievement of goals
- **Peer link** – three colleagues chosen by staff member to complete rating against the VIT/Australian Standards; change to rating by one colleague and the direct report in 2015
- **Classroom observation** – by head of department/mentor
- **Student feedback** – not undertaken in a formal way
- **Standards referencing** – use of VIT Standards for self- and peer rating originally; change to Australian Standards in 2015
- **Sharing with staff** – incidental
• Evidence of impact on student learning – indirect indication in improvement in VCE results

SCHOOL C — Staff Appraisal Process

The appraisal process is undertaken by teaching staff in a 3-year cycle with full documentation required at the end of the third year for interview with the principal. Decisions on professional learning are made by the teacher to support learning needs noted in the self-reflection, as well as by the school to support school goals (e.g. digital needs). Heads of departments are provided with training to carry out classroom observation and provide feedback to teaching staff. Release time for professional learning is provided on a needs basis. Completion of the formal appraisal processes is understood to be part of the normal routine of the teachers. A record of goals set, professional learning undertaken and achievements is completed annually and kept by the teacher. In the appraisal year, the third year, detailed records of processes undertaken are completed for interview with the principal. A summary is kept on file and a copy of the summary is given to the teacher. In the final term of each year an “exhibition” of projects completed for the achievement of goals is set up in the school in various locations for the staff to circulate around. All staff have an opportunity to present their project.

• Self-reflection – “self-appraisal” with questions to guide reflection on areas of greatest satisfaction in role, professional strengths, areas for further development, aspects of role most challenging
• Goal setting – annual; Independent Learning Project; alignment with school’s annual goals

• Mentor role – head of department (reviewing of annual goals, professional development record and other achievements); observation of lessons in appraisal year

• Peer link – head of department

• Classroom observation – by head of department with a guideline pro-forma for focus on student understanding and knowledge, performance tasks set, classroom management and relationships, teaching methodologies; guidelines decided on as part of appraisal planning by the staff representative committee

• Student feedback – survey sheets with 13 statements on teaching, feedback and relationships and a 4-point response scale; anonymous

• Standards referencing – previously VIT Standards, now Australian Standards and use of government Performance and Development Framework for refinement of the school’s appraisal and professional learning processes

• Sharing with staff – Term 4 (end of year) Exhibition set up as a fair for staff to circulate around; all staff present their project

• Evidence of impact on student learning – as gauged from classroom observation and student feedback
In this school’s process, consideration is given to the readiness of teachers to undertake the requirement (e.g. classroom observation), to the extent that the cycle for completion is determined as appropriate to each teacher. The role of mentoring is significant, as outlined below, and professional learning is provided in coaching, classroom observation and feedback. Time for sharing of specific aspects of teaching is provided in weekly ‘teaching for understanding’ sessions, on staff days and by special arrangement with the director of teaching and learning, if necessary. A group of staff have undertaken in-servicing on approaches to classroom observation to inform school choices and information is provided to teachers at staff meetings. Resources (both external and school-generated) are provided on the teacher portal, Moodle. Notes on the three mentor interviews outlined below are filed for use by the principal and director of teaching and learning. These are considered to be providing information on staff growth and personal action research, as well as how staff view the values and interpret the vision of the school. The project proposal and final report are considered to be meeting AITSL Performance and Development requirements. Staff are able to view the interview transcripts and suggest changes.

- Self-reflection – encouraged through preparation for initial interviews (questions provided in advance) and use of online resources (by the teachers’ initiative)
• Goal setting – a personal learning goal (called a Performance of Understanding project) set in line with the school’s targeted themes, e.g. differentiation, feedback to improve student learning or a group focus; focus and methodology by the teachers’ own choice; approved by head of department and director of teaching and learning

• Mentor role – (1) review by senior member of staff on values and vision, role of a teacher, learning, relating with colleagues and students; (2) review of current practice by head of department; (3) review of process undertaken in project and its outcomes with senior member of staff (guideline questions based on the Australian Standards) — referred to as a “preview” which then informs plans for the next stage of professional learning

• Peer link – coaching support from trusted colleague; formation of triad (self-chosen)

• Classroom observation – on selected techniques; use of Ladder of Feedback; video examples from colleagues available on Moodle; incidental observation by principal, or arranged observation by teacher choice with the director of teaching and learning

• Student feedback – surveying (by choice)

• Standards referencing – against the ‘Highly Competent’ category of the Australian Standards; process seen to fulfil the professional requirements of the school as defined in the AITSL Performance and Development Framework
• Sharing with staff – through ‘teaching for understanding’ meeting times and staff days

• Evidence of impact on student learning – student feedback, assessment information, student work samples – choice of teacher

*SCHOOL E — Action Research*

The Action Research process is undertaken annually. The professional learning provided places emphasis on current pedagogy (e.g. making learning visible, clarity of learning intentions and checking for understanding). Some professional learning sessions are school-led; other undertakings include attendance at external workshops. Time is provided to staff on staff days and during after-school meetings to progress their action research. Responsibility for documenting the process rests with staff and forms part of the professional learning record to satisfy VIT requirements. At the end-of-year staff conference, teachers present to groups of 25 on the action research undertaken.

• Self-reflection – consideration of an area for improvement; influenced by sharing of action research work in staff conference in preceding year

• Goal setting – for “growth and development”; guidelines provided on purpose and methods of setting goals; type of feedback and forms of evidence of progress to be considered (AITSL guidelines provided)

• Mentor role – by professional learning team (PLT) leader to discuss goals set
• Peer link – professional learning team of 12 led by a member of the school executive; four triads of “critical friends” chosen by the teachers make up the PLT

• Classroom observation – by choice within triads (moving towards all teachers eventually being involved)

• Student feedback – survey use by individual choice based on goal choice; some use of ‘exit cards’ and blogs

• Standards referencing – selection of six of the Australian Standards (from Proficient and Highly Accomplished categories) used as benchmarks allied to school’s current emphases for learning; each teacher chooses a Standard related to the chosen personal goal to report on

• Sharing with staff – end of year staff conference (presenting to groups of 25) on Action Research undertaken

• Evidence of impact on student learning – some analysis of ‘effect sizes’ (by individual choice of the teacher)

**SCHOOL F — Appraisal Process**

This is an annual process emphasising collegial sharing and development of processes for classroom observation. The process culminates in the presentation of a portfolio by each staff member, accompanied by their ‘collegial partner’, to the principal. A summary document is kept on file. The record of professional learning undertaken to support goals set is given to the coordinator of professional
development. Release from class time is provided for four meetings, each of two hours, to enable planning and sharing with the collegial partner. Additional time is provided on staff days, and staff meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to share their learning and processes (e.g. in classroom observation) with the whole staff.

- Self-reflection – self-appraisal/rating (5-point scale) based on VIT Standards, then Australian Standards 2014
- Goal setting – formulation of a Professional Learning Plan for three years ahead; strategies/methods to achieve the goals documented
- Mentor role – staff choice as an alternative to collegial pairs
- Peer link – collegial pairing (self-selected); option of reflective interview as part of portfolio
- Classroom observation – individual choice
- Student feedback – optional, to become compulsory 2016; emphasis on students reflecting on their learning
- Standards referencing – VIT, then Australian Standards 2014; selection of three to provide evidence on
- Sharing with staff – some during trialling of methods (e.g. classroom observation) at staff meetings
- Evidence of impact on student learning – anecdotal; some pre- and post-testing by individual choice
SCHOOL G — Performance Development Process

The process is undertaken in a 3-year cycle with teachers working in learning teams. The focus is on refining elements of teaching practice. Professional learning activities are provided for all teachers to enable them to support the Teaching and Learning Improvement Plan. A group of mentors — who have volunteered for this role — are provided with training on classroom observation approaches, evidence-based practice, providing feedback, undertaking difficult conversations and coaching. The undertaking of the process is understood as part of general teaching requirements, whereas those performing the mentor role have a reduced teaching allocation. The process is documented by the teachers and provided as evidence of participation to the principal. Formal acknowledgment of completion of the process is retained on file and a copy given to the staff member. Teachers have the opportunity to share their learning with colleagues at staff meetings and through the learning teams.

- Self-reflection – on areas for growth based on Marzano’s Diagnostic Observation Proforma and on student performance data
- Goal setting – on an element of teaching practice (e.g. classroom techniques, preparation, assessment) in support of the school’s agreed Teaching and Learning Improvement Plan; written up as a Focus for Improvement; linked to Australian Standards
- Mentor role – observation and discussion to confirm areas for growth and to monitor and assist with progress; mentors apply for this role and are assigned to staff by a Mentor Selection and Allocation Panel

- Peer link – informal with a learning team

- Classroom observation – by the mentor on the aspect of teaching being focused on; compulsory; use of the Marzano Observation Protocol Short Form

- Student feedback – planned by the mentor and the teacher in relation to the aspect of teaching being focused on

- Standards referencing – the Standards underpin the process as an informing document

- Sharing with staff – during development of the process within a learning team; in staff meetings

- Evidence of impact on student learning – from student feedback, pre- and post-implementation of the aspect of teaching focused on; data on student performance

**SCHOOL H — Appraisal Process**

The process spans a 3-year cycle with an emphasis on making learning visible. Reporting on the chosen area of focus on teaching practice (The Growth Project) is undertaken annually to a senior member of staff assigned to each teacher (e.g. the vice principal or head of school), and at the end of three years to the
principal. Ongoing professional learning is undertaken, provided for all staff on staff
days, or guided for individuals by the senior staff member allocated, or as requested
by the staff member on the area of practice being researched (as a teacher
practitioner). Time to undertake the process is considered to be part of normal
responsibilities with the project undertaken needing to align with planning of work
directly related to student learning needs. Sharing of professional learning is enabled
at general staff meetings and in faculty meetings. Staff are encouraged to write
articles on their learning and they have an opportunity to talk about their project at
the conclusion of the year when achievements are celebrated and a certificate given.
Completion of the project is noted on the school database, and the professional
learning record forms part of the VIT requirements.

- Self-reflection – on an area for growth with consideration of the
  Australian Standards; research information provided on what works best
  in raising student achievement
- Goal setting – Project Focus — on an aspect of teaching practice to make
  a difference to student performance and an activity to support the
  annual school strategic directions — a Personal Professional Learning
  Plan (revised after the appraisal)
- Mentor role – senior member of staff (trained) assigned to provide
  encouragement, assist with resources, conduct classroom observation
  and conduct final discussion at the end of the project
- Peer link – teacher chooses a staff peer ( mentor) to work with
• Classroom observation – compulsory by chosen staff peer and senior member of staff assigned

• Student feedback – surveys used (formats provided on online management system); teachers can also design their own survey format as surveys form an integral part of the evidence required

• Standards referencing – a resource for reflection and choice of area of practice to work on

• Sharing with staff – at faculty meetings; some at general staff meetings; writing of article (individual choice); achievements celebrated at conclusion of year, projects talked about (and certificate given); school emphasis on making learning visible

• Evidence of impact on student learning – to be shown through, e.g. pre/post testing, student survey feedback, peer observation of lessons (compiled in a portfolio); cumulative effect in results; tracking of school performance data, e.g. NAPLAN, VCE results; major emphasis on engagement of students, gauged from annual survey to staff, students and parents

• Special provision – Enterprise funded awards for the undertaking of a special project on teaching and learning to support the school’s strategic directions can be applied for
The Action Plan annual cycle culminates in final reporting by teachers on their achievements to the head of campus. Professional learning undertaken emphasises thinking routines, the giving of feedback and coaching. Much of the learning is undertaken internally, but training for coaching is provided by an external consultant. A number of staff have completed Harvard online courses on thinking routines. Provision of release time from class is dependent upon needs associated with the Action Plan, and some adjustments to schedules are made to enable team teaching. Sharing of learning with colleagues takes place in department and campus meeting times. A record of achievements in the Action Plan is kept on file by the head of campus.

- Self-reflection – self-assessment against the Australian Standards to inform area for growth
- Goal setting – done at start of year; maximum of three goals; one goal linked to annual emphasis on learning/school theme
- Mentor role – goals discussed with head of department or head of school; two further interviews to track progress
- Peer link – chosen by teacher (pairs, triads, small group)
- Classroom observation – by chosen peer (not compulsory); incidental observation/walkthroughs by head of school
• Student feedback – survey use (arranged through Melbourne University, online, based on Australian Standards) providing individual feedback on strengths and areas to work on, outcomes acted upon in Action Plan; global results to principal (whole school and by department or section of the school)

• Standards referencing – self-assessment against the Australian Standards to inform goal setting; for Exemplary Employee Classification (see below)

• Sharing with staff – some use of regular department or school section meeting time

• Evidence of impact on student learning – not gathered statistically; progress gauged by heads of school sections

• Special provision – Exemplary Employee category can be applied for; application based on Lead category of Australian Standards; for three-year phase; remunerated; responsibility to work with other staff on professional learning

**SCHOOL J — Professional Growth Plan**

The annual cycle emphasises achievement of goals set for personal professional learning and to support department and school goals. With a theme set for the year, professional learning sessions, some on staff days, are aligned to support achievement of the goals. Learning from such activities is shared in Growth Groups (see below). Time is provided as part of after school meeting times to undertake the
program. A report is completed by each teacher on how he/she has achieved the chosen goal and is submitted to the deputy principal. This is stored electronically for access only by the principal and deputy principal and understood to be a record of completion and ongoing participation in the Professional Growth Plan. Any concerns are followed up with the staff member.

- **Self-reflection** – use of modified version of VIT reflection document (a different version for each of the five years of the registration cycle) with guidance to staff to apply it to a particular unit of work or class; change to integration of Australian Standards 2014/15 to determine areas to work on
- **Goal setting** – chosen goal(s) outlined (maximum 3) in support of the subject department goals and school goals for the year (curriculum directions) and how it would be achieved
- **Mentor role** – growth group leader
- **Peer link** – growth groups of 5-8 teachers with designated leader trained by the deputy principal; growth group leaders in turn are members of a group (up to 10) guided by one of four staff in senior leadership roles
- **Classroom observation** – commenced to assist reflection on individual practice
- **Student feedback** – by individual teacher choice
- Standards referencing – use of VIT Cycle of Reflection applied at commencement of planning; Australian Standards reflected on to determine goal setting for professional growth
- Sharing with staff – in growth groups
- Evidence of impact on student learning – staff being encouraged to explore understanding and engagement of students through peer and/or student feedback (marks excluded from consideration)

**SCHOOL K — Staff Feedback**

The emphasis of this school’s program is the provision of detailed feedback to teachers to enable them to focus ongoing professional learning to refine areas of teaching practice. The cycle is annual with the process undertaken in a four-month phase. A significant part of professional learning involves the interpretation of data from analysis of class and individual results and from student feedback. All processes undertaken are understood to be part of the normal routine of teachers. Data is stored electronically and is accessible by the principal and executive staff. The data records are used by teachers for discussion of needs and planning of appropriate approaches and professional learning with a “critical friend” chosen by them.

- Self-reflection – use of questionnaire based on Victorian Independent Education Union (VIEU) Dimensions of Teaching (5-point scale)
• Goal setting – not formalised; as it applies to professional learning selected for areas of improvement gauged from student feedback and performance data, or from perusal of the Australian Standards

• Mentor role – head of department; for professional development planning; feedback on role in department, teaching expertise, extra duties; final interview with staff member by head of department

• Peer link – choice of “critical friend” to discuss student feedback and student performance data

• Classroom observation – by choice, staff observing head of department, head of department observing staff; deputy headmaster or director of studies observing selected teachers’ classrooms on a needs basis (derived from data on student achievements)

• Student feedback – questionnaire on Purposeful Teaching, Teacher Empathy, Behaviour of Staff, Behaviour of Students, Student Morale; opportunity for staff to personalise the questionnaire

• Standards referencing – School Improvement Framework and Australian Standards inform the goal setting process and the student feedback questionnaires

• Sharing with staff – with “critical friend”

• Evidence of impact on student learning – use of data (process facilitated by Melbourne University), students’ results plotted against class and year level average; analysis of class and individual results against the General Achievement Test, Differential Aptitude Testing at Year 10, Year
7 Orientation Day testing, NAPLAN testing to determine the value adding for each student; for use by individual teachers; trialled selectively over 18 months before full implementation.

**SCHOOL L — Professional Reflection and Review (PRR)**

This school’s process is undertaken in a 3-year cycle with an annual requirement of progress being noted on a Personal Reflection Form and submitted in readiness for interview with either the principal, head of campus or director of professional learning across the 3-year cycle. Each year, three pieces of evidence of progress are presented (e.g. a report from a teacher peer, student feedback, analysis of a work sample). A PRR response is completed by the interviewer as evidence of participation and achievement and kept on file. A copy of this is given to the staff member. Time for completion of requirements and the undertaking of professional learning to support the PRR Plan is understood to be part of the normal teaching requirements. Time is provided at some staff meetings for staff to share what they are undertaking. Further sharing occurs with the teacher’s chosen “critical friend”.

- **Self-reflection** – Personal Reflection Form completed each year
- **Goal setting** – Professional Reflection and Review (PRR) Plan completed annually, related to the school’s major goals and emphasising elements of teaching practice to work on
- **Mentor role** – head of department to advise on an action plan; director of curriculum to advise on professional learning
• Peer link – selection of a “critical friend” for discussion on an element of practice and for classroom observation and feedback

• Classroom observation – by “critical friend”; choice of videoing to critique lessons; can be used as one piece of evidence of progress

• Student feedback – by survey, addressing five of the Australian Standards relevant to students

• Standards referencing – Australian Standards for setting of goals and determining progress; internal appraisal process also covers VIT annual requirements for professional learning

• Sharing with staff – with “critical friend”; some presentations at staff meetings
  
  • Evidence of impact on student learning – from student surveys, work samples; overall gauging of school performance, e.g. VCE results
Table 6.2: Summary of Appraisal Methods Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self-reflection</th>
<th>Goal setting</th>
<th>Standards referencing</th>
<th>Mentoring by senior staff</th>
<th>Peer collaboration/coaching</th>
<th>Classroom observation</th>
<th>Student feedback</th>
<th>Performance data</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>on learning that matters</td>
<td>for professional learning</td>
<td>to inform goal setting</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>training in coaching proposed</td>
<td>being trialled, videoing proposed</td>
<td>online system proposed</td>
<td>tracking of indiv. student performance proposed</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>self-rating against Nat. Standards</td>
<td>Professional Learning Plan — aligned with faculty and school goals</td>
<td>for self-reflection and peer rating</td>
<td>Head of Faculty</td>
<td>peer rating</td>
<td>by Head of Faculty</td>
<td>informal</td>
<td>overall VCE progress</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>self-appraisal with guiding questions</td>
<td>Independent Learning Project, aligned with school goals</td>
<td>Nat. Standards guiding prof learning</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>by Head of Department</td>
<td>survey sheet, anonymous</td>
<td>overall VCE progress</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>stimulus of questions for initial interviews with senior staff</td>
<td>Performance of Understanding personal learning project, aligned with school goals</td>
<td>by indiv. against ‘Highly Competent’ category for learning project; guideline for discussion on project achievement</td>
<td>school executive and Head of Dept.</td>
<td>self-chosen, use of triads</td>
<td>by chosen peer(s) on selected techniques; Principal walkthroughs</td>
<td>teacher choice</td>
<td>teacher choice</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>stimulus of staff conference</td>
<td>guidelines provided for choice of practice to develop</td>
<td>selected benchmarks for school’s learning emphases, individual goal and evidence of progress</td>
<td>Prof Learning Team Leader for goal setting</td>
<td>“critical friends”/triad teacher chosen</td>
<td>teacher choice in triad</td>
<td>survey use by teacher choice</td>
<td>teacher choice, analysis of effect sizes</td>
<td>professional learning process designated as Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>self-rating against Nat Standards</td>
<td>Professional Learning Plan (3 years)</td>
<td>selection of three to gauge achievement of goals set</td>
<td>optional/teacher choice</td>
<td>self-selection collegial pairing</td>
<td>teacher choice</td>
<td>compulsory 2016, reflection on learning</td>
<td>optional, pre- and post-testing</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Use of Marzano’s Diagnostic Observation Proforma</td>
<td>Focus for Improvement supporting school improvement plan</td>
<td>informing document for choice of focus</td>
<td>assigned trained mentors from staff</td>
<td>informal with learning team</td>
<td>compulsory by mentor</td>
<td>compulsory planned by mentor and teacher</td>
<td>pre- and post-testing on focus for improvement</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>Standards referencing</td>
<td>Mentoring by senior staff</td>
<td>Peer collaboration/coaching</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>Student feedback</td>
<td>Performance data</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>guided by research on raising student achievement</td>
<td>Project Focus for teaching practice and goal to support school goals</td>
<td>resource for reflection and goal setting</td>
<td>trained and assigned to teacher</td>
<td>teacher selected</td>
<td>compulsory by peer and mentor</td>
<td>survey (school format or teacher choice) to inform evidence of progress</td>
<td>pre- and post-testing; tracking of school performance, e.g. VCE</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>self-assessment against Nat. Standards</td>
<td>on areas of practice for growth (max. 2) and goal supporting annual school learning theme</td>
<td>to inform goal setting</td>
<td>Head of Department or School</td>
<td>pair, triad or small group chosen by teacher</td>
<td>optional by chosen peer(s); walkthroughs by Head of School</td>
<td>compulsory online survey</td>
<td>informal; general gauge by Heads of School</td>
<td>Exemplary Employee Classification by application, assessed against Lead category of Nat. Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>guided by Nat. Standards</td>
<td>max. 3 on areas of practice supporting subject dept. and school goals</td>
<td>to inform goal setting</td>
<td>Growth Group Leader assigned</td>
<td>Growth Group (5-8) assigned</td>
<td>compulsory by member of Growth Group</td>
<td>teacher choice</td>
<td>general gauge of school data, e.g. VCE results</td>
<td>emphasis on student understanding and engagement through peer and student feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>VIEU Dimensions of Learning questionnaire</td>
<td>on area for improvement based on student feedback and performance data</td>
<td>for goal setting and resource for student surveys</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>teacher choice of &quot;critical friend&quot;</td>
<td>teacher choice</td>
<td>compulsory surveying to inform goal setting</td>
<td>formalised analysis of class and individual results; data informs goal setting</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Personal Reflection Form</td>
<td>Prof. Reflection and Review Plan (PPR), supporting school goals</td>
<td>to inform goal setting</td>
<td>Head of Department (for PPR) and Director of Curriculum (for resourcing)</td>
<td>teacher choice of &quot;critical friend&quot;</td>
<td>compulsory, by &quot;critical friend&quot; on element of practice</td>
<td>compulsory survey based on Nat. Standards</td>
<td>overall gauging of school performance, e.g. VCE results</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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PART 2 DISCUSSION ON METHODS OF APPRAISAL AND INTERVIEW

FINDINGS

In the following sections, I discuss key elements of methods of appraisal, including interview feedback as applicable from the principals. Specifically, the methods of self-reflection, goal setting, classroom observation, student feedback and student performance data are included. In the discussion, I seek to determine the extent to which the school-level processes have supported the major purposes as expressed by the principals of continuous learning and growth of their teachers to fulfil the predominant aim of improving student learning outcomes. Additionally, record keeping of the appraisal processes is commented on. The analysis of the findings is informed by the research literature on appraisal methods and the conceptual and theoretical issues included in Chapter 3.

6.1. Self-reflection appraisal

Self-appraisal was understood by most principals interviewed to be an essential starting point in their appraisal processes to inform areas of practice to work on. However, it was noted by the principal of School F that self-appraisal is “natural for some, not for others”. Guidance for such appraisal and the provision of catalysts for reflection on strengths and weaknesses of practice varied from school to school, but the need for some form of guidance has been well recognised.
Seven schools used the Australian Standards as a guide for the self-reflection, encouraging staff to determine where they were placed within the Standards and where they needed to improve. School J used the VIT Cycle of Reflection\textsuperscript{11}. School G encouraged their staff to use the resource of Marzano’s (2007) Diagnostic Observation Proforma for reflection to inform the choice of an area of teaching to improve. A further alternative approach was that of School K where a questionnaire was devised based on their school system’s improvement framework and a Dimensions of Teaching tool\textsuperscript{12} to guide self-reflection. Emphasis was also placed on self-reflection on student performance data for readiness for discussion with the chosen “critical friend”. This was the only school out of the twelve that integrated student performance data formally across the teaching staff, although this was still claimed to be for formative purposes.

School C included “self-appraisal” in their Staff Appraisal Process, guiding staff to consider areas of greatest satisfaction in their role, professional strengths, areas for further development and aspects of their role that they found most challenging. School D, in advance of interviews with teachers, provided questions for them to guide their reflection on the values and vision of the school, their role as a teacher, significant aspects of learning, and relationship development with colleagues and students. Additionally, various resources and articles on their online management system were provided for reference, with a view to enabling the

\textsuperscript{11} This is based on an inquiry approach adapted from the cycle of teaching inquiry and knowledge building of Timperley et al. (2008)
\textsuperscript{12} Refer to Dimensions of Teaching and Learning, Centre for Educational Leadership, University of Washington, College of Education
teachers to come to the interviews prepared and informed. It is of interest to note in relation to these resources that it was indicated that teachers needed to use their initiative to make use of these resources, a hope for thoroughness on the part of the teachers.

School E’s system included a staff conference towards the end of the year with sharing of Action Research projects on an area of teaching practice chosen at the commencement of the year. The content of the conference is said to have helped to inform self-reflection and Action Research choices by staff for the following year.

The processes used by the principals concur with the findings of Ross & Bruce (2007) that, in stimulating and encouraging self-reflection, the potential outcomes should include increased capacity on the part of teachers to select improvement goals through opportunities opened up for finding gaps between desired and actual practices. Ross & Bruce (2007) also raise increased capacity to facilitate communication with a teacher peer. This aligns with the findings of Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) who emphasise the importance of teachers developing “adaptive expertise” which involves the ability to learn from others, to develop the skills and will to work with others in evaluating their own performance.

Certainly, critical reflection on practice needs to be central to the learning of any teaching professional to be able to articulate assumptions that underlie practice and consider alternatives to current perspectives on practice (Cranton 1996; Timperley et al. 2009). The emphasis on reflection expressed in early interviews was
re-affirmed in the final focus group with the principals. There needs to be insight on the part of principals and senior staff leading appraisal processes of differences in teachers’ self-efficacy impacting upon whether change will or will not ensue. There could be potential lack of desire to try to change following any negative self-assessment, because of a depressing effect (see Ross 1998), or lack of capacity to change following accurate self-appraisal if suitable support is not provided (see Ross, McDougall et al. 2002). Such difficulties need to be overcome to support improvements in teaching practice and continuous growth of teachers, critical self-reflection playing an essential role in teachers coming to understand the assumptions that underlie their practice (Cranton 1996), their own underpinning theories of action (Timperley et al. 2007), their beliefs and values, and their thinking and perception (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014).

Once again, I note the need to enlist a colleague’s support to build on the outcome of self-appraisal/reflection, whether at the starting point of the appraisal process or during, to engage teachers in discussion on such assumptions and beliefs. Each of the principals has tried to provide for this through a variety of means (Refer to 8.3.).

The findings noted above on suitable support for change, and the experiences of principals differ from indications in the OECD (2013) report on the need for self-appraisal to be a private undertaking to assist accuracy of such appraisal for the individual. This argument more so pertains to the consideration of self-appraisal not being valid for summative purposes. In each of the schools involved in
this research, the intention of the appraisal processes has been for formative purposes. Even in the example of one school using student performance data, use of the data is intended to be for reflection with a “critical friend”, who provides constructive feedback but does not flinch from discussions on areas of need, that is, used formatively to determine areas of teaching practice to work on.

What occurs beyond any stage of critical reflection needs to be resourced well with options for action on teaching strategies (Fox 2014; Ross & Bruce 2007; Taylor & Tyler 2012).

6.2. Goal setting

Self-reflection was in most schools a precursor to goal setting. Seven of the schools specifically requested staff to take into account the school’s goals or strategic directions or emphases for professional learning, or specific faculty goals, when considering the setting of personal professional goals. In most schools, the goal setting was a significant stage, formalised into a Plan (e.g. a Professional Learning Plan, Professional Learning Action Plan, Independent Learning Project, Performance of Understanding Project or Action Research).

Part of the Plan in some schools involved consideration of what types of evidence could be used to indicate achievement of the goal(s) set. School H outlined possible types of “evidence” of learning (e.g. pre/post testing, student surveys) and challenged staff to consider how they could “make visible their good practice to others”. This was stimulated by the research of Hattie (2009). School L specified
collection of three pieces of “evidence” (e.g. from student surveys, work samples, statements from colleagues and lesson observation reports).

Formal approval of goals set varied from school to school. Ten of the schools involved the head of faculty/department or another senior member of staff in a mentor role to discuss goals set, approve them and assist with resourcing of them through professional learning opportunities. The value or lack of value in such an approach is taken up in 8.3.

6.3. Peer links/coaching/mentoring/feedback

There is growing evidence that teacher collaboration and peer learning have a strong positive impact on student achievement over time (Looney 2011). This provides support for the principals’ encouragement of such collaboration with peers. Working with colleagues was facilitated in a variety of ways across the schools. These included:

1. Assignment of a mentor from amongst the senior staff to discuss and/or approve goal setting, assist with professional learning opportunities or to discuss student or peer feedback.

2. Assignment by the appraisal coordinator of teachers to a “growth group” of (e.g. five-to-eight teachers with a senior staff member leading).

Having an approval process implies a checking on the validity of goals set by the teachers by those senior to them. With this power differential coming into play, there
is the potential to cause negative responses from teachers who consider themselves capable of determining their own directions for growth. Helping to resource goals set would be beneficial; having them approved is another, unless this were to involve, for example, simply a discussion on alignment of the goal choice with school or department goals.

Issues associated with a potential power differential (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014) and the need to develop leadership capacity to carry out such a role (Hall 2010; Gimbel et al. 2011) are elaborated on in Chapter 10.

3. A teacher choosing a trusted colleague as a “critical friend”, “coach”, “mentor” or “collegial partner” to discuss self-reflection, elements of teaching practice, student feedback, classroom observation and, in one school, to discuss data on student achievement/class performance.

4. A teacher choosing two colleagues to form a “triad” for planning professional learning or for classroom observation.

These two approaches concur with the findings of Smith (2005) on the important source of information about quality teaching that colleagues can provide for professional development purposes. Such links necessitate preparation of staff in techniques of collaborative reflection and professional sharing (Claudet 1999). On the matter of coaching, support for this choice comes from the research of Joyce & Showers (2002) into the process of development of specific teaching skills. They indicate that the process of learning, planning instruction, experimenting and
reflecting as new skills are developed in the classroom can be supported by skilled coaching in peer support groups. The collegial nature of the process has been found to stimulate reflection and greater skill development. Value has also been found in feedback, with the caution, as raised by Showers & Joyce (1996) of not slipping into “supervisory, evaluative comments” (p. 15). Concerning the use of a “triad”, this is a term that has been applied to a group of three which is considered to support good feedback (refer to Zbar, Marshall & Power 2007).

On the matter of “critical friends”, one principal commented on how this approach had developed from being “stop start” to becoming embedded in his school over time. He indicated, “there is now an expected relationship between members of staff in having these conversations and people feel almost that it’s what we do, what is expected of us”. This latter comment is reflective of, on the positive side, staff coming to see value in the discussion or, on the negative side, possibly resignation of some staff that to the fact that this is having to occur.

5. Formation of an informal “learning team” or “faculty team”. The arguments raised in 4) above apply here also. I add the potential of such an approach to build the intellectual and professional capital of the staff throughout a school, including leadership capacity (Timperley et al. 2009). Leadership can then potentially become distributed, instructionally focused and ultimately teacher-owned (Harris et al. 2003) with an emphasis on being “ideas based” (Darling-Hammond &
Bransford 2005; Drago-Severson 2004). These arguments are built upon in Chapter 9 (Community of Learners).

6. A teacher selecting, for example, three colleagues to complete a rating of them against the Australian Standards.

7. A teacher selecting a peer to provide an open comment on their teaching practice as one of three forms of evidence for an appraisal process.

It is important to note in 6) and 7) that these processes were just one part of the appraisal process. In particular, in 6), self-rating against the Standards as well as rating by the direct reports for teaching and pastoral responsibilities were used, as well as interviewing to discuss the findings. Whilst noting the formality of this approach, the principal claimed openness of senior staff and himself to feedback from the teachers and integration of this into the strategic directions of the school. This was seen as part of the culture building nature of the school. Sensitivities of staff going through such a process cannot, however, be overlooked, the matter of the potential negative impact of a power differential being evident.

6.4. Classroom observation

Matters critiqued in the section on peer feedback apply also to classroom observation which necessarily involves interaction with peers. Classroom observation was compulsory in eight of the twelve schools. Who would observe lessons ranged from the principal or deputy principal to a senior member of staff, for example, a
The prevalence of this method across the schools is in line with the findings through OECD research (Isore 2009) which indicates classroom observation as the most common source of evidence of teaching practice in OECD countries, whether American, European or Asian Pacific (including Australia), for both developmental and accountability purposes.

With this choice, there is recognition of the classroom as the main place of work of teachers. The potential for changes in practice through this method and the breaking down of isolation in classrooms has been supported since early research on appraisal of teachers’ work (for example, that of Kyriacou, 1995 and Ponticell, 1995). It is important to note in this context of classroom observation, that school architecture can be a major enabler or inhibitor of certain pedagogical, and hence appraisal, processes. Over time, with developments in school design enabling more flexibility in learning spaces, various size groupings of students, teachers working together and more visibility into classrooms, the traditional sense of the privacy of the classroom has been diminishing. However, the emphasis of the principals has been more so on one-on-one observation and is indicative of acceptance of traditional pedagogy. This is evident, for example, in the words of one of the principals:
To open up your classroom to another professional to come and see you teach, to give you feedback on your teaching, and to read the notes, and then to sit down and discuss that with someone, has a clear and direct result on the actual interactions in the classroom environment that’s created. It’s to do with classroom management, professional knowledge, teacher confidence...

As classroom observation has been undertaken for formative purposes, not summative, there is an underlying consistency across the schools in a growth perspective. The potential issues of teacher inhibition or contrived performance (Miujs 2006; Papay 2012), or reduction in openness in discussion, feedback and professional learning from the interaction (as found by Santiago & Benavides 2009) may have been reduced. However, with observation by “superiors”, there is the risk of perception by teachers of a “surveillance” role of the senior staff, as opposed to a formative, collegial role (see Stronge & Ostrander 1997).

To maximise usefulness and acceptance of the undertaking, training is necessary to conduct observations effectively and to engage in constructive discussion (OECD 2013). Additionally, lack of information on how to improve could be a barrier to individual improvement among teachers. Gaining of new knowledge, development of new skills combined with opportunities for self-reflection are seen to be essential to make such an exercise an effective form of professional development (Taylor & Tyler 2012). It is noted that preparation for classroom observation was emphasised in the schools. One school raised the importance of
training in coaching for follow-up after observations and regretted that there could not be more time for such training.

Three principals noted specifically the Ladder of Feedback (Perkins 2003) and provided training in this method. In one of the schools, the principal outlined the importance of having such a specific technique and the value of staff modelling the approach to others as part of their professional learning:

We have a number of staff who have been trained in using the Ladder of Feedback. They have done observations with one another and are now the ones promoting it, modelling it to others. I think that modelling from teacher to teacher is good because they know it works. If it works for their colleague, it will work for them.

Focusing on specific aspects of practice for professional growth, preferably based on a research-based strategy, has been found to be beneficial in more recent research (see, for example, Fox 2014). Such an approach was indicated amongst the schools (for example, from the work of Hattie 2009; Marzano 2007), and chosen by the teacher being observed, as opposed to general observation where human limitations in taking in details accurately could limit the usefulness (refer to Waters 2011).

One school specifically raised videoing of lessons or segments of lessons. Varying responses of teachers to this method were mentioned, some being quite
frightened by the prospect. Although still in the trial phase, some staff had made videos of themselves available to others as a learning tool. This was seen to be reinforcing and encouraging for colleagues. The potential value of videos of oneself for self-reflection is raised by Waters (2011).

Walkthroughs were mentioned in two of the schools. It is noted in one of the schools, where the principal carried out the walkthroughs, that such circulation through classrooms had become expected by staff as part of development of a culture of openness to learning and sharing on the concept of ‘teaching for understanding’. As for this strategy improving instruction, findings are unclear (Camika & Matthew 2009; Holland & Garman 2001), and the principal indicated in the focus group that teachers do show some signs of self-consciousness or even fear when he enters. He does always follow up with some discussion (and reinforcement) afterwards.

6.5. Student feedback

Smith (2005) reinforces the value of teachers drawing on what she sees as the “expert opinion of the pupils”, the insights they can give into, for example, teachers’ classroom behaviour, affective and didactive skills, for teachers to improve their teaching. Whether by formal or informal means, potential value is claimed. However, research studies on the use or reliability of such surveying remain rare (Isore 2009). Student feedback was compulsory in six of the schools. Management of such feedback included:
1. Use of survey sheets devised by the school on a range of elements of classroom practice and management

2. Use of surveying by an external consultant to determine areas of strength and areas to work on

3. Specific feedback on an aspect of teaching in focus

Concerning school-devised surveys, one school included the areas of Purposeful Teaching, Teacher Empathy, Behaviour of Staff, Behaviour of Students and Student Morale. The principal indicated the potential for staff to modify the survey to suit them, a step that concurs with the advice of Smith (2005). Smith’s findings suggest that such surveys are best used by teachers themselves for professional development purposes, not for management and administration for decision-making purposes. School K’s use is in line with this as the purpose of the survey results was for discussion with a “critical friend” (although the results were accessible by the principal and the senior executive team, with indication given by the principal that any “major concern” would be followed up with discussion with the teacher and involvement of the head of department).

This principal did also note “how regularly fair” the students’ feedback is and the extent to which the teachers indicate the students’ feedback is “feasible, reasonable and balanced”. This concurs with the findings of Hattie (2009), who notes students generally provide accurate feedback, regardless of the evaluation tool used. He considers that students are well placed to comment on teachers’ impact on their learning as they observe teaching practices on a daily basis, a view that differs from
that of Peterson (2000, 2003) who cautions students are not teaching experts. I note also the lack of research studies on the use or reliability of such surveying as raised by Isore (2009). As found by Ferguson (2012), student surveys used as a single method of feedback would be open to error and need to be well-constructed. Their use may be limited to suggesting directions for professional development.

Where the eliciting of feedback was optional, approaches included:

1. Use of school-devised general survey sheets, anonymous, for use by the teacher, for example, for discussion with the “critical friend”
2. The devising of questions by the staff member based on the goal chosen on classroom practice
3. Use of “exit cards” to clarify student understanding\(^\text{13}\)
4. Teacher-devised surveys that emphasised students reflecting on their own learning

One principal expressed:

We’ve left it very much to staff how they want to get feedback because some will get it back verbally, others will get it via exit cards, and others would do a questionnaire. It hasn’t been imposed that you must get student feedback

\(^{13}\) Exit cards require students to answer particular questions on a piece of paper/card that is handed in before they leave the class. These cards can provide teachers with immediate information that can be used to assess students’ understanding, monitor students’ questions or gather feedback on teaching. For students, exit cards serve as a content review at the end of a daily lesson and enhance their meta-cognitive skills (For example, refer to: http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/exit-cards
feedback, but we’ve talked about Hattie’s work and the importance of feedback.

Another commented on the potential usefulness of student feedback:

I think that student feedback was enlightening for staff. For some it was affirming of things that they were anxious about; for others it gave insight into some aspects that could be taking a lot of the teacher’s energy but for the students were not leading to much gain. Listening to the students, reflecting and making changes can be really beneficial.

However, in the interview, whilst acknowledging the potential usefulness of such feedback, the principal did note that less confident teachers can find negative feedback threatening — a matter that she has needed to work on with staff to encourage them to benefit from the students’ perspective.

6.6. Evidence of influence on student learning

In one of the schools, detailed analysis of student performance data was undertaken with consultancy organised through a university to assist with management and interpretation of the data. This involved plotting of student results against class and year averages, comparison with results on the General Achievement Test for senior students, with a Differential Aptitude Test for Year 10, Year 7 internal Orientation Day testing and NAPLAN results. The process was trialled for 18 months before full implementation. Although kept electronically and accessible by the
principal, deputy principal and executive staff, the use of the data was intended to be by individual teachers for discussion with a “critical friend”, as noted previously. However, knowledge by staff of potential access by the principal and other executive staff could be seen as a potential threat.

The relevance of examining performance data was implied in a number of the schools but without a systematic procedure for analysis. In four of the schools, some pre- and post-testing/analysis of effect sizes was undertaken in relation to an aspect of teaching being focused on. This was undertaken by individual choice of the teacher.

Data from student feedback was more prevalent, this method being used in six of the schools. There was also some gauging of impact on student learning from student work samples, classroom observation and peer feedback, such methods being used in one school as examples of “making learning visible” (Hattie 2009), and in another as examples of “evidence” of improvements in teaching practice impacting on students’ understanding.

Four of the principals referred to the cumulative effect of the professional growth undertakings with improvements in VCE results and NAPLAN results. At the focus group, the principals indicated that realistically their best gauge of improvement in student learning was through the VCE results. Hence, proof of impact of appraisal processes on student learning outcomes, where understood as meaning results, remains at a more general level, as opposed to more specific gauging of
impact by, for example, pre- and post-testing to determine the impact of specific teaching practices.

The detailed student performance data analysis in one of the schools, although intended for individual teacher use to discuss with a “critical friend” to consider ways of improving performance, does provide evaluative data which would identify broader areas of instructional strength and weakness in the school. This could enable the targeting of resources and possibly the leveraging of existing teachers who have had success in certain areas to share their knowledge (Papay 2012). It is noted also that, in this school, expertise has been enlisted from the university level to ensure that there is sufficient understanding of the data and how it can be used to inform instructional practice (an approach supported by Hargreaves 2007; Papay 2012).

Use of such data as a primary measure to judge the quality of a teacher’s practice is considered insufficient because of other influences on students’ learning, such as school factors (class sizes, instructional time, resources etc.), home background and peer culture (Darling-Hammond 2011). In this particular school, the data was stated as being information to assist teachers’ planning of instructional practice following discussion with a colleague, not for summative purposes. However, follow-up clarification with the principal did reveal that, although a commitment not to use such feedback for “due process” has been maintained, in cases where concerns in results have been noted, discussion with the teacher(s) has been undertaken by senior staff.
It is noted with any of the forms of data used in these schools that there has been consciousness of providing feedback in a timely manner to make the information more relevant for the teachers, to make this part of an ongoing process for teacher learning. This concurs with the recommendations of Goe (2013) from her research on potential impacts of teacher evaluation on improvements in teaching practice where regular, timely and specific feedback is given focused on improving teaching, with the proviso that the feedback is based on adequate data and that the person providing the feedback can make reliable and meaningful judgments (p. 26).

6.7. Reporting on the appraisal process/record keeping

Across the schools, the purpose of record keeping was seen to be as evidence of staff participation in the processes determined by the school. Such records were specified also in one school as evidence of their following the AITSL Performance and Development Framework. In all schools, the professional learning undertakings formed all or part of requirements to satisfy the external requirements of the government agency of the Victorian Institute of Teaching for ongoing registration of teachers. The latter requirement, being external to the school and applicable to teachers in all schools, provided for some validation of the record keeping, which one would hope to reduce the potential tension between “accountability”, inferred by such reporting and desired encouragement of further professional learning and collegiality, raised as a concern in appraisal processes by Timperley & Robinson (1998).
In three of the schools, online recording was specified. In one, this involved goals and achievements, and ratings by individual teachers, by a peer of their choice and by their direct reports for both teaching and pastoral responsibilities against the Australian Standards; in another, this involved student performance data; the third involved the growth goal set and record of the process undertaken to achieve the goal. In the first two cases, the records were accessible by the principal or other relevant senior staff (e.g. the head of faculty. In the latter case, records were accessible by the principal or deputy principal. The first two examples could heighten the potential tension referred to above, however, the openness claimed by the principals in each case to discussion with the staff members and feedback from them on the school and its directions were seen to lessen such tension. For the first example, as teaching standards are mandated, this may create an interpretation of bureaucratic accountability which could stand in conflict with teachers’ own sense of professional accountability and detract from the principal’s positive intention of supporting the professional learning of his teachers. In a situation with such thorough record keeping, it would be essential that any staff fears of later use of the records be allayed (Vanci-Osam & Aksit 2000).

A process of summaries of final interviews with the principal or head of faculty/campus being kept on file and a copy given to the staff member is noted in six of the schools. One specified that the staff member could have input into such documentation if desired. If there is to be no summative use of such a document, modification would appear not to be necessary. One principal specifically stated that
no central record of action research records of staff members was kept. This was seen as the responsibility of the individual staff member. In all schools, teachers kept records of professional learning undertaken as part of the appraisal process, as noted above, for VIT records for teacher registration purposes.

6.8. Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the methods of appraisal applied across the twelve schools involved in the research. Both similarities and differences have been noted, but the common aim claimed by the principals has been to support and encourage teachers in their professional growth and development of teaching practices to support improvements in student learning. A critical question concerns whether the methods applied fit the intentions or whether the principals have been drawn into the application of a range of traditional methods of appraisal, whose importance has been raised in an era of audit and measurement, creating a more complex and time consuming process than necessary for their original intentions. Potential complexities in management of the processes and receptivity by staff have been discussed, in particular, where a hierarchical superior/teacher interaction is concerned. In the following chapter, I provide findings on the principals’ expressed purposes behind their implementation of teacher appraisal processes in their schools.
CHAPTER 7

Purposes of Appraisal

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to elucidate what the principals in this sample consider to be the purposes of having an appraisal scheme in their schools. In their planning for appraisal in a variety of forms, it is evident that they have deeply considered their intentions and the potential benefits for their teaching staff and their students’ learning. For purposes of clarity, I have organised the principal feedback into subheadings, but it is evident that many of the purposes outlined are inevitably interconnected. The various purposes outlined also allude to principals’ efforts to create a community of learners in their schools. I deal with this aspect separately in Chapter 9. A summary of components/ sub-themes and principal responses is provided in Table 7.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components / sub-themes</th>
<th>% of principals identifying these components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student learning outcomes</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous learning &amp; growth for teachers</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning professional learning with the appraisal process</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback to teachers</td>
<td>11 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying state and national requirements</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning professional learning with school goals</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7.1: Core Category 1 — Purposes of Appraisal*
7.2. Student learning outcomes

The principals unanimously expressed their conviction concerning the importance of achieving the best learning outcomes for students. This was succinctly expressed by a number of the principals. For example:

To improve children’s learning, that’s the number one priority, to make sure we’ve got the best pedagogy happening across the college that we can. (School I)

An appraisal process has to be centred in what ... is best for our kids and their learning. (School C)

There can’t be an argument if you’re talking about improving student learning because most teachers go into the profession in order to do the best by their students, so there can’t be much argument; even though you’ll get resistance, people can’t say that’s not a worthwhile thing to do. And that’s all it’s been about. It’s not about teacher loss of advocacy and so on; it isn’t about qualification or registration or appraisal; it’s about the student learning. (School E)

One principal (School B) expressed the importance of student learning by stating that this is “top of the hierarchy” of reasons for undertaking teacher appraisal.
7.3. Continuous learning and growth for teachers

Supporting student learning was certainly directly linked and an outcome of a similarly strongly expressed purpose of providing opportunities for continuous learning and growth for their teachers. School D expressed an understanding of purpose as:

Continuous learning... it’s just about learning and growth. I think it’s about boosting learning outcomes for students because in everything we do in talking about this, we talk about developing teachers but there’s only one goal, and that’s improving student outcomes and so that puts us on the same page straightaway.

The principal of School F cited reflection on practice as impacting potentially on student learning:

For me at the heart is improving learning outcomes for students, so it’s actually a supportive process for teachers to actually reflect on their practice and look at changes they could make to enable improved outcomes for students.

Underpinning this is an assumption of teachers understanding “their role as a teacher” (School F) and being open or being assisted to become more open to exploring what “good practice” entails. The principal of School H expressed:
We want it (the appraisal process) to be a fulfilling experience, a relevant experience, obviously designed for teachers’ professional growth and we also wanted them to be able to articulate and make visible their good practice to others, so it’s an exploration and a sharing process... focusing on an aspect of teaching practice that is thought to make a difference to student performance.

School L expressed also the opening up of conversations about teaching practice:

One of the spinoffs of an appraisal system is for the first time I think we were having conversations about pedagogy and about teaching practice within the school and ... that had never happened before.

School E has structured professional learning undertakings for staff to improve consistency of practice in making learning intentions clear, checking for student understanding and giving quality feedback to students on their work to support student learning.

7.4. Aligning professional learning with the appraisal process

The purpose of supporting and aligning professional learning was evident in all schools and specifically expressed as supporting the formulation of an agreed personal teaching and learning plan for each teacher. For example, School H:

One thing that every staff member has to do is prepare what we call a Personal Professional Learning Plan and that outlines where they are at and
those areas where they would like to grow, and we have a conversation with them at the end of the year about that and that informs their personal professional growth plan for the following year.

A further example is that of School B with all professional development needing to be “aligned with the Professional Learning Plan”. School L in its process of developing its appraisal scheme, found that “professional learning plans” could be formulated which “related directly to the needs and wishes and the areas for improvement for the staff member”, enabling a “structuring of professional learning in the school” and an “embedding of it in an informed way”.

7.5. Providing feedback to teachers

Part of creating opportunities for growth involved the giving of feedback, which surfaced in the sample schools as a major purpose. School C, in particular, emphasising the accountability of teachers to their students, stated:

We considered it important that the students would give feedback on their teachers (which is anonymous). Students fill in survey sheets... There has also been a lot of benefit from people being in and out of others’ classrooms... I think it’s just an open learning culture.

(The processes enabled) having a look at the teacher, for the teachers to look at themselves, then other professionals and the students ... which I think is fair and I think that’s where teachers feel quite supported and that it is professional because it’s about their professional performance... I think
the opportunity to give critical feedback to a professional ... I think that’s very important for people if they’re going to improve as professionals, and they need a means by which they can be given that feedback and time to reflect and put it into practice... It is an accountability to their students but it is also very much about themselves for their own professionalism.

The professional commitment of teachers and the value of feedback are echoed also by School J:

I think the purpose of appraisal for me is about enabling good teachers to become great teachers, okay teachers to become good teachers, the opportunity for action research in your classroom providing real time feedback. I do think most teachers, when you get to the core of their being as practitioners, don’t want to be ordinary, and so a process like this enables people to follow a structure if they’re well led which will lead them to a point where they actually are energised by the way in which they can see themselves improving.

Whereas School J referred to the potential to “energise” the teachers, School L expressed a purpose of being able to be affirmed:

To affirm people in what they were doing...there were good conversations and people felt affirmed and felt that they had been listened to ... saw the
advantage of having a conversation with a senior member of staff structured in.

Apart from affirmation, there was also recognition at School L, similar to School J, that:

Everyone can teach better and those who might be struggling can be assisted so that they actually feel safe and trusted in the role.

7.6. Satisfying state and national requirements

A final clear purpose evident across the twelve schools was having processes in place that satisfied government compliance requirements, and which supported over time the Standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and aligned professional learning with teacher registration requirements. Similarly, principals acknowledged the value of the Australian Standards for Teachers and the requirements of the Performance and Development Framework applied to teachers in government schools. Recognising the scope given to independent schools to formulate a process that suited their school environment, each principal has aimed to create an appraisal scheme that respects State and National directions but best suits its teaching staff.
7.7. Aligning personal professional learning with school goals

In utilising scope to formulate an appraisal process to suit the school’s teaching staff, nine of the schools integrated professional learning into their appraisal scheme that would directly support the school’s goals or strategic directions.

Such support for school goals is evident, for example, in School C:

Across the school every year we have our school goals which we set or priorities and every person has to align their own goals set for the year to those and then ... their professional learning. And so we provide professional learning structured, very structured, through the year and people elect to do certain courses.

At School I, the principal indicated:

We have a college theme every year and linking that and constantly emphasising the importance of the theme and linking that to our professional learning has also been helpful.... This year we’ve gone for one that is pastoral but also academically linked and we’ve been rolling out the thinking curriculum over the last couple of years and ... really pushed that this year. So that gives an extra amount of buy-in for the staff.
One school expressed how the appraisal processes can support the strategic directions of the school:

I like to give my staff a little bit of autonomy and allow them some elbow room to explore an area that they want to, but one of our strategic goals is to deliver what we call an excellent (School H) learning experience. The elements of this represent our priorities as an Australian girls’ school with an international outlook, so that is the big education goal and it allows a lot of leeway. And then every year we have different ideas come into focus, so it gives teachers an opportunity to feel connected into that strategic goal and it also has that notion of aspiring to excellence all the time and being aware of what else is out there in an area that interests them.

7.8. Discussion

The major focus, as expressed by the principals, has been that of achieving the best possible learning outcomes for students, strong convictions expressed that this must be the ultimate purpose of having an appraisal process. Wanting the best outcomes for students is closely bound to their indication of achieving the best pedagogy amongst their teachers, having their teachers continuously learning and growing in their practice. There is a strong implication in their statements of having teachers accountable through the demonstration of ongoing improvements in their teaching practices.
This is in line with the OECD synthesis (Isore 2009) on approaches to appraisal aimed at both ensuring educational efficiency (meeting academic standards) and ensuring ‘best’ practice to improve student outcomes for all students (educational equity). However, there is a strong formative stance expressed by the principals involved, with an intention of supporting teachers to reflect on practice (emphasised in the OECD report 2013), and to examine what ‘good’ practice entails. This aligns with Isore’s (2009) clarification of “good teaching” as opposed to “successful teaching”, the latter potentially determined by value-add means associated with student results.

Such a formative stance by the principals would resonate with that of Conley & Glasman (2008) who support evaluation purposed toward teacher formative assistance which appears to provide the most promise of blending organisational and individual goals. Examining ‘good’ practice has involved a focusing on specifics of classroom practice (Sinnema & Robinson 2007) in the majority of these schools, such specifics including making learning intentions clear, checking for student understanding, giving quality feedback to students. There has also been an emphasis on qualitative approaches to identifying strengths and weaknesses and tailoring professional learning to address the weaknesses (Stronge & Tucker 2003). Accountability in such approaches can then come in the form of seeking improvements (Poster & Poster 1997) and “acting as one responsible” (Ingvarson 1998). However, identification of weaknesses becomes an area thwart by potential negative teacher responses, an issue I take up in Chapter 7.
Principals have also emphasised a purpose of enabling sharing amongst colleagues of elements of practice that are thought to make a difference to student performance. How this is managed with, for example, time issues and who most comfortably shares with whom, is elaborated on in Chapter 9.

A notable aspect in the principals’ explanations of intended purposes is the avoidance of tenure, promotion or salary decisions associated with the appraisal processes undertaken. However, it is noted that one school provides a special summative process based on achievement of the Australian Standards in the ‘Lead’ category for staff seeking to be designated as “Exemplary Employees” with special responsibility for supporting others with professional learning (a three-year tenured position with additional remuneration). I had assumed that an avoidance of summative approaches associated with tenure or salary matters would be the case amongst the principals and expressed this assumption in Chapter 4. Although I maintained an open mind on this matter, the principals’ responses indicated a clear rejection of such summative approaches.

Similarly, underperformance is expressed as being dealt with by a separate process of ‘performance management’ or ‘due process’. However, it is noted that one principal indicated that if an extreme weakness were to be detected within the appraisal process, this would then be dealt with by ‘performance management’. Such a follow-on would surely undermine trust in the intention of professional learning or growth. Regardless of intended formative purposes, an underlying concern can remain for some teachers that, within the formative process, a problem will be
detected. An implication of judging remains, of remedying deficiencies in performance and there being a deficit model directed towards equipping staff with the required skills (Wilson & Wood 1996). This is particularly evident in the reference above by one principal to ‘performance management’ being implemented if an extreme weakness were detected. I concur with Conley & Glasman (2008) who emphasise that fear of failure and stress need to be removed from the processes undertaken.

To the principals, appraisal and professional learning are seen as interrelated, ongoing processes and they have each sought to align teacher goals within appraisal and associated professional learning with the school goals (or, in one case, a chosen theme for learning for the year). The value of setting a particular focus on an area of teaching or student outcomes in a school development plan and emphasising the potential impact is found to potentially lead to greater emphasis on this area in teacher appraisal and feedback, which in turn can increase the changes in teachers’ work and teaching practices (Isore 2009). One school emphasised that a very structured professional development plan was devised for each year for teachers to progress the emphases for learning within the school goals. This resonates with the importance placed on understanding which types of professional learning are most likely to be effective in improving pedagogical practice and student outcomes in the Australian Charter for Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (2012). Similarly, it is noted that principals’ support for and participation in
professional learning is seen to produce the largest effect size on learning outcomes for students in the meta-analysis of Robinson et al. (2008).

The importance of providing feedback is also emphasised, (1) entailing peer feedback following classroom observation (compulsory in seven of the schools), ranging from feedback from a chosen peer to feedback from a senior member of staff, for example, a Head of Department; and (2) student feedback (compulsory in six of the schools by a variety of formal survey or informal means). One principal emphasised strongly the importance of “critical feedback to teachers as professionals”. Another added that “most teachers don’t want to be ordinary”. This resonates with the research of Davis, Ellett & Annunziata (2002) and their conclusions that evaluation and professional growth systems provide rich opportunities for teachers, as professionals, to focus on the core of their professional practices (p. 297). A related element of feedback is the opportunity to provide affirmation of good practice and to listen to teacher concerns (Gimbel et al. 2011). The Performance and Development Framework (2012) recognises the “entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support”. Ellett (1997) and Davis, Ellett & Annunziata (2002) emphasise that it is essential to appreciate teachers’ professional autonomy and choices and to recognise that there is ‘no one best way’ to teach. The topic of feedback is dealt with further in Chapter 9 in my discussion on the building of a community of practice.

The macro-policy agenda features to a lesser extent in the direct statements of the principals in the early stages of interviewing, but it was mentioned in cursory ways, understood as an influential factor in the background. In further interviews, the
pressure to comply by having some form of appraisal became more evident. Whilst state and national directions have been acknowledged, it would appear that the principals have aimed at formulating an appraisal process that would support their purposes as expressed above. Their challenge has been to have their teachers understanding the significance of choices for their own school environment and the students for whom they are responsible, trying to achieve the most suitable processes to have their teachers on side and understanding the significance of continued teacher development for improvement of instructional quality (Papay 2012). Hence, clarity to their staff of the purposes expressed has been critical. This is dealt with in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 8

Clarity of Purposes/Validation of Processes

In the previous chapter, I outlined principals' interpretations of the purposes behind their implementation of an appraisal scheme with their teaching staff. Predominant themes expressed were: the support of the best possible student learning outcomes; providing professional growth opportunities for their teaching staff; aligning professional learning with the appraisal processes; providing opportunities for feedback; satisfying state and national requirements; and aligning professional learning with school goals.

In this chapter, I give voice to principals’ experiences with how significant clarity of purpose is in the winning of trust of their teachers, and the importance of providing processes that are seen to have integrity and take into account the teachers’ sense of professionalism and the demands of their teaching responsibilities. A summary of components/ sub-themes and principal responses is provided in Table 8.1 below.
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<td>References back to the Standards</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning not performance management</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving staff in the planning process</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking time to build trust / learn new skills / ensure capacity to use processes</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
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*Table 8.1: Core Category 2 — Clarity of Purposes / validation of processes*

8.1. Clarity of purposes

8.1.1. Mandated requirements

In the first stage of interviewing, three principals referred directly to compliance requirements as a rationale for undertaking an appraisal scheme to legitimise it (e.g. to receive school funding). Others, at this first stage, mentioned state and national requirements in cursory ways but were more direct in further interviews. It was evident that the development of the Australian standards and the Victorian Performance and Development Framework had accelerated their thinking about appraisal of their teachers. It was evident that the development of the Australian Standards and the Victorian Performance and Development Framework had accelerated their thinking about teacher appraisal in their schools. However, although acknowledging such requirements, their explanations of purposes for their appraisal processes were more idealistic, taking account of the advantages of encouraging the professional growth of their teachers for the benefit of students in their classes.
The principal of School H recognised that “you have to do it for compliance”, but grasped the opportunity to develop an approach in her school that could be more creative and one that she considered would suit the school environment in which she had invested much effort in building trust:

We’re expecting students to have outcomes, so we have to too. That’s a take away from the compliance issues that say for your government funding you have to have appraisal and you have to have a conversation at the end of the year. So if we’ve got a choice in the matter, why not make that process more interesting and enjoyable and creative because then it’s more relevant to the person. So I think appraisal is important, but I think ... when you’ve built a whole lot of relational trust with the staff, that’s an important investment that you make, so these appraisal processes need to be seen with the right intent because it’s not about catching people doing things wrong; it’s about trying to get them to unleash their talent on the world and see the benefit in that.

The principal’s nominee at School D recognised the significance of mandated processes and having teachers understand that these were necessary, but also saw the need to assure the teachers that the process would need to suit their school:

It was important for staff to understand that the process was a mandated process. There were certain things that the school had to do and that was, I think, very fortunate because it let staff just relax and understand that this is
something everyone has to do and it is part of practice as a teacher these
days. It was how we would interpret that structure that was important to
them.

At School C, the principal echoed the growing acceptance of accountabilities,
acknowledging:

Appraisal is part of our accountabilities now; we have to have an appraisal
process, so you wouldn’t find a school that didn’t have one. But 10 years
ago, you may have found lots that didn’t have a formal structure ... I think
now everyone accepts it as part of professional learning, and with the
government now with the professional learning framework that we all have
to introduce, it’s a given, in addition to the VIT (Victorian Institute of
Teaching) requirements for professional development.

8.1.2. Reference back to the Standards

All principals made reference to either the Victorian Institute of Teaching
Standards or the Australian Standards for Teachers (referred to by a number of the
principals as the AITSL Standards), using these to set benchmarks and to provide
deeper insight for their teachers into potential directions for growth. The
comprehensive nature of the Australian Standards was acknowledged as a positive,
but the level of detail was seen as a negative in some schools. The predominant
approaches involved using a selection of the Standards as a guide for areas of
professional learning for the teachers. Examples included School D:
We look at some of the AITSL Standards for teachers, so there is a referencing backwards and forwards into what is expected of the highly competent teacher, as most of our teachers are.... when we started we began with the AITSL Performance and Development Framework... we looked at the documentation and I created on a Moodle a professional learning section ... whenever I talked and referred to any documentation from AITSL, copies of it went up there. Everything was documented. And every member of staff got a booklet with the whole process. As well as framing it in terms of the broader educational view, we looked at what was right for our school.

Application of a selection of the Standards was the case at School L where teachers sought feedback from colleagues and students and related the activities in meeting their chosen goals to a number of the Australian Standards: “We don’t necessarily want them to achieve all of them (the Standards), but some of them”. A more specific example from this school was devising a student survey that took into account “the five Standards that actually address students”. In relation to VIT requirements, it was also noted by the principal that one of the advantages of following their appraisal process was its alignment with the requirements for professional learning for VIT registration, “so that it’s taken a bit of a load off them (the teachers); they’ve saved time because by doing this process they basically can just tick the box for the VIT”. It is understood that the principal was not diminishing the value of the requirements of the VIT, but he was acknowledging the time pressures on teachers of meeting both internal and external requirements.
At School F, as part of the teachers’ exercise in reflection and goal setting, they were asked to select three Standards and give evidence as to how they were meeting them. This was seen to support thinking more deeply about what they had learned during the appraisal process.

A selection of relevant Standards applied to School E also, where staff reacted negatively to the complexity of the Australian Standards for Teachers document:

We as a staff looked at the AITSL Standards two years ago and the complexity was too much to handle for most people. They could see the various areas we had introduced it to them, but it was too complex, so what we’ve done this year is to have a working group that plans the work on teaching and learning (a group of nine). We went through the Standards ... and selected six we could see were allied to the kind of work we were doing. Staff have been advised to select a Standard from these that relates to their current work.

The principal of School G indicated that the Australian Standards are “referenced and contextualised into the documentation regarding the wider vision for the students”. They “underpin” their internal processes as “an informing document”. In the school’s early stages of developing an appropriate process of appraisal for their teachers, the teachers were guided through discussion, leading to their determination of what they thought “good practice” was. What they identified
matched very closely the eight Standards with the principal indicating “there was very close correlation”, which was seen to be affirming for the teachers.

School J has used the VIT requirements for registration to design five different reflection documents for teachers to use over the five years of their registration cycle to guide them in professional learning undertakings, providing them with a collection of information suitable for being audited, should this eventuate. In order to set goals, teachers are asked to identify Standards they specifically want to work on in their growth plan — two or three as a maximum for manageability. Use of the Standards is seen to “legitimise the process of professional growth”. Additionally, the Standards have been used as an exercise with the staff at School J for them to determine where they think they “sit” on the ‘Graduate to Lead’ spectrum. It was reinforcing for some, but it was noted that a number of teachers in leadership roles recognised they were a step back from the Lead category. This exercise acted as a motivator for a number of teacher leaders and reinforced details that had been raised over time by the senior leadership of the school.

Considering the gradual development of an appropriate approach to appraisal and what would suit an individual school, the principal of School H referred to AITSL content with her staff:

We’ve looked at AITSL in terms of a performance and development culture… but in some ways I haven’t wanted to have that… I think you have to choose your language well… and ‘appraisal’ isn’t probably even the right word…
‘performance’ sometimes too. In some ways we’ve got to build our resilience to that, but it’s really about growth.

8.1.3. Professional learning not performance management

In all twelve schools, the need for clarity of intentions was raised. In particular, teacher sensitivity to use of terminology and potential negative interpretations were taken into account in the planning processes to avoid derailing development of a suitable process of growth. Confusion between ‘appraisal’ and ‘performance management’ is noted (‘appraisal’, although able to be viewed negatively, was still seen as “better” than ‘performance management’); and the need for reassurance and ongoing sensitivity to potential doubt on the part of teachers that an appraisal process could develop into one that could lead to loss of jobs was evident.

In the beginning stages of developing an appraisal process at School F, the principal carried out some research with a couple of the teachers and determined the focus should be advising teachers that the process would be “research based” and assuring them that it would “help them improve”. It was thought that there would be a stronger take up of the process if the staff were confident that the process would be “formative”, as opposed to being “summative” (with an assumption of judgments being made). This led to clarity in the documentation about the process being based on “mutual trust and respect”, “receiving feedback”, “being affirmed in their practice”, but also “challenged” to consider how they could improve student learning.
outcomes. Concern about censure was a major aspect of the teachers’ response. The principal stated:

At the very beginning of the whole process, I said to staff that appraisal assumes there is already a level of understanding of your role as a teacher; this is not about picking out teachers about whose professional practice we’re concerned. That’s a very different process.

The potential for confusion and a barrier to advancement of the appraisal planning is indicated even more strongly by the School F principal — confusion arising from the timing of discussions in the broader educational community about performance management and performance pay and awareness of the meso policy picture on the part of teachers:

There are always some staff, the naysayers, who don’t necessarily have a leadership position but have an informal power and at the time (i.e. early stages) probably one of the biggest hindrances was there was a lot of government discussion about performance management and that coloured the view of some … which is why we spent a lot of time looking at the difference between formative and summative (approaches) as there was a suspicion, particularly from those with a strong union allegiance, that this would lead to performance (based) pay. And then also a year or two into the process, in one of the negotiations for the agreement which is state-wide for Catholic schools, there was an element … not from principals as such, but
from the leadership of Catholic education about performance (based) pay.

That probably undermined some of the planning and we had to work hard to differentiate.

Similar staff concerns were noted by the principal of School G:

People were nervous early on. Is this judgmental? Is it in fact summative? Will someone lose their job over this? And we came up with guidelines which made it very clear that if there were concerns about performance or you might lose your job, then you would not be undergoing this. You would be on a performance management process... This was to address staff concerns that this was secretly about getting rid of people on the secret list that we apparently secretly had. I don't know, all staff seem to think you’ve got a secret list and you never really do have.

The principal of School C, in outlining the early stages of her own planning for appraisal with her staff, spent considerable time talking through what appraisal meant, conscious that there was fear that people could lose their jobs:

I made it really, really clear from the beginning, and I think this has probably been a very important part, that appraisal was not performance management. So the two were quite separate, and the appraisal process is underpinned by professional learning, professional development and is not
performance management at all. In looking back, that was probably a really
important distinction to make very, very clear early on.

Further into my interview with the School C principal, she re-emphasised how
important it is to clarify intentions:

I can’t stress that enough. I and others have genuinely... and honestly
maintained that there is no connection with performance management,
which is a separate process. And people now understand that the appraisal
process is an appraisal of them as a professional and they’ve got to own the
role; it’s not what is being done to them. They’re appraising others as much
as being appraised by them. We’ve never crossed the line with performance
management and so there’s never been resistance because people have not
seen it as a dubious or underhand way to performance manage.

The principal of School B raised also the potential confusion because of
“continued rhetoric” about “appraisal being about performance management”. He
cites the impact of state sector salary negotiations coinciding with the early stages of
development of his school’s appraisal processes:

It’s challenging in our sector where philosophically we don’t hold that view
(i.e. that appraisal is about performance management), but for our staff to
hear that, they go... “can I really trust this... is this what it is?” It muddies the
water. And I think that’s difficult ... I think that’s hard... and it can only be developed within the school context through the development of trust.

The importance of developing trust by being very clear about the intentions of having an appraisal scheme to support professional learning was also experienced at School L with nervousness that the processes chosen would be used “to review salaries” or “to terminate people”. The principal needed to use language such as “this is formative”, “this is about professional journeying”, “this is about improvement”, “this is not about review and performance management and not connected to salaries”. The principal of School I, in talking about difficulties experienced in negotiating his pathway for an appraisal scheme, indicated also that some staff were concerned “that it was going to be related to hiring and firing”.

At School E, although the emphasis was on professional learning, there was recognition of doubt on the part of some teachers on the use of the processes undertaken. The principal’s explanation, although reinforcing professional learning, still would not allay fears of a link to performance management:

We’ve tried to make the distinction (between performance management and our professional learning processes) that we set expectations and we give you professional learning so that you can meet those expectations, and we might revise the expectations, but give you more professional learning, but if there is no progress or if there are consistent parent complaints, then we’ll engage performance management.
The potential for confusion based on use of terminology led to some schools avoiding use of the term “appraisal”, believing that it conjured up too many negative associations and interfered with their aim of being very clear about the intentions of their chosen processes for professional growth.

At School D, the confusion was explained as resulting from “some baggage from the past associated with it, of old inspectors and being rated and ranked or being judged”. Similarly, at School K, despite a detailed process of data analysis and student feedback, a choice was made not to label the process as “appraisal”. The principal indicated speaking about it very much as “feedback… to assist classroom practitioners”.

School J made a decision to change the language from “appraisal” to “professional growth” because “people were worried that it would somehow be … revisited on them as evidence of lack of performance or that, if there was a disciplinary process, we would drag these documents in”. Much effort was made to clarify that the growth process had nothing to do with a disciplinary process. At another stage of our interview, when talking about the need for clarity of intentions, it was stated:

I think we learned early on that not to be clear, not to state our intent, to assume people understood what we were doing, was a mistake. So I would rather be criticised for overstating our intention, but try giving it three or four ways of being explained to be clear, than the other.
A similar example came from School G:

We haven’t called it “appraisal”, we call it “performance development” and we’ve done that quite deliberately because it is in no way a summative assessment. It is entirely formative. So that’s why we called it “performance development” rather than “appraisal”, just to make sure that that didn’t get caught up in people’s thinking.

I return to the issue of distrust of the principals’ intentions in the discussion section.

8.2. Validation of purposes through the integrity of processes undertaken

8.2.1. Involving staff in the planning process

In varying degrees, the following principles guided the principals in their planning towards development of an appraisal scheme that would support professional learning:

1. Enabling their staff to have a voice in how their appraisal scheme would be shaped (seeking feedback, distributing leadership, being receptive to staff opinion)
2. Engaging their staff in research and conversations about best practice and recent pedagogies (resourcing the staff, sharing internally, using consultants beyond the school)
3. Maintaining awareness of staff sensitivities and helping their staff manage change (being cognisant of timing, aware of time pressures on
The principal of School C had implemented an appraisal scheme at her previous school, but, recognising the need to understand her new school context, did not impose a scheme on the staff:

Because I was new, I needed to listen to the people who were here because it’s about what suits the school and the culture of the school... it was just a matter of us together looking at what would be the best overall system for the school (involving a number of campuses). It had to be something that would be applicable across the whole school.

(This included non-teaching staff, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis). She emphasised how important it was to be transparent throughout the planning process, being open to conversations with individual staff, enabling everyone to see the developing documentation concerning how the process would work (provided on the school’s learning management system), who would be involved, the timing and what would be expected of everyone. Importantly, in her opinion, a pilot of the first potential scheme was carried out and staff were able to provide feedback on the documents and the process. She indicated, “it took probably two to three years before we really felt that we had the appraisal process in place and that it was running, everybody understood it, everybody knew what to expect and they were
part of it, I think”. Aiming to respect the professionalism of her staff, the principal added:

I was very determined that the individuals owned this as their appraisal. It wasn’t something that was being done to them, it was something that they as a professional were really buying into and taking seriously, and doing their best with, and that is the case. It’s just embedded in the culture of the school now.”

Recognition of an appraisal scheme that was not seen as something “done to staff” is evident in the work of the principal of School G with her staff. She stated, “staff have to feel that it’s not being done to them, but with them”. Her process of formulating direction with her staff was a lengthy one, moving steadily ahead, assisting staff to develop deeper insight into the potential benefits. She established very carefully within the staff “the notion that we should aim every year to be better than we were the year before”, an attitude that she openly indicated “was considered fault finding and insulting” at first:

There was a view that if you were highly competent, why would anyone suggest you should aim to be better. But over time, people have come to see that, in fact, it is our job to be learners, that if we don’t model that for our students then we can’t expect that they in turn will be as successful as we want them to be. Not only that, education is changing, and we need to change with it.
The process undertaken over a number of years began with a consultative group looking at the curriculum, trying to begin to establish the notion that “wisdom should be shared” and that “it wasn’t even necessarily going to be residing in those with formal leadership positions, so any number of the teaching staff could stand for membership on the consultative group. Following this, she negotiated with her teaching staff a strategic plan for the improvement of teaching and learning, with “a deliberate focus on classroom practice” and having each teacher undertake a “learning project”. This ran for two years as preparation towards the development of specific performance development processes. Involvement of staff is evident once again at this stage with volunteers called for to form a planning committee (which numbered 17 staff described as being “dedicated to getting it right” and “prepared to meet for at least one full day in each vacation”, and seeing this as “the next logical step” in the school’s journey.

Development of a draft scheme and the piloting of it took longer than planned and recognition of the need for flexibility was evident in the extension of timeframe to do this well and to have staff on board. The principal expressed:

You can create an environment that supports change but you can’t force people to change their practice. You can tell them what you expect, but when they’re in the classroom behind the closed door, they will do what they think is right. So the only thing you can do is to produce an environment that is conducive to reflecting on practice and shifting...
The advantage of having staff “on the ground” from the planning committee who could help with incidental clarification with other staff, for example, in staff rooms, is noted, as the devised system of having trained mentors evolved (the difficulty of the cost of resourcing the training and providing the necessary time to mentor other staff are noted).

With the commencement of planning for an appraisal scheme at School F, the value of opening up the opportunity for staff involvement is also noted:

Initially we strategically chose a group who would be very keen to investigate options and also with a couple who would be anxious about it so that they had ownership. Over an extended period of time different models were developed and they were presented at staff meetings for feedback to make sure there was a sense of understanding...

This “taskforce” was chaired by a member of the leadership team and included a couple who had middle management roles. Concerning co-opting of the couple “who would be anxious”, it was explained that they were identified as very good teachers, “probably humble in their way and therefore would be very anxious and threatened by this process”. This was a “deliberate constitution” of the group to enable some breakthroughs. The chair was described as “very practical, well-organised, someone highly respected by the staff, an excellent communicator and someone who could challenge any undermining comments in an appropriate way”. The constitution of the staff at the beginning stages of planning was described as
being “predominantly experienced... with a sense of comfort about what was happening in the school as it was”. It was recognised that getting a sense of respect for any new process would be essential. Staff self-nominated to be part of the piloting of two final options, one involving mentoring, and the other collegial pairs. During the cycles of working through this, participating staff presented to others to have them informed and involved.

A similar process was followed at School I with the setting up of a staff group, with key staff leading but inviting expressions of interest from others who wanted to be involved. The committee comprised twelve staff given the task of researching processes in other schools, doing some research about various models, communicating various ideas in their sections of the school and putting together a model for trialling for 12 months in a couple of parts of the school, before extending it to the whole school. Difficulties experienced included concern about the amount of time it would take “in an already busy schedule”. In response to my question of what worked well in the planning process, the principal indicated the consultation with his staff:

Consulting with staff was the thing that enabled us to get staff to participate and be involved so that it was very obviously something that we were asking of them to help develop the model, rather than us saying this is it — that’s what you’re doing.
In referring to specific avenues for consulting, the trialling was highlighted and getting feedback from the staff:

Consulting throughout the trialling. Talking to the schools (that is, sections of the school). Refining the process by getting their feedback about how well it was and wasn’t working. And we continue to do that because every year we have the annual staff survey and that’s always a part of the staff survey and there are written comments that come in about how well it is and isn’t working.

At School E, it was made clear that everyone would be involved in working on a particular area of practice (referred to as their “action research”)\(^ {14}\). This was said to meet with some resistance from teachers who thought “they didn’t have enough time” and “this was an extra on top of their work”, despite the fact that they were given time each term to work with others. Concurrently with this, a working party of eight staff was configured, made up predominantly of the “trailblazers” who were interested in the ideas and keen to “build the culture of action research and lead (the staff) towards a staff conference”. The sharing at the staff conference in various group configurations was seen to be beneficial in increasing staff understanding that what was being done could “help their work” and “they could work more effectively”, as opposed to seeing the process as an extra use of their time.

\(^ {14}\) Stringer (2004) explains that “action research” aims to design inquiry and build knowledge for use in the service of action to solve practical problems. Stringer’s five-part action research demonstrates basic research in four parts (research design, data gathering, data analysis, communication), with action added as a fifth part.
The value in supporting staff to take the lead in influencing others was also highlighted at School D where options for models for classroom observation were trialled by a small group. These staff then promoted this to others, instead of the principal or curriculum leaders doing this:

It’s very important for me that it’s not me up the front or the head of curriculum; it’s real teachers in real classrooms telling about their experience, so when we present the model, they will explain why there is a model... I think that sort of modelling from teacher to teacher is good because they know it works. If it works for their colleague, it’ll work for them. And more than that, they’re prepared to give it a go even if they feel a bit strange.

More generally at School D, the staff have been encouraged to show personal initiative in making use of the multiple resources provided on the learning management system, on various matters to do with teaching and learning and reflection on practice. “It’s about putting before staff a whole lot of resources and a lot of opportunities but it does require staff to follow up and use them”. Although the principal’s nominee indicated that she and the principal were “keen on just getting teachers to learn the skills that they’re going to put into practice”, they are also cognisant of teachers trying to find time in a busy schedule, saying “that’s been the hardest thing... we would have much preferred if we could have had more time to work through the coaching at a quicker rate to build on the skills, but... you only get snippets of time”.

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At School J formal and informal avenues for feedback from staff were used through the heads of academic curriculum, the executive team as a forum for review and critique, and through “other environments in a casual way to seek ideas”, “feedback on the ground”. In terms of negotiation it was stated:

Fairly early on it became clear that something that was simple, something that wasn’t going to require huge amounts of documentation and multilayers of evidence was going to provide people with a degree of comfort that we were going to move into a manageable future.

An example of specific involvement of staff at various levels in processes being developed is provided by School K with the introduction of student surveys:

The questions went online. We found examples of best questionnaires. We looked at the School Improvement Framework questionnaires. We looked at the Australian Standards for excellent teaching and we put them together. We’ve got a list of a hundred questions. We went through them as a leadership team, as the pastoral committee, and at curriculum committee. And we basically picked out what we thought would speak best to us and speak to the boys. And then we trialled them... We also said to staff, talking about feedback, that if there wasn’t a question there that could draw out their specific strength, they could add that question. We wanted this to highlight their strengths. If there were any questions that they felt wouldn’t speak to their processes, they could take the questions out.
In reassurance to the staff, the questionnaire results were indicated to be for their use, to discuss with a “critical friend”.

8.2.2. Taking time to build trust/learn the skills/ensure capacity to use the processes

The principals placed great emphasis on the needs of staff to be able to undertake a productive appraisal process. Common undertakings included (1) providing opportunities for staff to acquire the skills needed, for example, in classroom observation, providing feedback, coaching; (2) resourcing the staff with materials, including recent publications on pedagogies, research articles, videos; (3) providing proformas for obtaining student feedback; (4) use of consultants, in particular, for analysis of data.

One of the strongest examples of recognition of staff sensitivity and the need to support them into the potential processes for growth came from School D:

We decided the first two stages were simply to talk and to talk about very basic things like why did you become a teacher? What attracts you about education? And then building from that actually looking at not so much the reasons why they wanted to be a teacher, but how they fitted in with the school community... to identify their alignment with its culture and values.

The first interview was carried out by a senior member of staff, said to provide an opportunity for teachers to gain insight into the management of the school. Questions for the interview were given in advance to provide staff with an
opportunity to prepare. The second was with the head of department, focusing more on subject matter, identifying potential areas for development and avenues for such development.

It was recognised that there were a number of skills that needed to be developed, in coaching and classroom observation, in particular. These were taught to the staff through professional learning sessions, led by staff who had attended sessions outside the school (e.g. through Independent Schools Victoria [ISV]). The skills were then used for work in groups of three (triads). All content was provided on the learning management system so that no one missed out. This content included short videos of teaching techniques that some staff were happy to share. The resources have built up as more staff have become involved, but it has been understood that teachers needed to take responsibility for using them. The need for time for this was recognised, as was the advantage of not rushing ahead:

I’m really keen on just getting teachers to learn the skills that they’re going to put into place... if you put too much pressure on staff who are incredibly busy... for something to be seen as a process that’s for learning and not a burden, you have to have a flexible timeline ... that stops people getting their backs up.

The need for training for classroom observation and giving feedback was highlighted by School C. Recognising how significant collaboration of teachers is and the need to have this occurring constructively and with trust, work was done in
professional development sessions to assist staff, especially for the heads of department, to enable them to be “critical observers in the classroom and to give feedback in a positive way... so that it’s of value”. Lack of confidence of some teachers was seen as a potential detractor, hence the effort given to providing teachers with the necessary skills.

As part of the process of planning a scheme at her school, the principal of School F recognised that groundwork needed to be carried out for giving feedback. She made the observation:

I think that senior staff in schools are very used to review and reflection, and probably get a lot of feedback all the time. To me it’s a paradox that teachers whose very vocation is education and giving feedback, sometimes find it difficult when they’re in a position of receiving it.

In the early stages of preparation for a comprehensive professional learning scheme at School E, there was extensive sharing of details on recent pedagogies, and a trialling of classroom techniques through action research was undertaken by some staff. Having some staff involved in further study outside school was seen as advantageous as they were able to bring ideas to working groups at the school and to general discussions in the staffrooms. Workshops on visible learning were provided, guided by the work of John Hattie at Melbourne University.\(^\text{15}\)

A further specific example of skills needed for the chosen appraisal directions of the school is provided by School K where analysis of data on results and from student feedback has been used. For this, an outside consultant has been used to enable clarity in interpretation of results. The principal justified this consultancy as providing an advantage of neutrality, but acknowledged the cost of paying for such a service.

8.3. Discussion

It is considered that appraisal and professional growth systems can provide important and rich opportunities for school professionals to focus specifically on the core of their professional practices (Davis, Ellett & Annunziata 2002; Santiago & Benavides 2009). In undertaking the process of formulation and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools, the principals involved in this research expressed strong commitment to such a focus for the benefit of ongoing learning for their teachers and for the potential effect this could have on student learning, this focus underpinned by an intention of maintaining accountability for development of professional practices. Through the interviews with the principals, I sought to find out how they would determine the impact of this focus. This matter was taken up in Chapter 6.

The extent to which the principals have needed to draw on their leadership capacities and strategies, as they have sought to develop what they have considered to be positive approaches to appraisal to suit their school is evident. Such testing of
leadership capacities is also evident in the research of Day et al. (2010) and Hallinger (2010). The principals have needed to be flexible, to try to adapt approaches to the circumstances in their schools and the needs and responses of their teachers. Their capacity to set directions, develop their teachers, and build the culture and relationships (Leithwood et al. 1999) has been drawn upon. Many of the findings and arguments that follow will be reinforced in Chapter 9 (Community of Learners).

It is of particular interest to note that only three of the twelve principals mentioned the term “mandatory requirements” directly in response to my questions concerning the importance of clarity of purposes for appraisal in the first interviews conducted. Of those that did raise this directly, one was determined to approach the learning of her teachers in a way that fitted the culture she had sought to develop in the school. Despite mandated requirements, she encouraged her staff to be creative about how they would go about their work to explore approaches to teaching and to make them visible to others. She had built “relational trust” with her staff and obviously did not want their motivation to be dampened by government mandates.

Another principal trusted that, in expressing the necessity for all schools to have a process for appraisal and feedback, the staff would accept this, take it as a ‘given’ and move beyond requirements to be part of their school’s individual approach. It was expressed that there were “certain things” the school “had to do” as “part of practice of a teacher these days”, but it was emphasised that they as a school would determine their interpretation. Another principal objectively referred to appraisal as
being part of “our accountabilities”, but was determined to involve her staff in
devising suitable processes and having them “own it”.

That some form of “appraisal” of teachers is mandatory appears not to be
enough in itself to bring acceptance on the part of teachers. It may simply provide a
stepping stone. For the other principals, knowledge of government requirements was
evident in the background and provided an impetus for them to press on with the
development of appropriate approaches in their schools. This became more evident
in follow up conversations and the focus group conducted at the conclusion of the
research. It became apparent in six of the schools that the school board expected
some form of appraisal of teachers to be carried out. It was up to the principal to
follow through with this. Even with involvement of staff in the planning, it is evident
that the perceived need for devising processes is because “it is required”. The counter
effect of government requirements or school board expectations in the background
is that staff awareness of these could detract from their own sense of professional
accountability, that is, that they have not needed to be prompted bureaucratically
(Glasman & Glasman 2006). At the school level, even with an emphasis on teacher
professional growth, the challenge of reconciling perceived organisational and
individual goals remains (Milanowski & Heneman 2001).

Reference to the Australian Standards for Teachers (in place since 2011) and
the accreditation requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (in place since
2005) was more evident and consistent across the schools. In each school, clear
referencing to one or both of these was found in the outlines of methods used for
appraisal, as described by the principals, and in the documentation outlining the requirements in the schools. The Standards were used for setting benchmarks or providing potential directions for growth, standards to strive for “good teaching” (Fenstermacher & Richardson 2005). One principal purposely chose the ‘Highly Competent Teacher’ category, as opposed to the ‘Proficient’ category, as a benchmark, to affirm the capacities of the staff and to motivate them. Another principal found that the Standards helped to legitimise the words about teaching practice over time by the school leaders. In one school, where the teachers were given the full outline of the Standards and asked to gauge where they would place themselves, the awareness raising particularly for some in leadership roles that they did not well fit the statements in the ‘Lead’ category, did provide some motivation for them to consider their approach to their responsibilities. The principal confirmed in the focus group that this was unsettling for some, but increased motivation was observed and “results” of the individual leaders’ gauging of their performance against the Standards was retained privately by each individual. Such a step of privacy is another indication of avoiding potential reactions of resistance. In the principals’ focus group, the influence of the Standards in providing for more structure and a reference point for processes they had already been undertaking in their schools was emphasised (i.e. the Standards helped to clarify “good practice”). The need to tie any system for teacher appraisal to clear standards and competencies is supported by the research of Danielson (2012), Looney (2011) and Smith (2005).
A consistency across the schools was the recognition that, because of the comprehensive nature of the Standards, there was a need to be selective, for example, for a choice of an annual emphasis across the staff of elements of practice to concentrate on, or for teachers to reference their progress back to a selection of relevant Standards. The devising of student feedback surveys covering five of the Standards directly related to students was evident in five of the schools. Use of this feedback is discussed in Chapter 9.

A related matter concerns the VIT requirements for record keeping of professional learning undertaken annually, referenced back to the Standards, and recognition in the schools of not doubling the work of teachers to satisfy these requirements on top of internal requirements. One principal directly reinforced his internal appraisal process as “ticking the box” for the VIT. Whilst not diminishing these requirements, he respected time pressures on his staff. In another school, annual documentation reporting on achievement of professional learning goals directly satisfied the keeping of ongoing VIT records to cover the purposes of auditing, should this arise. Avoiding the doubling or tripling of teachers’ work to satisfy both internal and external requirements was emphasised by the principals in the focus group, a clear indication of both respect for the workload of teachers, but also acknowledgment of how detrimental it can be to have teachers off-side, thinking that the pressures on them are not understood.

The question needs to be asked in relation to there being a pre-determined set of standards, as to whether this potentially can limit outcomes for teacher
learning (Smith 2005) and not leave scope for teachers to draw on their own embedded working knowledge in their teaching (Marland 2001; Van Manen 1999).

Are the standards seen as setting a minimum or do they represent something that teachers can strive for, leading to improvements in outcomes which standards aim to do? The pitching of one school to the ‘Highly Competent’ category provides evidence of not settling for a minimum. Additionally, the example of the response of some senior staff in one school recognising gaps in their carrying out of their roles, in comparison with the ‘Lead’ category, provides evidence of the standards potentially triggering goals for improvement. Smith (2005), whilst recognising that standards have “taken teaching as a profession a large step forward”, warns that they need to be applied with professional caution and a great deal of common sense when evaluating teachers (p. 100).

The most notable matter to come through in the interviews was the amount of reassurance and clarification needed across all schools that the ultimate aim of the processes that were being devised in their schools was for professional growth, ongoing professional learning to benefit student learning, that is, for formative purposes. In comparing responses of the principals, there is an underlying consistency in distrust and scepticism to work through with their staff, concern that the processes to be applied could be for/or lead to ‘performance management’ or ‘due process’. Clearly, despite explanations by the principals that the process would be formative, doubts remained in each school that there could be a summative outcome with negative professional consequences. The difficulty of stepping beyond
the perceptions of appraisal being required “from the top”, triggering reactions to potential misuse of power is evident.

There is perhaps a residual response from older teachers of the days of inspectors or checklist methods (Ingvarson 1999), leading to an assumption of being judged in a one-way process as opposed to an intended one of collegial sharing of best practice. I note also the indications from two of the principals that state salary discussions and contentions concerning “performance (based) pay” discussions undid a lot of groundwork for a formative process in their schools, hence requiring further reassurances. Sensitivity to terminology is also noted, “appraisal” perhaps seen as judgmental, or retrospective as opposed to being for development ahead. I note the use in one school of the term “preview” to provide an understanding of emphasis on what can lie ahead for professional growth. Other choices of terms across the schools were “professional growth plan”, “feedback for professional growth”, “performance development”, “performance and preview”, “action research”, “professional learning action plan”, “staff feedback” and “teacher annual review”. One principal noted that she had her own reservations about the term “performance”, as it failed to capture her emphasis on growth and collegiality. Although intentions with such thinking by the principals would have been seen to be positive to avoid difficulties in interpretation, the semantic nature of the exercise could be viewed with cynicism by some teachers. I note the choice of wording by Elliott (2015), in reference to the Performance and Development Framework, in her question of whether the Teacher Performance Appraisal cycle of 2014-2015 in
government schools has been more about “performance” than “development”. Overall, there appears to be a mistrust on the part of teachers of business terminology being applied to education, hence avoidance by the principals. This matter is elaborated on in Chapter 9.

Does the emphasis on professional growth and improvement in teaching practice in itself potentially trigger misgivings that any “weakness” detected or aspect worthy of improvement will lead to a negative outcome, as opposed to the intended direction of guided professional learning to enhance practice? Klinger et al. (2008) raise the concern that evaluating to identify “underperformance” may create tension and fear among teachers, which may jeopardise the formative function of appraisal and inhibit teachers’ creativity and motivation. However, there has been no direct indication from the principals that they were wishing to detect “underperformance” — this being something identified mostly through complaints. In this context, the research of Hargreaves (2008) is relevant, which raises the critical role of trust in a professional learning community. Hargreaves indicates how delicate trust can be and that one breach of this can undermine years of work. I note in one of the schools, as part of the clarification of intentions of the appraisal process, the principal expressed the formative nature of the undertaking, but did add that if a major issue of underperformance were to be detected, then a performance management process would be undertaken. This would be sufficient to throw doubt over the whole process, requiring further clarification and reassurances.
Smith (2005) is of the opinion that teachers who are more open to self-assessment, self-criticism and continuous learning are teachers who more confidently face the “many challenges inherent in the complex task of teaching”. One could perhaps assume that such teachers would be less likely to jump to negative conclusions concerning the intent of the appraisal processes in their school. There must be reliance on most teachers being self-motivated and wanting to develop as professionals, refining their ability to teach effectively (Davis, Ellett & Annunziata 2002). The challenge remains for principals concerning how they overcome misgivings about the intentions of appraisal, that is, how they deal with the negative psychological issues attached to appraisal processes. In implementing an appraisal process, principals need to take into account the subjective perceptions and feelings of their teachers, as an appraisal process involves a process of change (Claudet 1999; Spillane et al. 2002; Starr 2011). The emphasis of principals on ensuring integrity in how the appraisal process is devised and implemented and placing value on what can be achieved for the teachers is thought to help to build trust and loyalty (see, for example, Moreland 2012).

An overriding factor in the principals’ responses has been the importance placed on involving their teachers in the planning process for their appraisal scheme. This concurs with the findings of Townsend (1998), Gunter (2005), Conley & Glasman (2008) and Kyriakides (2010) on providing for “ownership” by the teachers of the process, having them “buy into it” and “take it seriously”, to see that it is not “something being done to them”, as one principal expressed. However, it still can be
perceived as such, or unwittingly be as such, despite efforts to involve teachers, because it is motivated by a requirement that it happen in some form.

Examples of efforts to encourage involvement include the formation of a consultative group made up of volunteers interested firstly in working on a strategic plan for teaching and learning “with a deliberate focus on classroom practice”, the specific improvement of instruction and student performance (Conley & Glasman 2008; Elmore 2000; Papay 2012), and, secondly, a process of appraisal to support the strategic plan. In this school, the group was made up of volunteers from amongst the staff, an intentional move by the principal to demonstrate that “wisdom wasn’t necessarily going to be residing with those in leadership positions”. In another school, volunteers were called for, but also representation of senior and middle management was arranged, together with the strategic encouragement of involvement of some potentially reluctant or hesitant staff, with a view to encouraging them. This could also be interpreted as a co-opting of potential ‘resistors’ to get their support. The deliberate constitution did provide for encouragement of both positional and informal leaders (Spillane et al. 2001), for shared leadership to build capacity for growth (Harris 2003) and for the building of leadership potential (Timperley et al. 2009). Also significant in this latter example is the choice of the leader of the group, one considered to be highly-respected amongst the staff and “capable of challenging undermining comments appropriately”. In being placed in this position, authority and legitimacy were being provided by the principal (Gunther 2005). In yet another school, the planning group was made up of the “trailblazers” amongst the staff who
were keenly taking up opportunities for “action research” on aspects of teaching practice, staff who would be able to confidently share their work with colleagues and encourage them. This process finds validation in the emphasis of Davis, Ellett & Annunziata (2002) on creating “leadership density to promote reflective praxis as a collegial activity”. They have also emphasised that professionals value their own judgment “to determine the best course of practice”, maintaining autonomy and control of their practices.

During the planning processes in the schools involved, the seeking of feedback from the staff and being receptive to staff opinions have been essential (Gimbel et al. 2011). Approaches have included: the publishing on the learning management system of details as they have developed; use of staff meetings at which the planning group could explain details (an emphasis here on this information coming from staff representatives, not the principal or senior leader of teaching and learning); options for approaches being provided to staff for comment; potential schemes being piloted; and feedback invited from staff on their preference of approach. One such example was of two options trialled, one a mentoring option, the other a collegial pairing option.

In the approaches undertaken, the principals have emphasised the importance of engaging their staff in conversations about best practice and recent pedagogies (Conley & Glasman 2008), maintaining a sustained focus on learning (Hallinger 2010) and emphasising the promotion of the engagement of their teachers in activities directly affecting the growth of students (Leithwood et al. 1999). The
question remains as to whether devising the best possible appraisal processes is going to be the answer to engaging staff in conversations about best practice.

Keeping abreast of what other schools were doing is noted and seen to be of value by the principals, having this broader sharing of practices potentially to support student learning. However, such sharing can involve replication of more typical approaches, unless there is clear consideration of the suitability for a particular school context. One school’s example involved researching approaches to student feedback surveys. This sourcing of examples was combined with analysis of the Standards, resulting in 100 questions that were given to senior staff for input and then to all staff for comment. A final list was decided upon, but, importantly, flexibility was maintained with assurances given to staff that they could add questions that might better “draw out their strengths”, or they could remove questions they considered not to be suitable. This approach concurs with the research of Moreland (2012) on the importance of involvement of key stakeholders, in this case the teachers, in particular, on whom the students would be giving feedback. The principal affirmed the value of such flexibility in further interviews, but this could be interpreted as minimising resistance.

A significant part of providing for integrity in appraisal processes involves assisting teachers in acquiring the skills needed to undertake the processes. This concurs with the findings of Kleinhenz (2007) on the need to motivate staff to become more skilled. In particular, skills for classroom observation are noted, skills for providing feedback to colleagues (and receiving feedback), mentoring skills and
coaching skills. Additionally, classroom techniques and elements of “good practice” have become part of the professional learning provided. An additional area noted for skills development is the training of middle management and senior leadership in feedback for when they are placed in a mentor role (Cheng et al. 2007; Gimbel et al. 2011). It is significant to note how important opening staff to feedback is (e.g. confirmed by the research of Taylor & Tyler 2012). It is paradoxical that teachers who are providing feedback every day, may be reluctant to receive it themselves. How professionals receive and apply feedback is considered to be the cornerstone of any system for improving teacher performance in the opinion of Roussin & Zimmerman 2014). Significant in feedback being provided, however, is the teachers’ perception of the degree to which it is seen as a fair and just assessment of their work (OECD 2009 TALIS), specifically the quality of their work (Deneire et al. 2014). The research of Deneire et al. (2014) confirms that perceptions of fairness impact positively on job satisfaction of teachers. These aspects are elaborated on in Chapter 8 (Methods of Appraisal) and Chapter 9 (Community of Learners).

Supporting the development of skills is the provision of necessary resources. The posting of resources and outlines of processes on learning management systems is noted, as well as key publications on elements of practice being made available to teachers, for example, Marzano (2007), Zbar, Marshall & Power (2007), Hattie (2012, Ritchhart, Church & Morrison (2011). The production of short videos on classroom practice by teachers for use by colleagues is a particularly practical example of professional sharing and role modelling. Part of resourcing staff in four of the schools
has been the use of outside consultants to provide assistance with classroom observation approaches (e.g. the Ladder of Feedback [Perkins, 2003]16), and interpretation of data. The question could be asked on this account as to whether teachers as professionals could not undertake this themselves and whether the principals themselves are familiar enough with such processes. However, although the use of consultants may heighten the formality of the processes undertaken, if there is the need for assistance, principals justify use of consultants as a constructive path for resourcing teachers and principals and assisting them with the acquisition of skills required. The cost and affordability of this remain an issue. The research of Robinson et al. (2008) confirms the focus of the principals involved on support for and participation in such professional learning of staff. This was found to have the largest effect size on student learning outcomes (followed by setting of expectations and planning, coordination and evaluating teaching and curriculum).

Increasing the skills of teachers builds their confidence to interact with and learn from and with colleagues. However, to produce an environment that is conducive to reflecting on practice and shifting, the need to maintain awareness of staff sensitivities, help them manage change, communicate well with them and understand the time pressures they work under are emphasised by Drago-Severson (2004). The need to understand how individuals cognitively organise their

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16 Refer to Perkins, D 2003, King Arthur’s Round Table: How Collaborative Conversations Create Smart Organizations, John Wiley Press. Perkins writes: Communicative feedback clarifies the ideas or behaviour under consideration, so that everyone is talking about the same thing. It communicates positive features so that they can be preserved and built on. It communicates concerns and suggestions towards improvement (p. 46). This is guided in a five-step process: Clarify, Value, Raise Questions and Concerns, Suggest, Debrief.
experiences is also highlighted in the research of Drago-Severson (2004) on principals helping teachers learn.

Each of the principals across the twelve schools was very conscious of time pressures on their teachers. Breakthroughs were needed to have teachers not seeing the appraisal processes as an “extra” or “add-on” to their usual responsibilities (Vanci-Osam & Aksit 2000), but instead as ways of refining their practice. One school principal expressed that the final scheme needed “to be simple, not huge amounts of documentation and multiple layers of evidence”. Another emphasised that the end of process report by the teachers involved headings just requiring “four dot points”. On the time issue, another principal indicated a desire to have more time to have staff master coaching techniques but lamented that “you only get snippets of time”. A different slant on time issues came from another principal who indicated that, in deciding on their teacher-devised appraisal process, they would take whatever time was needed to develop it well and have it “right” for the staff. It is of interest to note also in this school that, from the beginning of the process when volunteers were called for, the principal placed the expectation that they would need to be prepared to use one day of each vacation to work together. This was accepted by the individuals as they were motivated to undertake the planning required. The issue of time and respecting the many pressures that teachers are under was further emphasised in the focus group discussion.

The process of change associated with an appraisal process involves attitude changing. Each of the principals has been cognisant of the difficulties that this entails.
This concurs with Timperley et al. (2007) who indicate the need to engage teachers in understanding their own underpinning theories of action. Similarly, Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) emphasise the need to find opportunities to engage with teachers’ beliefs and values and expand feedback conversations to focus on teachers’ thinking and perceptions. Drago-Severson (2004) sheds further light on this in expressing the need to understand that adults will make meaning of their experiences in developmentally different ways. For some teachers, this involves allowing them to take stand for what they believe in, exercise authority and take responsibility for themselves and their work. For others, there needs to be assistance to help them improve their capacities for managing the complexities of their work (Drago-Severson 2004). This latter point is supported by the emphasis placed by Roussin & Zimmerman (2014) on the need to foster emotional resourcefulness and transparency to build cognitive capital. As such, my reasoning is that there are reciprocal responsibilities involved here, on the part of principals concerning their awareness and efforts on behalf of their teachers, and on the part of teachers to build their own resourcefulness and resilience to meet their professional responsibilities for ongoing learning for the benefit of their students.

Whilst the principals have aimed to be cognisant of their teachers’ needs, they appear to have been challenged mostly by such needs. They have also recognised the necessity of being decisive about non-negotiable elements of their directions for appraisal and professional learning, to show integrity, firmness and conviction to move their staff forward (Kleinhenz 2007) and challenge their thinking.
(Drago-Severson 2004; Fullan 2014). Managing teacher needs is a significant part of the “school-level conditions” that in turn can impact on student learning (Hallinger 2010).

In the following chapter, I broaden the concept of appraisal and teacher professional growth, placing it in the context of the development of a community of learners or community of practice, the final core category/ theme drawn from the research undertaken with the principals.
CHAPTER 9

Findings — Community of Learners

9.1. Introduction

In Chapter 8 I wrote about the significance of clarity of the purposes of appraisal, especially in attempts to build trust amongst teaching staff. This is core to providing a firm foundation for encouraging cooperative efforts amongst teachers towards developing teaching practice to build a “community of learners”, a theme which surfaced significantly in my analysis of interviews with the principals.

All of the principals in this research noted the importance of their role in building a positive school climate that would encourage ongoing learning on the part of teachers. This presupposes going beyond simply being a supportive community to one that promoted professional learning that would have impact on the learning of students. The extent to which appraisal processes can or cannot assist with building a positive climate and supporting professional learning becomes paramount.

In my research I have sought to understand the approaches chosen by the principals to building a community of learners in their schools. Key aspects involve:

1. Seeking alignment of school leadership and staff with the school vision, mission and strategies
2. The need for leaders to take the lead (i.e. principals and those in key formal leadership positions)

3. Developing the leadership team and leaders generally amongst the staff

4. Supporting the concept of continuous improvement

5. Encouraging collaboration and sharing of experience, including celebrating achievements, to embed an open learning culture

6. Respecting and encouraging the professionalism of teachers (seeking to understand their needs and preferred approaches to learning, taking into account time pressures on them, communicating clearly about how any records on the appraisal processes are kept and used)

A summary of the components/ sub-themes and principal responses is included in Table 9.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components / sub-themes</th>
<th>% of principals identifying these components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking alignment with school vision, mission, strategies</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders taking the lead</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the leadership team and leadership generally</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting the concept of continuous improvement</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging collaboration and sharing experiences</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting the professionalism of teachers</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Core Category 3 — Community of Learners

9.2. Seeking alignment with the school vision, mission and strategies

As part of the initial interviewing with teachers, arranged to assist in paving the way towards the setting of goals and the formation of triads for cooperative
learning, School D included discussion on the match between the culture and values of the school and that of the individual teacher. It was stated:

That’s really an important stage for teachers to identify their alignment, and because that interview is being carried out by a senior member of staff, it gives an insight into the management of the school... and the alignment of staff with the immovable — the culture and values of the school.

The second stage of interviewing with the head of department at School D builds on this, looking at personal learning goals and the alignment with school goals or themes that the school is targeting in any given year, together with the avenues available through which the teachers can develop “their ability and their teaching”.

Significant in these “conversations” is the building of trust and demonstration of interest in the individual staff member:

These are opportunities to bond... it is really about building collegial trust and relationships... to have someone interested in why you’re teaching, what’s important to you, how you feel in the school, what you’re like in the workplace, what the core values are that are thought to be essential for a workplace, the core things in terms of relationships with other colleagues that are thought to be essential, and with students... we’re actually pulling apart the really important things.
These conversations are supported by information at staff meetings about the values of the school, in particular, about the concept of ‘teaching for understanding’. To ensure absent staff were abreast of the same information, everything was documented and every staff member received an explanatory booklet about the appraisal process. Additionally, the questions for the interviews, devised by the principal and the director of teaching and learning, were provided to the teachers in advance, with the intention of enabling them to go to the interviews well-informed and well-prepared. In my interview with the principal’s nominee, it was indicated that prior experience with staff elsewhere influenced this approach involving thorough preparation of the teachers and transparency aimed at showing respect for the professionalism of the teachers, not confronting them with surprises, and to take away the “fear factor”:

I put into place the things I knew could trip up teachers and the thing that trips up teachers is a lack of choice; they hate to feel that they’re not in control of their process, so I made sure that in this process they had full control and it’s just a matter of respect. I think if staff feel they’ve got control, and they’re respected, then they’re much more open to the process.

In response to my question concerning things that have supported the appraisal process at School H, the principal emphasised her investment in staff wellbeing and respectful communications. Together with staff, a set of behaviours that are the guiding principles of how they behave towards each other was agreed
on, and this applies to every facet of engagement. Central to the guiding principles are the qualities of being authentic, respectful and ethical. She stated:

It concerns trust building between senior management and staff; authentic support for the person, so if we say we’re going to support them with materials they need, we do, and that’s evidence of authentic support. Respectful communications support the process, the assumption of the staff being professionals and an encouragement and reinforcement of that… it’s really a matter of helping people be on the same page so you need some really good opportunities for communication about the process and the materials for them to read and seek clarification on.

Similar to School D, the importance of clarity of information and scope for individual choice were said to be recognised. Following clarification of the school's strategic priorities, each staff member has a professional conversation with his/her head of faculty and develops a personal professional learning plan. These individual plans are taken into account in the school’s planning, resourcing and provision of professional learning. The principal emphasised enabling staff to “feel connected into the strategic goals for the year”, “to aspire to excellence” and explore how they can resource their interests and growth.

The strategy of the principal clarifying strategic priorities for the year to the staff also applied to School J where a professional growth cycle is launched by the principal at the commencement of the year. This follows on from the provision of
professional learning activities at the end of the year prior, on emphases for the following. Topics are discussed that will apply to the new growth cycle. The exercise of having staff respond to the school’s directions with their own personal goals is said to be a positive influence in aligning the efforts of the staff.

At School G, concerning major supports for their developing process of appraisal, involving staff in the development of the school vision for learning and enabling staff to see the process as fully aligned to the agreed vision and mission of the school were emphasised:

Early on we established a vision of ourselves as the kind of school that we could be and the kinds of girls that our girls could be. Then we worked together on how we can help them to be that and what we (as adults) can do to enable this.

Indication was given of always working from an external research base to validate choices and maintain a commitment to excellence. From this research base, appraisal processes to support growth were developed. The principal added:

It is important that there is absolute consistency, that the process is purposeful. And that it is at core about children, and things being better for children. I think they are absolute keys (to success).

The principal of School B also emphasised the alignment between individual staff and the school’s directions. As the appraisal process has developed with self-reflection,
goal setting and feedback from peers and direct reports, the principal made the
observation that the process has moved to an alignment between the staff member
and the school:

The process has moved to a much bigger picture of why you are an
educator, what contribution you are making to the school, what do you
want to add, what do you find challenging, what we (as a school) are doing
well, what we can do better... it started as an appraisal model and moved to
become an alignment with a whole school culture model... an incredibly
powerful vehicle... talk about here’s where we’re going as a school, are you
on board? What contribution can you make to that? And what feedback can
you give me? So it’s become a cultural instrument... it’s become a
compounding leverage strategy for the whole school culture.

Alignment between the staff and school directions was emphasised also by the
principal of School I from the point of view of emphases for teaching and learning. He
referred to this as the “buy in”. He stated:

When you’ve got a whole school invested in a particular direction of
professional learning, so it’s not isolated learning, that’s when it (the appraisal
process) works. We have a college theme every year and linking that and
constantly emphasising the importance of the theme and linking that to our
professional learning has been helpful ... When there are groups of colleagues
working together on it, that’s when they see that it’s purposeful. When they
see that it’s linked to the college goals and improved learning for children, they see that it’s purposeful.

9.3. Leaders taking the lead

The attitude of principals and senior leaders towards the concept of a community of learners, and a commitment to and encouragement of the professionalism of their staff in being open to opportunities for growth, is seen to be significant amongst the schools involved. Examples range from successful and to not so successful leadership teams; to examples of the principals and key leaders demonstrating their own commitment to continued improvement through the seeking of feedback from all sections of their school community; to some indicating a need to be “fairly firm” and “persistent” about appraisal approaches to be undertaken to keep staff committed to requirements.

In response to my question concerning major enhancers of the appraisal process at School D, the principal’s nominee indicated the significance of the leadership team. She stated:

A supportive principal is essential. You need leadership on board and you need, for example, the head of junior school, head of curriculum, myself as director of teaching and learning, with us working together and then we have covered all bases. So we had a team to be driving it beyond a single person. You need a good group of people that span the school to drive it and to support it, and to put themselves out there as well.
The commitment and capacity of key leaders was seen to be various in some schools. The principal of School I, in response to my question concerning detractors from the appraisal process, referred to varied levels of commitment and capacity amongst his senior staff and noted the extent to which one relies on senior staff to identify with the process and inspire others. He stated:

The biggest difficulty, really, was making sure that all of the people who were in charge of groups of staff were as invested in it as they should have been... I’ve got two fabulous heads of junior school who are absolutely driven in terms of the staff appraisal process. It works particularly well in both of their parts of the college. I have a head of school on this campus who is the same; a head of middle school and a head of our other campus who aren’t as invested, so it doesn’t work as well in their parts of the college. If it’s not as successful as it could be, it’s because of the people who are running the process who are not following it up.

Concerning principals and key school leaders demonstrating their own commitment to professional growth, I cite the example of School H where the undertaking of a 360-degree feedback process by the principal and key senior staff was seen as role modelling for the staff. The principal, in talking about the initial fear of appraisal amongst her teaching staff and her aim of developing a process relevant to them for the sharing of “great practice”, stated:
We put middle management, that is, heads of departments and heads of year through a 360 which was done by an external consultant focusing on their leadership skills. I did it too. That approach was riskier than what we were trying to develop for the teaching staff, but we did it to role model. I hoped that the teaching staff would then think, if these people are prepared to do that, then this (i.e. the approach for teachers) is probably okay.

Similarly, in indicating supports for the appraisal processes at School K, the principal cited the fact that “we (i.e. principal and deputy) are always willing to put our hands up first and be the first ones to go under the microscope”. There is an implication in this of perhaps suggesting that appraisal would actually involve putting teachers “under the microscope”, more than was being expressed to them.

The extent to which some principals had to cope with staff fear or resistance and needed to take the lead in clarifying and encouraging the teachers is evident in comments concerning the need for “persistence” (School F and School E), “keeping staff on task with the process, having conversations with them and being steadfast on requirements” (School L), “overcoming a lack of confidence and fear” (School C and School G), the need “to be firm about the fact that everyone would be involved” (School G). The principal of School E even indicated that, after all of her encouraging efforts with her staff, “you could give up”, but she indicated that she has not because of her commitment to providing the best possible learning for her students.
9.4. Developing the leadership team and leadership generally throughout the school

Having leaders take the lead is partly dependent upon their capacity to do so. All of the principals recognised a need to provide the skills necessary for leadership within their appraisal process to build capacity for organisational growth and change. Similarly, they expressed a need to provide key leaders with authority and responsibility.

At School J, where leaders were assigned to “growth groups” of 5 to 8 people, they were given scope to decide the way in which they met, shared and communicated, but they — as group leaders — were assigned in turn to groups under the guidance of one of four members of the senior leadership of the school. In this way, they had a “guide behind the scenes” and were able to avail themselves of training for their leadership role. Heads of faculty were also guided in changing from dealing with routine administration in department meetings to leading conversations about curriculum directions and the encouragement of professional growth. A “culture shift” was noted over time. A similar culture shift was noted at School E:

We have been actively working on the role of heads of departments, so that they see themselves as more than department managers and managers of budgets, shifting their thinking to be leaders of people.

To assist this “shift”, consultants have been used to take this group of middle managers through a process of looking at themselves as leaders in a time of change.
Their responsibility as people managers and encouragers of professional growth, has been integrated into reviewed position descriptions. Additionally, to support the “shift”, curriculum meetings now focus on professional learning, and these leaders are resourcing themselves by undertaking a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) through Melbourne University on pedagogy. The principal emphasised her leadership of the executive of the school and her guiding of them towards having “challenging conversations”. Although recognising that this takes time, she wants this approach to move to heads of departments and the teams of “critical friends” throughout the school.

A further specific example of training and resourcing for leadership was evident at School A, where the principal has been part of the Harvard principals’ project, Leading Learning that Matters. Discussions with his leadership team have emphasised “taking a more holistic approach to what learning means”, emphasising the rethinking of learning and rethinking of subjects and disciplines to determine “what matters” in their school. Together Six Pillars of Learning are being developed for the curriculum and it is hoped that these will inform the characteristics desired in graduate students. For the staff themselves, the process of discussion has led to consideration of the idea of “teachers as learners” and “leaders as learners” — how they need to be as learners and what understandings they should have. The need for training in coaching throughout the staff is recognised, to enable all teachers to contribute to the school’s directions for learning. The principal expressed his ultimate
aim as having “everyone, at least the majority, moving in the same direction”, becoming “a learning community”.

At School L, the role of heads of departments was seen as critical in the process of change with appraisal processes. Thoroughness in their management and leadership of their staff was seen to be essential if appraisal processes were to be successful. Where faculty minuting and the requirement of cross-marking “to get people monitoring each other and pushing one another on” were concerned, the principal noted that “some were very slow to do that”, necessitating him “pushing hard”. With guidance he saw these middle managers starting to develop an understanding of what they needed to achieve in their faculties and in their responsibility areas.

At School H, teaching staff were given the scope to seek out a mentor amongst the staff with whom they could discuss their personal professional learning plan, determine the sort of professional learning that would be appropriate and decide on ways in which they could demonstrate or make visible their learning. 20In this way, the principal has tried to encourage leadership to be distributed throughout the staff. Additionally, a staff member is assigned to a member of the senior leadership team who makes time to meet with the staff member and his/her mentor to assist with the resourcing of the chosen directions.

20 Refer to references of Hattie (2009, 2012).
9.5. Supporting the concept of continuous improvement

All principals were seen to be encouraging continuous learning and improvement on the part of their teachers. How they have gone about this and how long it has taken has been dependent upon the level of receptivity of their staff and the extent to which the staff have identified with the potential benefits of appraisal processes in a variety of forms to assist in such continuous improvement.

The principal of School G clearly shared her experience of how difficult it can be to establish the notion of continuous improvement. To guide her staff in this direction, she established a consultative group to firstly look at the curriculum of the school. Involvement in this group was open to any member of the teaching staff. With this group taking the lead, a strategic plan for the improvement of teaching and learning was negotiated with the staff, with a deliberate focus on classroom practice. Another volunteer group was established to draft potential performance development processes that could be trialled. This process was not rushed; the seventeen who volunteered were committed to getting it right; it was recognised that the staff needed time “to give feedback on the potential processes and to adjust”.

An advantage of having this keen group of staff working on the matter was that they were well informed and able to field conversations with other staff, to be “advocates on the ground”, clarifying directions and diffusing misgivings. The process was said to be well resourced through internal and external professional learning.
opportunities, as the aim was to have a Teaching and Learning Improvement Plan that would work “to improve classroom practice and student learning outcomes”.

The combination of involvement of staff in the planning, gradually bringing staff onside to identify with the concept of continuous learning, plus persistence on the part of the principal not to give up are seen to be key factors in having change occur. The principal spoke strongly about persistence:

We wanted to make it very clear that the things that we had been talking about and working on through learning teams and through staff meetings and so on, were in fact going to stay. They (the staff) were not going to be able to give up on the notion of differentiation to meet children at their point of need for learning. They were not going to be able to give up on 21st century learners and how to meet their needs. They were not going to be able to give up on the notion that one has to collaborate on one’s professional practice. You cannot just be working in a vacuum.

The principal of School H sought breakthroughs with her staff by emphasising “enhancing professional strengths” and “making their practice visible to others” to encourage continuous improvement, being “energised” and remaining “passionate”. Taking a leadership approach of “setting expectations but having some room for consultation”, guiding staff to understand about “investing your success and wanting you to grow”, the process developed towards each staff member creating a Personal Professional Learning Plan. Achieving the goals and sharing the learning
represented the “appraisal” as such, and this was closely aligned with the professional learning undertakings.

At School C, “individual ownership” of the appraisal was seen to be key to breakthroughs with the staff. This gave recognition of the professionalism of the teachers to “buy into it” and “do their best with it”, to receive feedback from colleagues and students to inform their directions in their teaching to enable continuous improvement. Each teacher develops an Independent Learning Project. The aim is:

To have a look at the teacher. For the teachers to look at themselves, then other professionals, then the students... an opportunity to give critical feedback to a professional... and I think that’s very important for people if they’re going to improve as professionals. They need a means by which they can be given that feedback and time to reflect and put it into perspective. It is about accountability to their students but it is also very much about themselves for their own professionalism.

The principal sees the processes as now “embedded in the culture of the school”, a culture that she considers to be “an open learning culture”.

All principals appear to have needed to find breakthroughs with some staff to have them identifying with the concept of continuous improvement. Of particular
interest is the response of some very experienced teachers. For example, the principal of School L stated:

For some of the old operators who have been operating at the highest level, maybe at subject coordinator level, or as examination coordinators outside, they can be a bit defensive.

At School J, “inertia” originally in developing a suitable appraisal process was said to come from teachers who would refer to their excellent VCE results, wondering what more needed to be done. The principal’s hope to shift the emphasis from results to engagement with and love of learning was expressed at the final focus group.

The principal of School E, in response to my question concerning resistance to appraisal, expressed her understanding of teachers’ potential response and her perspective as follows:

They believe they’re working hard to do a good job and appraisal might indicate that it’s not perfect. For some of them, that’s a really tough thing to admit that you don’t know as much as you might or that there is the ability to improve, whereas in fact, it should be that we’re all striving to improve. It’s not about being perfect, it’s actually about the fact that we can always do better next time around.
9.6. Encouraging collaboration and the sharing of experiences

Closely aligned with the concept of continuous improvement is the sharing of experiences by a staff, having them work together as a learning community, not working in isolation. Across the schools involved in this research, various means of encouraging collaborative efforts and the sharing of learning and achievements are evident.

On the matter of what has worked best in the implementation of the appraisal scheme at School D, the following was indicated:

I think building collegiality. I think that’s the best outcome because at every stage people are talking to others about teaching and learning, good teaching and learning, and it’s those conversations that are the most powerful and they’re the things that inspire. It’s not the file that’s kept. It is actually having collegial conversations and not feeling any threat in the process but just really learning, and learning is exciting and teachers like learning.

This positive stance has been supported by a group of teachers who are confident and open to others visiting their classroom. They have also been open to being videoed demonstrating techniques and learning tools. From this, the school’s site on Moodle is developing so that staff can use this as a resource. It was noted also that the videoing is not edited:
Staff are starting to pick up techniques and ideas from each other and when we make mistakes we never videotape twice. We make mistakes, we’re not perfect. We want everyone to see we’re not perfect and that helps.

To enhance the capacity of teachers for constructive classroom observation, a group of senior staff attended in-servicing outside the school, bringing back potential models to share with other staff. As staff have trialled models, they have been able to explain these and promote them to others on staff professional learning days. Building collegiality amongst the staff by this means was seen to be an enhancer of the processes being developed at the school in two ways, firstly, by “having the staff realise that they as teachers can support and help each other”, “share and build personal connection with people who also value what you value”, and, secondly, that they can be part of developing the processes undertaken.

The experience at School H also demonstrates how sharing amongst staff can be encouraged to delve into the impact of teaching on the students’ learning. With the appraisal process based on the choice of an “area of practice to enhance professional strengths” as part of a Personal Professional Growth Plan, staff have been guided in resourcing their choice and determining the ways in which they could “articulate and make visible their good practice”. Following an appraisal meeting with the assigned senior member of staff and their mentor on conclusion of the process, staff are encouraged to share their findings with colleagues either at a faculty meeting or a full staff meeting, depending on the project undertaken. For the principal, a major aim of this was seeking “evidence” of good practice and
encouraging the staff to explore and seek feedback from colleagues and students. She stated:

The one word that was important in all of this was ‘evidence’. You know you’re doing a great job but how do you know, how do you make it visible? What sort of evidence would that be? How do you know that students are learning? How do the students know that they are learning?

To support this process, the principal emphasised the role of “respectful conversations”, the “reinforcement of staff as professionals” and “good opportunities for communication about the processes” to build trust. Earlier feedback from staff about their recognition of the role of collaboration in enhancing a sense of wellbeing amongst them, underpinned the directions the principal was able to take.

At School C, at the conclusion of their annual appraisal process, teachers do a presentation on their learning project of choice. This is set up like a fair around the school so that staff can circulate to hear various colleagues outline what they have explored in their teaching. As everyone has to have a turn, such sharing is said to have become part of the culture of the school.

Similarly, at School E, staff have shared their work on their “action research” at a staff conference, presenting to approximately 25 colleagues on the area of practice chosen. More detailed sharing through classroom observation is said to be
encouraged to have more staff using their chosen “critical friends” to obtain feedback. The school is currently trialling processes amongst the staff, paving the way to develop confidence in the staff with such observation and sharing, moving away from a traditional view of the privacy of their classrooms.

School G experienced breakthroughs in classroom observation through interested staff trialling this. The principal indicated the benefits:

The teachers have loved talking to other teachers about their teaching. They were anxious at first but have thoroughly enjoyed the conversations. Having done this with people beyond their faculty, not people with whom they would regularly talk about professional practice, they have found that it has opened up new conversations.

At School I, value has been seen in the development of cross-campus teams working with one another on the achievement of goals in their annual action plans, particularly associated with the thinking curriculum, resourced by Harvard online courses. At School J, cross-campus sharing has also been evident on staff days when time is spent in groups discussing pedagogical matters.

9.7. Respecting the professionalism of teachers

Various approaches and insights across the schools indicate determined efforts by the principals to show respect for and encouragement of their teachers as professionals, an understanding of their preferred approaches to professional
learning and sensitivity to the extent to which some teachers can be fearful of appraisal processes. The following have been raised in earlier chapters and are noted here in summary:

1. The need for clarity of requirements is seen as essential, aided by learning management systems, clear guidelines/booklets to avoid surprises in expectations.

2. Providing some elements of choice and letting teachers use their initiative, for example, in what element of practice will be focused on or who will be a “critical friend” or “mentor” have been found to be helpful in having staff take up opportunities for collaboration and growth.

3. Provision of the professional learning and coaching needed to undertake appraisal processes.

4. Provision of the resources for professional learning to support the choices teachers are working on within the appraisal system.

5. Encouraging sharing of professional learning amongst the teachers, either one-on-one, in small groups or through presentations to the whole teaching staff. The latter provides for a celebration and recognition of achievement.

6. Understanding time pressures on teachers to cover the day-to-day requirements of their role, necessitating appraisal undertakings to be manageable, to be understood as assisting their core work, not distracting them from it (the challenge of overcoming appraisal being
seen as an “add on” is noted and the difficulty of providing time for teachers to carry out learning, feedback and sharing).

7. Being clear about how requirements of the appraisal scheme are reported on, to whom, and where/how records are kept.

Across the schools included in this research, principals have expended much effort in encouraging their staff to identify with and constructively approach processes for professional learning and appraisal for their own professional benefit and for the benefit of their students. There appears to be a fine balance between, on the one hand, encouraging growth processes and remaining steadfast in seeing changes through and, on the other, understanding the factors that cause resistance and respecting the professionalism of their teachers.

However, an assumption of the professionalism of all teachers in a school may be misguided. In the opinion of the principal of School I, one cannot assume professionalism on the part of all teachers. In response to my question concerning why some staff resist appraisal processes, he stated:

My kind response is fear. Fear of the outcome. My harsh response is laziness, lack of commitment to their profession and more so lack of commitment to the children who are sitting in front of them in the classroom every day, because the passionate teachers want to do this (i.e. refine their practice) because they want to create the best learning environment they can.
The principal of School L sought to understand the resistance of some of his teachers to having colleagues observing their classes and has encouraged them to break down the sense of privacy of classrooms to increase sharing of their professional learning. He interpreted this sense of privacy as follows:

Teachers have historically always operated within their own classrooms and their own classroom is their domain; as for what goes on in the classroom, that’s “my business”, and they would prefer to maintain closed, locked off classrooms. Observation by peers is seen as an intrusion.

In overseeing change in his school, he considered “having conversations with people (to encourage and clarify) and being steadfast on requirements” to be essential. At School G, the principal expressed her understanding of staff resistance as follows:

I think they’re afraid. I think many of them are not confident; even those who should be outstandingly confident are not in fact confident of their professional practice, and so they fear that they will be found wanting. So they resist.

Understanding the fear of appraisal by some staff and the need to assist them to work through this was also expressed at School D:

Even from really good teachers, I think there is fear because it’s something new and they’re not used to it… and they’ve got a good reputation that they don’t want to lose it… there’s insecurity that they’re going to be found out
or not feel good enough, or be judged, and I think it's just a very human emotion really... everyone is scared of not being seen to be as competent, so I think it’s only through experience that you start breaking down those barriers.

A more novel method devised at this school to assist reticent staff with having a lesson observed has been the provision of small cameras with which staff can record their own lessons. When they are happy with a particular recording, it can be the one that they may choose to give to colleagues. This type of filtering is hoped to have an impact in increasing the confidence of those who need it. For all of the staff, coaching on an element of practice is provided before classroom observation is undertaken. Through this there is said to be an opportunity to “develop a relationship and trust” and it is hoped that the staff can step past their fear to “get excited about what they are wanting to achieve”.

The matter of reporting and the keeping of records of the appraisal process has been raised in Chapter 6. I reiterate that reasons given for such reporting and keeping of records included: evidence of staff participating in the processes determined by the school and confirmation of completion of the process; to meet AITSL Performance and Development requirements; to satisfy VIT requirements (this latter reason validated as being beyond the choice of the individual school). To maintain the trust of the staff and to respect their professionalism, clarity to them concerning such reasons was indicated to be significant by the principals. Two principals also stressed the need for brevity in record keeping to make the
requirements manageable for their teachers, in light of the many demands on teachers’ time.

9.8. Discussion

A notable feature of the principals’ efforts to build their schools as “communities of learners” is their assumption of the potential significance of the role of appraisal processes in supporting their efforts as they have sought to align professional learning undertakings with the vision and mission of the school. Such alignment has not happened naturally and how the process has been approached differs amongst the schools.

In the example of opening discussion on the match of the individual teacher and school’s vision and mission, and determining the alignment with the school’s core values and goals, this was seen by the principal (School D) as a constructive beginning to the desired opening up of appraisal processes. Values and practices were thought to be modelled by the senior leadership (Leithwood et al. 1999) through providing information at staff meetings on the school’s values in preparation for individual interviews, conducted by members of the school’s executive. It was thought that the professionalism of the teachers was being respected (Leithwood et al. 1999) by providing teachers with the questions for the interview “to enable them to come prepared, to present their views well and not be taken by surprise”. This was considered to be assisting the building of trust (Timperley et al. 2007; Townsend 1998). The need for clear communication was recognised (Vanci-Osam & Aksit 2000)
with the outline of appraisal processes provided in a booklet and online so that any absent staff could have access to the information. However, the issue remains here of how teachers respond to individual discussion with a member of the senior executive. Additionally, the questions for the interview — although clear and helpful for advance preparation — were devised by the principal and the director of teaching and learning. The power differential in such a situation is one that can impact negatively on some teachers (see Roussin & Zimmerman 2014). One cannot assume that all staff would understand that the aim was to respect their professionalism and provide them with some sense of control.

The power differential is also present in the approach taken in one school whereby there is an announcement at the commencement of the school year by the principal of the “growth cycle” for the year. The value of the associated alignment of school-wide professional development with the school goals for the year concurs with the findings of King et al. (2002). However, the overall process could be perceived as being “top down”. It is noted that in this school the growth direction for the following year is discussed with the senior leadership team, but this may not be enough to keep all in the main body of teaching staff aligned. Similarly, the choice in one school of setting a Professional Learning Theme for the year, although assisting alignment of professional learning undertakings, still runs the risk of being seen to be directed by the principal, unless sufficient preparatory discussion is carried out to determine the theme. In such cases, communication by those in middle management with their own groups of staff would be necessary to reinforce the chosen theme or
elements of teaching practice being emphasised. Similarly, leadership from amongst the staff to reinforce directions would be needed (Davis, Ellett & Annunziata 2002).

The example of the integration of the Personal Professional Learning Plans of the teachers into the school’s planning and resourcing for professional learning, with the aim of having staff feeling connected into the school goals demonstrates the principal’s focus on support for and participation in the professional learning of the staff (Robinson et al. 2008) and aligns with the findings of Hallinger (2010) of the need to set in place a process for creating school level conditions and approaches that can indirectly impact on student learning.

The question remains as to how alignment with the vision and mission can successfully occur. One school’s example enabled more direct involvement of staff in the development of a vision for learning for students. Participants on the committee were volunteers and, as the discussions developed and were communicated to the whole staff, the committee members were able to clarify any misgivings “on the ground” — in particular in incidental staffroom discussions. The value of this concurs with the advice of McLellan & Ramsey (2005) of harnessing the Core Group. Further work by a committee of volunteers to align appraisal approaches with the agreed vision and mission recognises the importance of involving teachers in planning of procedures for appraisal to provide for ownership (Conley & Glasman 2008; Isore 2009; Kyriakides et al. 2010). Emphasis was placed on how the adults can help students achieve through improving teaching (Conley & Glasman 2008). The approach does provide some evidence of “culture building” and “shared decision-
making” (Leithwood et al. 1999). Additionally, in determining choices for appraisal approaches, validation was sought from a research base (Marzano 2007; Zbar, Marshall & Power 2007), and focused and specific approaches to teaching and learning were determined (Leithwood et al. 1999).

A further approach of implementation of appraisal processes involving self-reflection, setting of goals for professional learning, seeking peer feedback and final discussion with the head of department and the principal, demonstrated a process aimed at gradual alignment on school directions/school vision. Although “top down” in the original process set, there was said to be openness by the principal and senior staff to feedback from the teachers; two-way communication was encouraged (Collinson & Cook 2007) on how the school was progressing (i.e. staff were given the opportunity to appraise the school and influence the development of the school culture). This principal, in further discussion, indicated that it took considerable time to have the staff understand that they could have input into the school’s directions.

As the appraisal process was partly undertaken to guide staff in improving results, a degree of reticence would be understood. Particular emphasis had been placed on VCE results from the start of the appraisal processes.

To demonstrate an understanding to their staff of the significance of being open to opportunities for learning and growth, in four of the schools, the principals and senior staff undertook a 360-degree approach to feedback from their staff and school community. They sought to understand the needs of the school (Day et al. 2010) and demonstrated the value of seeking feedback (Hattie 2012). However, the
question needs to be asked about a potential negative impression to staff concerning
the use of outside consultants and demonstration of a more summative approach.
The aim of demonstrating openness and preparedness to undertake a procedure
beyond what was being asked of the teachers could be undermined by a lingering
doubt about eventual summative approaches for the teachers. In one school, a
member of the senior leadership team used his own data on student achievement
and student feedback at a staff meeting to demonstrate the value of the feedback
and how he could use this feedback to change some of his approaches. This does
represent a constructive step to build “relational trust” with the staff (Moreland
2012).

Young & King (2002) have emphasised the need for the leadership group to
work as a team and inspire others. Although this is a traditional leadership stance,
the reality in these given schools is that leadership structures are in place and
principals rely on the leadership team to assist them and carry out functions that
they, time-wise, could not manage within their demanding schedules. Whilst
recognising this reliance on the leadership team, leadership capacity and
commitment were seen to be limited in some schools (informal, personal opinion of
the principals), a detractor to the appraisal processes undertaken. The question
needs to be asked as to why they were not committing. The answer may lie in the
level of capacity and need for training in their role or a lack of identification with the
directions taken, resulting from possibly insufficient discussion or opportunity for
input from these members of the leadership group.
In each of the schools, there was recognition of the need to develop middle management capacity to lead teaching and learning and enable growth and change (i.e. to have them taking the role beyond daily administration). However, even with such capacity building (Hallinger 2010), principals are left with the complexity involving potential perceptions of the staff that the formal leadership team know more about teaching and learning. Timperley et al. (2009) have emphasised the significance of determining how capacity can be built throughout a school by developing the intellectual and professional capital of the staff, including leadership potential. Leadership then becomes premised on the leadership capability of the many, rather than the few (Harris et al. 2003) with a focus on organisational growth and change “distributed, instructionally focused and ultimately teacher-owned” (p. 2). This stance, with an emphasis on supporting “leadership density”, is supported by other research (see Blasé & Kirby 2009; Davis, Ellett & Annunziata 2002; Seashore Louis et al. 2010). However, from principals’ responses, questions arise as to whether such a stance will flow across to teacher appraisal processes that successfully support collaborative efforts if the processes applied maintain “top-down” elements that can run counter to “teacher-owned” approaches.

In a number of the schools, teachers were able to choose a “critical friend” or “mentor” with whom to discuss, for example, classroom observation feedback, student work samples or student feedback. This was seen to be drawing on the expertise throughout the staff and building leadership generally. In some schools, steps were being taken to train teachers in coaching one another. There remains the
issue of how balanced or reciprocal the professional sharing is or whether there
remains a potential power differential which could lead to reluctance or distrust.
Certainly, not all teachers want to lead or be the “expert”, which can be a difficulty
in giving feedback (Adey 2004). However, coaching approaches have the potential to
mollify such misgivings in that an emphasis is placed on guiding one’s “partner” to
seek his or her own solutions to any difficulties (Joyce & Showers 2002; Showers &
Joyce 1996). Such an approach could produce an environment that is conducive to
reflecting on practice and shifting. If leadership is seen as “ideas based” (Darling-
Hammond & Bransford 2005; Drago-Severson 2004), authority can then come from
the quality of ideas, rather than the position or role; authority, responsibility and
legitimacy can then be distributed (Drago-Severson 2004). The significance of training
for mentoring or coaching remains paramount (Gimbel et al. 2011).

The need for persistence with processes for appraisal and professional
growth are noted by the principals. To what extent the teachers have identified with
the potential benefits of their appraisal processes cannot be determined entirely
from the principals’ perceptions and goes beyond the scope of this thesis. The
question remains as to whether the innate views of staff on how appraisal of their
practice should occur have been taken into account and whether appraisal adds to
teachers’ identification with the concept of continuous improvement. In Chapter 4, I
noted an assumption on my part that, without a collective understanding that
practice can be continually improved, there will be staff who will undermine or give
perfunctory support to the appraisal processes. In analysing the interviews with the
principals, there is indication that they concur on the significance of communication with and encouragement of teachers to work with one another to discover what can be gained from being open to learning from one another.

Producing an environment that is conducive to reflecting on practice and shifting, as well as continuous quality improvement and innovation, takes time (DuFour et al., 2008; Powell & Kusuma-Powell 2015). A focus on learning needs to be sustained (Hallinger 2010; Hargreaves 2008) — one that is specific to encouraging growth of students (Conley & Glasman 2008; Elmore 2000; Leithwood et al. 1999). Each of the principals involved in this research has indicated commitment to providing the best possible learning for students, hence their commitment to achieving continuous improvement and refinement in teaching practice. This involves how teachers organise and conduct their instruction (Mulford & Silins 2003) and the overall “instructional quality” of the school (Papay 2012; Young & King 2002). Feedback is essential in such a developmental process. However, defensiveness of many teachers to feedback is noted as an issue. The question of why some teachers are afraid of this was put to the principals and I reiterate some of their responses which involved a recognition of traditional maintenance of the privacy and autonomy of classrooms, a fear of being seen to be not as good as they feel they are due to a lack of confidence — even if they are “good teachers”.

The matter of wishing to maintain the autonomy and privacy of the classroom is an issue to be worked through in some schools but, as the principals indicate, there are issues to do with self-esteem. In seeking further clarity on this, I
draw on the research of Spillane et al. (2002) who indicate hesitancy on the part of some teachers to concede that past efforts may have been misdirected; this can involve a loss of self-concept. There may also be a threat to professional image and potential disempowerment if there is an imbalance of power in a superior/subordinate relationship when feedback is provided (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014).

However, I concur with Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) that being a professional involves not simply “knowing the answers”, but also having the skills and will to work with others in evaluating their own performances and searching for new answers when needed, both at the classroom level and school level — termed “adaptive expertise”. The related issue here for principals is how they engage with teachers’ thinking and perceptions and how they can support emotional resourcefulness on the part of teachers and transparency to increase teachers’ “cognitive capital” and encourage them to receive, interpret and apply feedback (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014). What is needed is transformational learning (how a person knows) as opposed to informational learning (what a person knows) in a change process (Kegan 2000), and the engagement of teachers in evaluating their own underpinning theories of action (Timperley et al. 2007). Overall, a de-privatisation of practice is needed, enabling regular, open collegial inquiry into and discussion of best practice, achieved through a trusting and collaborative climate with a shared mission, in which initiatives and risks can be taken and the collective
efficacy of the staff and their ability to engage in organisational learning can be developed (Mulford & Silins 2003).

The principals have undertaken a range of approaches to encourage collaboration and the sharing of experiences. Apart from staff working with a mentor or “critical friend”, some have established teams, ranging from informal configurations to formally arranged groups under the leadership of an executive member of staff. There has been some use of cross-faculty or cross-campus teams. Enabling such multiple combinations of teachers concurs with advised processes by Cole (2005) who emphasises the importance of collaboration for the sharing of teaching strategies to extend teachers’ repertoires.

The most common means of sharing has involved teachers trialling approaches, for example, to classroom observation, and then providing information at staff meetings — or staff sharing at meetings of whole or part of the staff details on an element of good practice and providing evidence on the impact on student learning. The research on teacher responses to evaluation by Conley & Glasman (2008) supports the value of teachers’ skills and talents being made more visible within the school and encouraging teacher sharing and distribution of skills to others. In such presentations it is essential that they do not come across as indicating “this is how you should do it better” (see Stoll & Louis 2008). Three of the schools have an end-of-year celebration of achievement or staff conference/expo for teachers to share what they have worked on. All of these methods are aimed at modelling good practice and demonstrating that teachers can learn from one another (Blasé & Blasé
2001). However, should it be necessary to organise special events for sharing? In a community of learners, understanding collective responsibility for students (Timperley et al. 2007), the ideal to work towards would be building a culture of “thinking and learning together” (Stoll & Louis, 2008), encouraging a sense of all as equal learning partners (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014), having people acting rather than reacting (Mulford & Silins 2003). The research of Blasé & Kirby (2009) also provides support for the extent to which teachers can provide significant support to colleagues, for example, through helping them plan and organise for learning and through modelling classroom behaviour (i.e. through providing informal leadership). Hargreaves (2008) concurs that shared learning and leadership for achievement improvement coming from every part of the school are essential and that this can become a way of life that changes the entire school culture.

The aspect of celebration of achievements is positive, public recognition being noted as a clear incentive in the OECD research (2009). Also, awareness raising of elements of good practice at a staff conference could be beneficial in stimulating the thinking of other teachers. This is not dissimilar to Cole's suggestion (2005) of all staff posting in the staffroom the element(s) of practice they will be working on. Done at the commencement of the year, this could trigger beneficial connections between staff for professional sharing.

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22 Lack of recognition for successful and effective teaching was noted by 90% of teachers who participated in the surveying reported by the OECD 2009.
This ideal is one that both respects and encourages the professionalism of teachers, one that respects teachers as adult learners who are part of a “community of practice” developing and transmitting knowledge and being involved in ongoing inquiry in their classrooms and addressing problems of practice (Drago Severson 2004); being life-long learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005).

However, part of supporting the professionalism of teachers is maintaining some sense of autonomy and control and valuing professional judgment concerning the best course of practice (Davis et al. 2002; Gunther 2005). The principals were conscious also of the importance of good communication, providing some choice in approaches to appraisal and respecting time constraints (Vanci-Osam & Aksit 2000). The issue of reporting on the appraisal process (discussed in Chapter 8), what is actually kept on file and the use of this appear to remain matters for consideration in most of the schools involved. Consideration of this is essential because of the potential tension between “accountability” inferred by such reporting and desired encouragement of further professional learning and collegiality (Timperley & Robinson 1998). As Scott (1999) cautioned, if the costs outweigh the benefits, people will disengage. Formalisation of records of professional learning for ongoing registration with the VIT provides some justification for record keeping in the school, although this responsibility lies with each teacher as a professional.
CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

10.1. Introduction

The focus of this grounded theory research has been the topic of teacher appraisal and what principals in this subgroup of twelve independent schools have done through processes of appraisal to encourage professional learning for the benefit of student learning, and whether this has been beneficial in these schools. I have aimed to achieve the following: (1) to give voice to the principals’ experiences and perceptions as they have negotiated the purposes, planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools with their teaching staff; (2) to find out what the principals have done through methods of appraisal to encourage their teachers to undertake meaningful professional development and integrate it into their ongoing practice, and how effective they have considered this to be; and (3) to find out what the principals perceive as enhancers and detractors in the appraisal processes undertaken in their schools.

There is a growing body of international research confirming a direct relationship between teacher quality/effectiveness and student learning (see, for example, Hallinger et al. 2014). Scholarly research shows that teacher appraisal and feedback can significantly improve teachers’ understanding of their teaching methods, teacher practices and student learning (Hattie 2009). Hence, teacher appraisal systems have come to be considered an important link in the chain leading
to desired student outcomes (Ovando & Ramirez 2007). As such, the onus lies with
principals to understand how to support teachers to develop practices that will
support all learners. Appraisal has become an assumed part of this support for
teachers, taken up by state and federal governments as a means of lifting the
performance of schools in Australia. However, opinions vary as to how teachers
should best be appraised and how processes of appraisal might improve teacher
quality and performance (Hattie 2009; Taylor & Tyler 2012). Additionally, the
ultimate impact of such processes on student learning outcomes is unclear (Jensen &
Reichl 2011; Leithwood et al. 2007).

This research has taken place in the context of an intensification of public,
political, bureaucratic and market accountabilities in education, that has placed
teacher appraisal in focus in student outcome-based measurement and appraisal
(Glasman & Glasman 2006) and in response to demands for high education quality
(Isore 2009). There is a quest for more powerful strategies to improve student
performance, which Hallinger et al. (2014) conclude are leading policy makers and
system leaders to experiment with new models of teacher appraisal. Teacher
appraisal is now an accepted and permanent feature of teachers’ work in schools and
is constantly growing in status as expectations for continual teaching and learning
improvements remain high on the agendas of governments and systemic decision
makers. The imperative for appraisal alongside the impetus for evidence of teaching
and learning effectiveness has also impacted on the work of school principals who
are charged with ensuring school improvement — mostly gauged through formal
measurement instruments such as public examinations and standardised student testing regimes.

The Australian government wants the schooling system to enhance the nation’s international economic competitiveness and productivity. In addition, it aims to improve the country’s rankings in international test results (e.g. in PISA and TIMMS tests). In the introduction to the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework, it is stated, “the rest of the world is not standing still ... Australia aspires not to be among the best in the world, but to be the best”. The introduction of NAPLAN testing in 2008 was thought to potentially provide a measure by which governments, education authorities and schools could determine whether important education outcomes were being reached by young Australians. With the introduction of the My School website, published information on results has increased school transparency, comparisons, competitiveness and scrutiny with resultant pressure for improvements in student learning. Although results from such tests are intended for school-level accountability and to identify areas for school improvement, it can be considered that trends in these results can influence community attitudes, parents’ choices and broader expectations on teachers concerning the effect of their teaching, resulting in an indirect impact on appraisal processes chosen in schools (see Looney 2011).

Part of the federal government’s response to international competitiveness has been the formulation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (2011). At the state level, the Performance and Development Framework (2012) has
been devised, with requirements for annual feedback to/appraisal of teachers to raise student achievement. Additionally, in Victoria, in 2005, the Victorian Institute of Teaching set in place accreditation requirements involving documented hours of professional development undertakings by teachers to maintain their registration and, therefore, licence to practise.

Such “external drivers” (Harris 2003) from the government level, and pressure to enact policies (see, for example, Honig 2006; Kraft & Gilmour 2015), combined with expectations for high-level performance of teachers coming from school boards as well as parents in the independent sector, place pressure on school principals to show proof of improvement and, in turn, pressure is applied on teachers. Principals want to be accountable to the government, to their boards, to parents, and ultimately to their students and need to determine how they can best satisfy these accountabilities. Teacher appraisal has come to be seen as a means of assurance that quality teaching is occurring to improve student learning (Hattie 2009; Glasman & Glasman 2006; Ovando & Ramirez 2007).

As I explored with the twelve independent school principals their experiences and perceptions as they negotiated the planning and implementation of appraisal processes in their schools, key themes of their intended purposes for appraisal and the need to provide clarity of these purposes surfaced. The principals have espoused clear purposes of achieving the best possible student learning outcomes; encouraging continuous professional learning and growth for their teachers to have what they perceive to be ‘cutting edge’ pedagogy in their schools;
aligning professional learning with the appraisal processes; and satisfying state and national directions and requirements. A significant question that has remained present for me throughout the research has been: if professional learning is seen as key to the development of quality teaching, how can it best be encouraged and to what extent can appraisal support this learning?

In wanting to satisfy accountabilities, the principals appear to have been caught up in common approaches to appraisal to have teachers accountable and showing that they are continually developing and progressing in the profession (as per national standardised professional standards). They also appear to have relied upon traditional forms of leadership creating complications in “power relations”, which I expand on in the following section, in which I draw conclusions on significant detractors to appraisal processes that the principals have overseen and experienced.

In section 10.3, I draw conclusions on enhancers to the processes undertaken by the principals and follow in 10.4 with the issue of evidence or lack of evidence of student learning outcomes. In 10.5, I consider what has been learnt from these research outcomes and in 10.6 I draw together my final conclusions.

10.2. **Detractors or barriers to appraisal processes**

External drivers and extrinsic requirements noted above cannot be underestimated. They have provided impetus for having some form of appraisal and feedback in place in every school. Their very existence has also challenged the principals in presenting their own personal commitment to professional growth and
student learning, and not being seen to be moving in the direction of appraisal just for extrinsic reasons. Without the government expectations, the principals could still have overseen processes in their schools to support teacher learning, intrinsically motivated by the specific needs of their school.

All of the principals indicated they had not chosen to undertake summative directions in their appraisal processes for the general teaching staff. This is in line with my second assumption noted in Chapter 4. All principals emphasised the choice of formative appraisal approaches, aiming to encourage professional growth as this was seen as constructive to encourage “best practice” and is seemingly less complex than undertaking summative processes. However, despite steps taken to implement formative appraisal processes, the principals discovered the extent to which complexities still arise due to staff resistance. Misinterpretation of the purposes and misgivings on the part of some teachers about the “real” purpose of appraisal hampered progress and drew on the leadership capacities of the principals to find ways to bring teachers on side. Their approaches have been discussed in Chapters 6-9. Principals have needed to deal with a number of negative psychological issues attached to appraisal processes, in particular, an underlying fear of failure and resultant stress (as found by Conley & Glasman 2008), and assumptions on the part of teachers of there being judgment and an intention of remedying deficiencies. It is of interest to note this negative response occurring in all the schools involved in this research, as was the case in the earlier research of Wilson & Wood (1996) and Claudet (1999). Even with the principals’ emphasis on professional growth, there was seen to
be misinterpretation and a triggering of an interpretation by teachers that any “weakness” detected or area seen to be open to improvement would lead to a negative appraisal of them.

There have needed to be breakthroughs even with some of the staff principals perceived to be of the best who have resisted appraisal processes, wondering what more could be expected of them, particularly those who have been consistently achieving outstanding Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) (end of secondary schooling examination) results. Principals have needed to be persistent in opening up such staff to new ways of thinking about learning and engagement of students, drawing largely on the principals’ capacity to manage change. (I note my own experience as principal of some of the highest achieving staff, as far as VCE results were concerned, being so modest about their achievements that they did not want to put themselves forward, as they interpreted it, to be “showing others” how they could approach their teaching, that also indicated a sense of teaching being an atomistic, private activity).

Experiences shared by the principals involving, for example, simplification of appraisal requirements, reducing the time required for documentation, allowing modification of student survey questions or removal of undesired feedback, indicate the extent to which the principals had to accommodate staff feelings to avoid or reduce staff resistance.
Principals across the schools needed to provide reassurance that the content of the appraisal process would not be used for summative (non-developmental) purposes. This particularly involved the need for clarification that the content would not be used for purposes of “performance management” (or what is often referred to as “due process”) resulting from perceived underperformance. There was an underlying consistency in distrust and scepticism to work through across the schools, and a negative response to the term “appraisal” itself. The filing of teacher appraisal records, either in hardcopy with the principal or head of campus or online, would not have helped to diminish misgivings. This was justified by principals as evidence of completion of the process undertaken and/or goals achieved, and satisfying government expectations concerning evidence of annual appraisal or feedback to teachers. My assumption concerning principals feeling unwittingly compelled to bring formality and reporting into their teacher appraisal processes was confirmed in my discussions with the principals. In particular, where ratings against the Australian Standards by the teachers, their peers and direct reports were formalised in one school, staff tensions about use were heightened. A potential perceived summative end point to the appraisal process would run counter to formative intentions. The fear of negative repercussions on the part of teachers is significant and points to considerable lack of confidence on the part of a number of teachers either in themselves, in the appraisal processes or in the hierarchy of the school. It also points to a huge problem with trust in principals as representatives of employing bodies in schools.
Real or perceived power differentials between staff presented a major detractor. This played out, in particular, between those in leadership roles and those not. I conclude that there is a potential trap in interpretations if the formal leadership team gives the impression that they know more about teaching and learning and appraisal of these complex activities. This can result from a structuring of appraisal where teachers have to report to a senior member of staff. Through lack of skills for leadership in an appraisal process (e.g. in the giving of feedback) on the part of staff in leadership positions, or from a lack of involvement of the general teaching staff in decisions about how appraisal processes will be conducted, negative responses on the part of staff can be the outcome. I noted an assumption made by me concerning this in Chapter 4 (refer to Assumption 4). This was confirmed in the interviews with the principals. Fear of “the hierarchy” is particularly evident in one principal’s description of the anxious response of some staff when he conducts walkthroughs.

Linked to power differentials, but also the outcome of lack of confidence or defensiveness, is the detractor of teachers’ general lack of receptivity to feedback. Although constructive feedback is recognised as critical to growth in teaching practice (Hattie 2009), it cannot be assumed to happen naturally between staff either in a situation of a perceived or actual power differential or between teacher colleagues. Both the skills and will to work with others in appraising effectiveness and searching for new answers when needed must be worked on with teachers to gain potential benefits. Principals’ responses indicate many teachers being caught up in the privacy of their own classrooms and not being used to being observed — this is significant in
light of research confirming the value of peer feedback on classroom practice and working with colleagues on pedagogy (Gimbel et al. 2011; Looney 2011). I note also the paradox of teacher reluctance to feedback when they are themselves giving feedback to students every day.

An even more critical detractor has been the issue of how much time the appraisal process demands of teachers. Six of the principals have been insistent that the process is part of normal teaching responsibilities. Five have factored in time for staff to liaise with one another in what would normally have been after school meeting times. One, still in the development phase for the school’s process, has indicated that non-teaching time will be used, which basically involves part of the normal routine of the day. Some adjustments have been made for team teaching in one school. Although the principals have wanted to see the processes as assisting their teachers to do their job well and many have had their teachers choose areas of practice to work on that would support their normal preparation, the risk has remained of teachers seeing appraisal processes as an “add-on”. Apart from the negative perception of appraisal processes being an “add-on”, is the interpretation of appraisal “being done” to staff, it being a judgment of them, instead of the learning flowing naturally from perceived and shared needs on the part of the teachers. (I refer here to my Assumption 4). In three of the schools it was particularly noted that, where some staff were enthused or became “trailblazers”, they did willingly put in the time needed to achieve their goals. I conclude that, if professional learning stemmed organically from teachers working together to determine student needs
and potential solutions, with accountability being a natural and understood part of being professional, negative responses about time consumption would diminish. Additionally, time in a school day is open to a variety of approaches to scheduling that can be manipulated to better suit teaching and learning needs.

How much record keeping teachers have to do for appraisal exercises is a critical issue. Requiring too much has been found to add to the time issue. The principals who were requiring a lot of detail have gradually reduced requirements. Some from the beginning emphasised with their staff that this would be brief and streamlined, to avoid having them off-side. Part of the streamlining was to include required records of professional learning undertakings for VIT registration purposes as part of the appraisal record-keeping. One principal at the final focus group emphasised the extent to which he was needing to keep working on this issue to avoid double or triple handling of content by his teachers. These functional issues cannot be overlooked and trigger the question of whether reporting beyond VIT records should be necessary, this in itself already taking valuable time away from teaching and learning.

Time issues pertain not just to the teachers, but also to principals. The reality of their multiple responsibilities has resulted in them being less “hands-on” in teaching and learning than they would like to be. They have needed to rely on senior teaching staff to follow through with learning directions they have stimulated for their schools as part of their strategic directions. Each of the schools has a key senior position for curriculum or teaching and learning or relies on the functioning of heads
of schools or campuses. Three principals indicated at the final focus group that they have appointed staff to special positions to look after the appraisal and professional learning processes, and one of the schools had created a position for the oversight of this and other compliance matters several years ago. There has also been the use of consultants, an indication that appraisal processes are too cumbersome or complex for schools to deal with themselves (Refer to Donaldson 2013 and Hill 2013, on this matter of time issues.) Traditional leadership structures have been maintained to manage appraisal processes, even though the principals have espoused the value of building leadership capacity amongst the staff.

10.3. Enhancers or supports to appraisal processes

The principals have either created or experienced some factors that have, from their perspective, enhanced their appraisal and professional learning processes.

All principals have sought to maintain a sustained focus on continuous learning for teachers, recognising that this needed to be led by them modelling their own commitment to reflection and improvement for professional growth. If processes were to be formalised to help support this continuous learning, the importance of involving teachers in the planning process was recognised, to create some sense of ownership, an approach well supported in the research literature (e.g. Conley & Glasman 2008; Gunter 2005; Kyriakides 2010; Townsend 1998). Five of the schools enabled the formation of staff representative groups made up of volunteers, with involvement of key staff in formal leadership positions. To enable feedback and
input from other staff, communication by this group was essential, either formally through staff meetings or incidentally “on the ground” as questions arose, to provide clarification and as a means of reducing resistance. It is of interest to note that these planning groups were formed because of the principals indicating that there would be some form of appraisal. In two schools where the appraisal processes were worked on by staff representative groups, complex schemes with reporting to middle managers ensued. This resulted from minimum requirements set by the principals in the first place, hence a “top-down” approach despite staff representation. This has also partly resulted from replication of processes used in other schools or the staff not speaking for their right to work with colleagues without a sense of the “power differential”.

Closely tied to this approach was how leadership was enacted in the schools. The need for close alignment between the principal’s vision for learning and that of the senior leaders was essential, as, in each case, responsibility for the management of the appraisal processes was delegated. Additionally, teachers participating in planning were supported to be using their initiative and were thought to be given some authority and legitimacy. This approach provides some evidence of support for the building of leadership potential and the sharing of leadership to enable success of the processes (Harris 2003; Timperley et al. 2009). There was said to be recognition that “wisdom wasn’t necessarily going to be residing with those in leadership positions” (School G). However, I return to my claim that minimum requirements were set and that the staff knew that appraisal was to be formalised. It was a case of
staff representative groups being co-opted to make the processes acceptable to the broader teaching staff.

Through sustaining a focus on how student learning could be supported (Hallinger 2010; Leithwood et al. 1999), gradual engagement of staff in conversations about “best practice” and recent team-based pedagogies was seen to be enabled (refer to Clifford et al. 2012; Conley & Glasman 2008). The significance of the classroom as the place of interaction between teachers and students was also recognised, hence the assumed need to open classrooms to learn from one another (Smith 2005) and promote quality of instruction (Papay 2012). I reiterate my comments on what must be a retained tradition of private classrooms and that many teachers are still not used to or comfortable with being observed by others, despite many modifications of learning spaces in these schools to increase flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning. The sense of privacy would, of course, vary between disciplines and age-groups, less privacy probably, for example, being the case in practical classrooms where assistants could be present, and in many early learning centres.

Taking time to consult and gain identification with and support for the appraisal directions was seen by principals to be a key enabler. Trialling processes, gaining feedback, modifying further until processes considered to be workable and manageable was found, was aimed at respecting sensitivities of staff concerning the privacy of their classrooms and time needed for change (see Claudet 1999). There is
an underlying implication in this that, given enough time and staff support, staff will adjust or resign themselves to the fact that appraisal will occur.

The need for training in the processes of mentoring, coaching and giving feedback was recognised across the schools as it was believed that without appropriate skills, desired outcomes would not be reached. The resourcing of staff extended also to providing research information on some of the understood “best practices” in the classroom (although there would be many conflicting views on these amongst a staff group). These expressed enhancers were considered by principals to be an essential part of professional learning of teachers to aid their collaboration.

Positive recognition of the value of the Australian Standards providing benchmarks to strive for, a reference point for professional learning activities and a new structure for early attempts at appraisal processes (the case in six of the schools), was given by the principals at the final focus group. Compliance with the Standards appeared to be accepted by the principals, no negative comments having been made about government imposed standards. This is perhaps an indication of this group of principals being a very compliant and accepting group, or their being too busy to consider in detail such new policies that can have great impact. It was understood that the Standards were not a basis for an appraisal scheme but a resource, and that there was a need to be selective, in any given year, because of the comprehensive nature of the Standards. Use was also made of the Standards for the devising of student feedback surveys.
The sharing of teacher action research or professional learning undertaken with other staff through department or whole staff meetings, or through end of year “conferences” was considered to be positive by the seven principals who supported this. In particular, this was seen to enable a celebration and recognition of teachers’ work (see also OECD 2009, p. 155 for findings on the importance of public recognition), apart from the process stimulating ideas for other staff and the potential for sharing of practice (Cole 2005, 2012). Such sharing hints at the benefits of teachers working together, but stops short of teachers’ sharing of practice as a natural part of everyday teaching and learning in a school (see Cole 2012).

The undertaking of student feedback in six of the schools was seen to be significant as a source of information for teachers to draw on for development of their practices. Such a belief aligns with the findings of Smith (2005) and Hattie (2009) on the potential value of drawing on the insights students can give into teachers’ classroom behaviour and affective and didactic skills (see also The Measures of Effective Teaching [MET] project 2010). Use was understood to be for the individual teacher to inform further professional learning, but the need to understand potential staff sensitivities with such feedback remains.

A final particular enabler in a number of these schools was their capacity to financially resource professional learning activities and, in two cases, consultancy to assist with student survey processes — and, in one school — data collection and analysis of individual, class and year level grades. Such resourcing through outside consultants would not be possible in all schools, and some would prefer not to
undertake this to maintain responsibility internally in the school. If a school can afford such consultancy, the benefits from a purely practical point of view concerning the handling and interpretation of data were evidenced. However, such an approach may add to the mystique of appraisal and endorse fears that appraisal is complex, which should not necessarily be the case. Use of consultants may also give the impression that the school does not have the skills to do this.

10.4. Evidence or not of influence on student learning

A predominant purpose expressed by the principals for having an appraisal scheme was to “support and enhance student learning”. Evidence was mainly anecdotal — despite formalised appraisal processes — or noted by the principals at the focus group as gauged from improvements in external measurements such as Victorian Certificate of Education results or NAPLAN results over time. There was some pre- and post-testing by teachers in relation to aspects of practice in focus, some analysis of work samples, and in one school direct encouragement to try to make the impact of the application of their professional learning “visible” to others by seeking some form of “proof” of effect by, for example, work samples, results or student feedback. Only one school undertook formalised plotting of student results against class and year averages, throughout the secondary levels, accessible by the principal and executive staff, but said to be for use by the teachers. Data from student feedback was more prevalent, used in six of the schools, which would at least have provided an indication of student understanding, engagement and some feedback to the teachers on, for example, their methods used to present a unit of work. Overall,
where results are concerned, the principal feedback indicates only a sense of a gradual lifting of these. No examples of extensive improvements in results through appraisal processes were offered. This suggests that the effect of appraisal is either difficult to measure or it is making little difference. Alternatively, if there is little effect, this may suggest that principals are not clear about which processes might be beneficial to improve student performance.

If the aim of implementing appraisal is to improve student achievement, and taking into account that appraisal processes can take time from teachers’ usual responsibilities, the type of processes chosen need to be seen to be of value and bear the scrutiny of teachers. The encouragement of teachers to work together in teams to discuss pedagogy and gauge the impact of practices on students’ understanding and performance, as opposed to the prevalence of more traditional forms of appraisal found in this research, would have more potential to enable the targeting of resources and the leveraging of existing teachers who have had success in certain areas (see Papay 2012).

10.5. **How the growth of teachers and their influence on the learning of their students can be best supported**

Some positive gains from the processes implemented are noted — for example, in breakthroughs in peer collaboration and the opening up of classrooms, as well as in the encouragement of staff to seek evidence of the impact of their teaching practices on their students’ understanding — but there are gaps between original intentions and the processes implemented. Wanting the best possible
student learning outcomes would be an intention of any principal but there has been an application or combination of some traditional methods of appraisal that may not serve the original purpose. The systemic approach of government schools has flowed over to independent schools with each one aiming to create its own version, but replicating existing approaches. These principals have tried to demonstrate their accountability and honour the “requirements” placed on schools, concerning having some form of annual appraisal/feedback, but implementation of processes has not been straightforward. Much effort has been expended in trying to be as constructive as possible, to make the appraisal methods palatable and manageable, which would not be necessary if the processes were more teacher-directed and controlled. Choices made indicate implementation with a high level of discomfort, a lack of exploration of ways that could be more beneficial to satisfy the ultimate aim of enhancing student engagement and achievement, and probably a lack of time on the part of the principals to determine what would be most beneficial for their individual school. Ultimately, appraisal was perceived by principals as a process for teacher development that has to be formalised — an interesting assumption given what educators know about the effectiveness of informal means of assessing students’ learning.

This leaves the question of whether it was worthwhile to set up formal appraisal processes or whether a more straightforward encouragement of teachers — working in teams, discussing pedagogy, applying insights from professional learning, gauging student understanding and engagement, and analysing student
performance — would be more beneficial. That is, a team-based approach to reflection and planning as a natural part of teachers’ daily practice. Although acknowledging the opinions of some researchers (e.g. Gimbel et al. 2011; Jackson & Bruegman 2009; Smith 2005) that the impact of appraisal processes will be seen “over time”, I contend that it is the targeted professional learning and the application of this learning, reflection on the impact and regular collegial sharing that will have an effect, not whether there is an appraisal scheme in place.

The emphasis on performance, results and competitiveness that has arisen at the international level, influencing federal and state governments in Australia (raised in Chapters 1 and 2 and reiterated in my introduction to the conclusions), has led to repetition across schools of appraisal methods in an attempt to get the best out of teachers. Such an emphasis overshadows the potential of drawing on teachers’ professionalism. The pressure for continual improvement and showing proof of improvement can be seen in the comment of one principal, “ignore the results at your peril”, and another asking the question, “improvement to where?”, “how much more improvement can be expected of us?”. These words reflect the response of Ball (2012) to the similar demands in the higher education sector, which he captures in the term, “performativity” to emphasise “a powerful and insidious policy technology” (p. 19) requiring measures and comparison of outputs, which requires increasing amounts of time for accountability purposes (refer to Chapter 2). The use of more time on reporting and proving than doing has been experienced by the principals involved in this research.
Whilst acknowledging the pressures they are under to show improvement, the principals expressed their ideals, first, to simply have their teachers “reflecting on their practice and becoming more collaborative”; second, having the students engaged in their learning; and third, that, as “values-driven schools”, they place more weight on the “intangibles”, the character qualities of the students, and having the students focused on engagement in learning, not results, to become life-long learners. Achievement of such goals can only be gauged by teachers, working with students over a period of time, reflecting on their academic and social development, intervening when necessary and conferring with colleagues to determine beneficial directions.

10.6. Drawing together my conclusions

The significance of the influence of a principal in maintaining a sustained focus on learning for both teachers and students is reinforced by this research (see also Hallinger 2010). Working with teachers to create a vision for engagement and achievement is paramount. The scope of the learning will be individual to any given school and stem from the culture, values and needs of the school. Critical reflection by the principal is essential to understand the idiosyncratic nature of his or her community of teachers, in order to be able to determine the right directions to support professional learning to — in turn — support student learning, and to manage what involves a process of change for some teachers. This is evident across this sample of 12 schools and, I would conclude, reflective of all schools.
I conclude that drawing on the capacities and knowledge of the teachers as professionals in developing and sustaining this vision is essential. By enabling them to articulate their views on teaching and learning and how they can be advanced, the strategic directions of the school can be formulated through a cooperative effort, working together as a “community of practice” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Sergiovanni 2001), with a sustained focus on organisational growth and change (refer to Harris et al. 2003).

Teachers — as professionals — should be role models of life-long learning, exemplary learners, hence it is their responsibility to be continually refining their practice, keeping abreast of the latest research to provide the best possible learning opportunities for their students. The principals all believed that teachers as professionals need to be accountable. Providing evidence of the sort of learning undertaken to improve their practice and the role played in the “community of practice”, conferring with colleagues, working in teams, on ways to assist the learning of their students, examining what is working and what is not, should be a given, without this being seen as a judgment of them. Results of this research highlight the extent to which in each school there is a proportion of staff who either do not identify with this stance or who fear grasping hold of it, exacerbated by the formalised processes implemented, enforced from above and not in their control, processes that can instil fear about judgments of them being made and fear about how reports will be used in the future.
The focus of appraisal is student learning and how this can best be assisted through improving teaching/instructional practice (Conley & Glasman 2008; Hallinger 2010; Elmore 2000; Leithwood et al. 1999; Seashore Louis et al. 2010). With this focus, collaboration amongst teachers, reciprocity in learning, as Stone & Heen (2014) suggest, enables all to draw on the expertise of others and to determine the resourcing needed to support teachers’ work with individual students and groups. Due to the findings about teachers’ distrust of appraisal processes, and taking into account recent changes in views on atomistic pedagogies, it appears that responsibility for this collaboration should reside with the teachers. Findings from this research support the stance that, through collaborative efforts, and reciprocity, with teachers as equal learning partners, they can assist one another and can help to encourage and resource one another (see Stone & Heen 2014; Townsend 1998). Accountability becomes accountability to one’s peers and the students, seeking positive impact on student learning (Robinson & Timperley 2007). Within this context, thinking can be challenged to move practice along (Drago-Severson 2004), the work of teachers is “instructionally focused and ultimately teacher owned” (Harris et al. 2003), and a culture that has learned how to receive and apply feedback can build collective wisdom (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014). I concur with Danielson & McGreal (2000) who state: “Professional dialogue about teaching, managed and led by teachers is the only means by which teachers will improve their practice” (p. 9), that is, team-based pedagogies where teachers have time to reflect as a group, thereby making improvement a natural part of their daily practice.
The emotions of this process cannot be overlooked. Assumptions cannot be made about the readiness of all teachers to work comfortably with others. They may, for example, work with others on curriculum development in their department, but when it comes to the individual classrooms, the barriers become evident. This research supports findings of other researchers that, through collaboration, teachers are presented with an adaptive challenge requiring them to go beyond their current capacity and current ways of operating (see, for example, Fullan 2004) and to confront long-held assumptions (Powell & Kusuma-Powell 2015; Sinnema & Robinson 2007). The “adaptive challenge” that Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) refer to captures what we would understand as the ability to learn from others, to develop the skills and will to work with others on the evaluation of their own performance. Teachers need to become emotionally resourceful in working with one another, to be transparent and, hence, benefit from feedback. Through this, the “cognitive capital” of the staff can be built (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014). If judgment, as opposed to cooperation and support, enters this situation, the potential richness of collaborative learning will be squandered.

Within a “community of practice”, leadership will also surface from amongst the teachers. Such leadership needs to be acknowledged, legitimised and nurtured to build genuine leadership density and capability throughout the staff (Davis, Ellett & Annunziata 2002; Timperley et al. 2009). Leadership through ideas can be enabled (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Drago-Severson 2004), with authority coming from the quality of the ideas, rather than a position or role.
To advance the “community of practice”, the principal will need to rely on the senior leadership team. The philosophical alignment of this team with the principal and teaching staff is paramount and a mutual understanding that their role in leadership is one of encouraging and resourcing teacher learning, to avoid teachers’ negative responses concerning power differentials between those in formal leadership positions and themselves, as evidenced with the application of traditional approaches to teacher appraisal as found in this research.

Resources are in abundance, especially research and publications on effective teaching practices. Systems for data analysis of student achievements — gathered from within and outside the school — can assist in highlighting gaps in student performance and are another resource for a more diagnostic analysis of student progress. Feedback from students can inform teachers about the impact or not of their practices on their students’ understanding. Responsibility for enabling teachers through professional learning to use such resourcing resides with the principal. The combined efforts of teachers analysing of data and being of assistance to and responsible for the development of each other should be encouraged and valorised. Not all schools can afford to employ consultants or increase their staffing for this, and the step of drawing on consultants brings with it a potential message of fear for some teachers or an indication that the school does not know how to do it, as I have referred to in 10.3. Furthermore, if teachers are held responsible for working together to improve practice across the school, there is no need for such expenditure.
Although principals reported negative responses from teachers arise when the word ‘data’ is raised, the issue is which data, why it is being gathered and how it is used. Over emphasis on externally collected data can distract from teachers’ working on strategies to have students engaged in their learning, while internally collected data can target areas of concern to augment or refute teachers’ hunches. Research indicates that an overemphasis on analysis of teachers’ results against standardised tests is in question (see, for example, Hallinger et al. 2014).

Training is essential to support the work of senior teacher leaders, in particular, in personnel management, to enable them to help sustain the community, and the health and wellbeing and engagement of its teachers (see, for example, Carter 2007). Training is also needed for teachers, in particular, in giving feedback, in coaching, and in collaboration in the classroom (Gimbel et al. 2011). Through such resourcing, it is more likely that teachers can become engaged in “understanding their own underpinning theories of action” (Timperley et al. 2009), their beliefs and values, thinking and perceptions (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014) concerning how they go about their practice to become more confident in sharing with colleagues.

The issue of time in living out this work as a “community of practice” can only be worked through in each school. Teachers who are stimulated by their reflection and collaboration will want to have sufficient time to work together. Flexibility in work schedules or weekly organisation, for example, with how meeting times are used, provides a means of showing support for teachers to advance their practice. Each school needs to be pragmatic in determining the use of time by
focusing on what will work best for that school's particular needs, maintaining reasonableness and respect for teachers’ daily responsibilities in and beyond the classroom. Ultimately, any processes for improvement of practice must be sustainable.

My research findings concur with Milanowski & Heneman (2001) and Kimball (2002) with indication that — as a principal — there needs to be an understanding of one’s own balance between, on the one hand, ensuring professional improvement for high quality teaching and, on the other, accommodating individual teachers’ desires and preferences, and supporting and valuing the autonomy of teachers as professionals in determining the best course of practice. Any choices of processes for professional learning and accounting for these must bear scrutiny of teachers and be seen to further enable them in improving their practice and benefiting from collegial sharing. Fullan (2014) states that, “healthy pressure and support help teachers grow”. My research findings support the need for a greater emphasis on “support”, moral support, encouragement, listening to teachers, open and honest communication (Gimbel et al. 2011), and resourcing them to encourage what Fullan (2014) refers to as “focused collaboration” (p. 79).

Some teachers will not achieve professional accountability without some form of direction. Hence, principals will need to help set in place processes that will assist any reluctant or hesitant teachers to work with others to have every teacher enhancing the learning of students in the school. It is important that collegial support is enlisted, that what might be seen as a meaningless exercise is not undertaken. Vast
talent can be drawn upon from amongst a staff to build collegial sharing. Use of the term “appraisal” for such support, I conclude, may be best avoided to reduce potential negative interpretations of this being imposed and, therefore, threatening, as opposed to being an intrinsic, everyday exercise on the part of teachers. As Santiago & Benavides (2009) assert, it is essential to avoid jeopardising improvement through methods used. The ideal is “all as equal learning partners” (Roussin & Zimmerman 2014), but, in the words of one principal, “you work with what you’ve got; it’s never perfect”. I note and concur with the research of Gimbel et al. (2011) indicating that principals tend to agree that listening to teacher concerns and open, honest communication are the most supportive factors in fostering teacher professional growth.

To accommodate principals’ perceived need of provision of evidence of professional growth to satisfy their accountabilities, teachers could keep a portfolio of work with colleagues and key advances in professional practice and knowledge to enhance student engagement and understanding, or a team report on activities and advancements in student achievement could be produced. An advantage of a team-based approach is the accountability to peers involved and members of a team not tolerating lack of input from a peer. Such documentation of evidence would assist reflection on practice and would form part of teachers’ professional requirements for reporting on their learning for Victorian Institute of Teaching registration purposes and formal school accountability purposes.
I highlight the words of one principal that indicate that, despite our understandings of what can be gained from collaborative efforts of teachers for the benefit of students, the “privacy” of the classroom is still held on to by some teachers:

Teachers have historically operated within their own classrooms and their own classroom is their domain; as for what goes on in the classroom that’s “my business”, and they would prefer to maintain closed, locked-off classrooms, and observation by peers is seen as an intrusion.

Such holding on to the privacy of classrooms remains a challenge for principals to work on as they encourage cooperative efforts amongst their teachers.

I draw also on the words of Smith (2005) for further understanding of the onus on principals for support and the reality that there will be a mix of capacities in any given staff group that a principal will be leading:

Teachers who are more supported and empowered when engaging in ongoing self-assessment, self-criticism and continuous learning… are teachers who more confidently face the many challenges inherent in the complex task of teaching (p. 111).

10.7. **Achievement of the purpose and aims of the research**

In determining this, I draw on the guidelines of Charmaz (2006, pp. 182-183) for evaluation of a grounded theory study, in considering credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness of this study.
In undertaking this research I aimed to give voice to the experiences and perceptions of the group of 12 independent school principals involved. The broad purpose, in line with grounded theory research was to generate a main issue surfacing for the principals, which was accountability via teacher appraisal. In drawing together the findings, I have highlighted this issue of accountability, noting its predominance in how the principals have attempted to enact government and community expectations. I believe that I have captured critical issues, in how the satisfying of these accountabilities has played out, in particular with the response of principals of setting up traditional “appraisal” processes that do not necessarily do justice to teachers as professionals, and run counter to the principals’ espoused preference of an emphasis of supporting reflection on teaching and collaboration in a “community of practice” in their schools. The concept of accountability is not negated by my research findings, but we need to be clear about whom principals are accountable to. Principals are accountable for supporting and resourcing teachers in the most appropriate ways to enable them to grow. Teachers need to be trusted to develop and get on with their job in effective ways. After all, they are accountable not only to themselves, but also to the school, their colleagues, their students and the community. We need to remain cognisant of the overall aims in schools of individual growth and organisational improvement rather than having an overwhelming sense of compliance and negativity.

Concerning credibility, I have come to this research with years of leadership experience as a principal and in various senior leadership roles, and experience with
the formulation and implementation of teacher appraisal processes. With this experience, I have been conscious of the need for reflexivity during the research process and to be responsive to the experiences of the principals involved. In Chapter 4 (Methodology), I acknowledged four assumptions with which I commenced the research and have examined these during the research process to ensure that I have not imposed my own views.

On the matter of originality, my elucidation of detractors/barriers to the appraisal processes provides new insights into leaders’ management of appraisal processes, with the realisation of the extent of the groundwork that is needed to be accomplished with an inordinate amount of clarification of purposes to have teachers responding positively to the appraisal processes. Surprising was the extent of the misgivings of the teachers’ lack of trust as perceived by the principals, as well as the reported fearfulness and hesitancy of so many teachers, which has required sensitive handling. This part of the principals’ experiences highlights the fact that formalising appraisal processes with teachers answerable to superiors can detract from the realisation of having teachers, as professionals, working together in a “community of practice” and taking individual and group responsibility for growing in their professional practice. Having a vision and bringing others on side involves strategic management of potential negative factors and understanding of the psychological issues that can hamper teacher involvement.

Concerning resonance, feedback from the principals at the final focus group provided indication of their making sense of the findings and gaining further insight.
A limitation of this research is noted in that the research has been undertaken in the independent sector. Generalisations may only apply to these schools or others within this sector, not those in the government sector.

I believe the findings are useful and make a significant contribution to the field of leadership, illuminating the principals’ actions and highlighting many of the issues they face negotiating the pressures for accountability whilst aiming to promote the professional learning of their teachers. Even in taking a formative approach to appraisal, they have needed to develop a deeper understanding of the emotions involved in a process of teacher appraisal. Their stories would be of interest to other principals, in particular, those new to the role, providing for discussion on preferred leadership approaches. As indicated in my findings, the principals’ comments indicate conservative notions of leadership with a top-down approach that created complications through a perceived power differential in reporting requirements for teachers. Additionally, the twelve examples of choice of appraisal methods will serve comparative purposes as other principals determine how they can best support the growth of their teachers in their school. The critical aspect of the need for a staff to work together for the benefit of the students for whom they are responsible and the need to draw on the expertise of others to grow in the role of a teacher stand out. Whether formalised appraisal processes are necessary to support this is in question. They will not on their own provide for the level of focused collaboration in a community of practice needed to provide the best possible teaching practices for students (Fullan 2014; Goe 2013).
10.8. Recommendations for further research

There is still a lot to know and learn about effective teacher practice. Further research into how changes in pedagogy can best be encouraged is an outcome of this research. Further insights are also needed into the underlying philosophy of learning, underpinning current teacher pedagogy, to enable a more consistent alignment of appraisal practices. Useful also would be further research into how the emotional resourcefulness of teachers can be fostered to enable them to benefit from feedback and openness to sharing their practice with colleagues (Looney 2011), to engage them in evaluating their own underpinning theories of action (Timperley et al. 2007) and to develop what Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) refer to as “adaptive expertise”. Further inquiry could also discover the most beneficial role of teacher leaders and principals in supporting the professional growth of colleagues.

10.9. A personal reflection

I have journeyed with the principal participants over a number of years as a colleague and in this research. As they have openly shared their experiences and perceptions, I have valued the principals’ honesty in what can be an exposing situation concerning their leadership and relationship with staff. I have learned from them and I admire their commitment to supporting the professionalism of teachers towards the engagement and wellbeing of their students. I trust that the time they have given and experiences they have shared have been justified by the content of this thesis.
I reflect also on the many outstanding teacher colleagues with whom I have worked over many years and applaud their dedication to their students and the role-modelling of life-long learning that they have provided.

I conclude with the words of an educational leader whom I have learned from and admired throughout my career — Michael Fullan:

The primary tool for improvement in any organization is not one-to-one appraisal but rather cultures that build in learning every day and that use appraisal to supplement and strengthen the learning (and indeed take action in relation to persistent low performers). If the appraisal system is perverse — that is, if it becomes artificial and is not linked to clear improvement — leaders will either have to play the game or otherwise engage in something that they know is inauthentic. Effective principals, those who want to get something done, will figure this out and learn to work with teachers in ways that do not waste time or are counterproductive. As wise cats, they will find it more productive to join the mice (pp. 29-30).

The findings of this research indicate that the macro forces of government demanding high education quality and controlling education policy have influenced choices by principals in the independent sector concerning teacher appraisal practices. In wanting to satisfy assumed accountabilities, principals have been led in a direction that could be concluded to be inauthentic and may not be the most effective in producing teaching and learning improvements. An emphasis on
management and leadership of appraisal processes has arisen, as opposed to giving more professionalism to teachers.

The question remains of what approaches by principals can best enable them to “join the mice”.

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Appendix A – Plain Language Statement

TO: Participants

Plain Language Statement

Date: August 2012

Full Project Title: Organisational supports and barriers to effective developmental appraisal schemes. A case study of Principals’ perspectives in ten independent schools in Victoria.

Project Number: HEAG (AE) 11 – 74

Principal Researcher: Prof Karen Starr

Student Researcher: Helen Hughes (Ph D student)

Associate Researcher: 

Your consent

You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You will be given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep as a record.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you are capable of informed comment. We would therefore like to draw on your understandings and experiences for this study.

Purpose of the study
The study seeks to examine the lived experiences of principals in their leading of the professional learning of their teachers and the implementation of teacher appraisal schemes. Observations and perceptions of factors that support or hinder successful implementation of appraisal will be sought.

Six independent school principals in Victoria will be selected for this study.

The research will involve a confidential interview of approximately two hours duration with each Principal involved. Structured and semi-structured questions will be asked. If a participating Principal wishes, the interview can be conducted with a nominated staff member of their choice, in addition to or instead of the Principal. With consent of the participants, the interview will be recorded. A transcript of the interview will be provided to each participant for comment and determination of accuracy. Follow up interviews may be requested for further clarification.

Documentation of existing appraisal processes in the Principals’ schools will be requested to inform interpretation of the interview questions.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. There should be no possible risks, side effects and discomforts through participation in this project.

There will be no payment for participating in this project. Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

Contact details of the researchers

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the principal researcher, Prof. Karen Starr (9244 6469), or the student researcher, Helen Hughes (0417 554 860).

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Please quote project number HEAG(AE) 11 – 74

The researchers responsible for this project are:

**Prof Karen Starr**
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Phone: 0417 554 860

Karen.Starr@deakin.edu.au

helen.hughes@strathcona.vic.edu.au
Appendix B – Consent Form

TO: Participants (selected Principals)

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**Full Project Title:** Organisational supports and barriers to effective developmental appraisal schemes. A case study of Principals’ perspectives in six independent schools in Victoria.

**Reference Number:** HEAG (AE) 11 – 74

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I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

I freely agree to have my interview(s) being recorded and understand that I will be provided with a transcript of the recording for review and editing.

---

Participant’s Name (printed)

……………………………………………………………………………….

Signature ……………………………………………………… Date

……………………………………………………

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The researchers responsible for this project are:

**Prof Karen Starr**
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Appendix C – Revocation of Consent Form

TO: Participants

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date: August 2012

Full Project Title: Organisational supports and barriers to effective developmental appraisal schemes. A case study of Principals’ perspectives in six independent schools in Victoria.

Reference Number: HEAG (AE) 11 – 74

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University.

Participant’s Name (printed)

Signature Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Helen Hughes
Ph D Student
c/- Prof. Karen Starr
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Phone: 9244 6469