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Redefining Appraisal:
Giving teachers ownership of their practice.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctorate
in
Education

at Massey University, Palmerston North
New Zealand.

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2012

Abstract

Appraisal has, for many years, been seen as something 'done to' teachers. It has simply been that bit extra that needed to be completed each year to ensure teachers could teach one more year. It was seen as having little benefit or significance, simply being a 'tick box' exercise. This study aimed to change this view and give teachers ownership of the appraisal process through self-directed professional development within a collaborative and collegial environment. In doing so teachers could then claim their practice as their own.

This study explores the issues with the appraisal system, the perceptions of teachers and possible solutions using action research methodology to plan, create and evaluate potential changes to the appraisal process. Throughout this process, staff at a secondary school participated in developing a shared understanding of the performance management criteria, provided feedback on the changes developed, and began the journey toward greater reflection on their practice.

The main aim of this study was to create a structured portfolio that could be individualised by teachers, allowing them to take control of the process by developing their own professional development plan based on their areas of need and interest. The building in of discussion and reflection time where possible helped to reinforce improvements in practice with the aim of meeting the Ministry of Education's focus of creating 'quality teachers'. Integration of the New Zealand Teachers Council's recently developed Registered Teacher Criteria created a backbone upon which the changes could be structured.

This study has demonstrated that teachers can take ownership of their appraisal processes. In doing so, teachers can improve their practice and engage in life-long learning. The structured portfolio not only allows this process to occur but also enables the integration of formative and summative assessment within one system, thus lessening the amount of work necessary to meet both attestation and

registration requirements. Central to this 'new' system is the need for it to be driven by the professional development needs of the teachers – this is the key component that enables teachers to drive the process rather than being the passive passengers of previous systems.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support of the many people who assisted me with this research study. First and foremost amongst these is my husband Rod. He has been the driving force behind this study, offering support, encouragement and patience in equal quantities. This research would not have been possible without his assistance for so many reasons. He has stood by me in all the good times where aspects of the research ran smoothly, and also during those times that stretched me beyond what I thought possible, all the while providing quiet and patient understanding and support. Rod helped me to unlock the potential I hold within.

My thanks also go to the staff at NZTC, especially Jenny Thomas, who willingly answered my questions and pointed me in appropriate directions. Her encouragement and enthusiasm helped me to realise that what I was attempting could have benefits for many people, not just those with whom I worked. Juliet Martin, one of the chief researchers into the RTC, was also pivotal in her support of this research.

I am grateful for the assistance and support of my principal and his senior management team. This research simply would not have happened had this trust and support not been available. The principal has also provided many examples of how a learning community can function well, leading by example rather than instruction. This helped to reinforce the findings of this research. All members of the senior management team 'got behind' this research in one way or another and for that I am extremely thankful; it made the change process within the school much easier to manage. It has been gratifying that this research has made a positive impact within the school and I thank this team unreservedly for the opportunity to help make a difference.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my supervisors Professor Margaret Walshaw and Dr Sally Hansen. These two people have been instrumental in helping to make this research happen. Over the several years of this study Margaret has been a constant

source of guidance, answering all my questions and providing timely and effective feedback. Sally has offered insights specific to the field of study that might otherwise have been missed. I am grateful to both these ladies for their different skills and their input into this study. I have also appreciated the support Margaret has provided on a personal level; it has been a delight getting to know her and her husband.

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Acronyms Used in this Thesis

AR Action Research

BoT Board of Trustees

DAR Developmental Action Research – research undertaken in one's own institution where a group works together to address an issue

E4E Education for Enterprise – a MOE initiative where students are exposed to authentic learning opportunities with stakeholders

ECE Early Childhood Education

ERO Education Review Office

FO Finance Officer

HOD Head of Department

MOE Ministry of Education

NCEA National Certificate of Educational Achievement – this certificate is gained by students in Years 11 to 13 at levels 1 to 3 respectively

NZC New Zealand Curriculum

NZEI New Zealand Education Institute – the union for the primary sector

NZTC New Zealand Teacher Council

NZQA New Zealand Qualifications Authority

PAR Participatory Action Research – the researcher participates in the research process and is not an impartial observer

PD Professional Development

PL Professional Learning

PMS Performance Management System – the means of managing staff and their evaluation

PPTA Post Primary Teachers Association – secondary union

RTC Registered Teacher Criteria – the current assessment tool for registration in New Zealand

SCT Specialist Classroom Teacher – has the role of support and guidance for other teachers within the school – usually at secondary level

WPR Work Plan Review – an initial document used to help establish professional development plans prior to the research