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**APPRAISAL:**

**REDUCING CONTROL - ENHANCING  
EFFECTIVENESS**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in  
Education at Massey University, Albany Campus, Auckland, New Zealand.

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## ABSTRACT

Between 1995 and 1999 the Ministry of Education (MoE) tightened the requirements for appraisal in schools in New Zealand (NZ). The first of three parts of the thesis reports on the impact of this tightening and enhanced control. The results from this impact study showed little indication of outcomes often associated with enhanced control such as increased defensiveness, decreased internal commitment, increased compliance, and inconsistent adoption of initiatives in appraisal. The results demonstrated an overall positive impact on appraisal implementation in schools associated with the enhanced control. On the downside, the results also provided a strong indication that much of the training conducted for appraisal had largely been superficial, and had failed to help appraisers to deal with problems with appraisees.

These results led me to clarify 'effectiveness' in appraisal training, and to determine how such training could help appraisers and appraisees to establish educative appraisal interactions. Such interactions lead to effective outcomes in terms of resolving problems, and consequently improved teaching and learning. The theory, philosophy, guiding values and strategies of productive reasoning were refined and adapted to underpin the development of two approaches to training in problem confronting and resolution: one short-term (one day of training fitting national training allocation for approximately 219 appraisers in 25 secondary schools), and one long-term (an action research approach with five appraisers in one school). My implementation of these training interventions, and their evaluation, determined the second and third phases reported on in this thesis.

For Intervention #1 (the short-term training), the evaluation results showed a considerable gap between appraiser espousals of educative process implementation and their practice. This became particularly evident when the majority of appraisers reported that the training had helped them to be more open and to deal with, rather than avoid, problems with appraisees, and yet the closer examination of their interactions with appraisees, and appraiser feedback, revealed little employment of an educative process.

Intervention #2 (the longer-term training), was designed to enable appraisers to better understand and further internalise the educative process, to provide further opportunities for practice, and provide more extensive follow-up support from myself and other appraisers. Although the intended action research approach, the Problem Resolving Action Research (PRAR) Model, was only partially realised in this intervention, the evaluation results led me to conclude that for three of the five appraisers a considerable positive shift in implementation of educative process skills occurred. These results indicated that the elements contributing to this shift included: appraiser commitment to improvement (for both themselves as appraisers, and for the teachers they were appraising); consciousness-raising associated with exposure of the espousal-practice gap; extended support; and the opportunity to repeat learning. The research also highlighted, and confirmed, the importance in action research of: gaining ownership and commitment; enhancing collaboration, and mutually informing theory and practice.

Overall, this thesis provides rare evidence to demonstrate that, given appropriate training, appraisal can ultimately improve teaching and learning.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **ORIGINS AND OVERVIEW**

### **CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is introductory in nature and begins with a personal statement about the origins of this thesis. This provides background to issues, forming a link between each of the three sections of the thesis which, in turn, are linked to the three phases in the research.

The next part of the chapter opens with a discussion of the background to appraisal in New Zealand (NZ) schools, with a particular emphasis on the responsibilities relating both to principals and Boards of Trustees (hereafter referred to as Boards). There is a consideration of what appraisal is, in terms of its improvement (development) and accountability (meeting expectations of performance) focus, and how the legislation for it has increasingly tightened in terms of teacher accountability in the last decade in NZ. This is then linked to the two major concerns which have informed the debate surrounding appraisal. The first was the fear that increased accountability would lead to increased hierarchical control, resulting in both reduced autonomy and collaboration. The second was that appraisal would fail to lead to improved performance.

The following section of this chapter examines what constitutes effective appraisal. Here, the emphasis is on two features of effectiveness which can overcome the concerns expressed earlier. The first of these features links effectiveness to an educative process, that is, an approach where interactions are characterised by high trust, openness (particularly in dealing with problems), shared (bilateral) rather than hierarchical control, and low defensiveness. The second feature links effectiveness to potent outcomes where problems are solved, and performance improved. A summary of the causal links between appraisal effectiveness and improvement outcomes in the thesis is presented, then a

description of the research approach, and the research questions. The chapter concludes with a description of the content of each of the individual chapters of this thesis.

## **ORIGINS**

Prior to 1994 I worked as a developer of staff and as a manager in a tertiary sector organisation. In this role I co-authored the policy and procedures of an appraisal process, and led the training and development of staff in implementing this. This was a difficult task given the hostility of some staff to any regulatory control or accountability, and widespread denigration of appraisal in this sector at that time (see for example Ker, 1992; Popham, 1988).

My experiences during this implementation left me with some strong, but subjective, impressions about the features of appraisal which led to effectiveness in terms of an integrated developmental and accountability approach. These included some of what I would consider to be process givens, for example that it needed to be a transparent, supportive approach, with good documentation, and follow-up. The most significant features, however, were associated with the relationship between the appraiser and appraisee. Specifically, I observed that the best appraisals were occurring when appraisers had an existing relationship with appraisees based on openness and trust. Because I knew the appraisers well I was also aware that those who had such relationships were most often prepared to engage in conversations about problems or concerns with staff, and were unafraid to use explicit, objective, evidence when discussing these concerns.

In 1992 a colleague introduced me to the work of Argyris (1985) on defensive routines. This work strongly confirmed my subjective impressions about the link between openness with problems and trust relationships between managers and staff. Over the next two years I read everything I could find on Argyris' work, and particularly searched for any New Zealanders who were working in this field. In early 1994 I made a career shift to enable me to work with one of these people, Dr Carol Cardno at UNITEC Institute of

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Technology in Auckland. The shift was prompted not just by my desire to learn more about helping managers to overcome defensiveness, but also to be challenged by working with someone who was as committed to doing this in her own life and work as I was. After all, if I could not practice what I espoused I would be a poor role model as a developer of managers.

The new career in which I engaged enabled me to continue my role as a developer of managers, but was located back in the school sector - my own teaching origins. A large component of the role specifically focused on helping senior management teams in schools to confront and resolve problems in non-defensive ways. This enabled me to experience the implementation of approaches drawn from the work of Argyris (1985, 1986), Cardno (1994), and Robinson (1992, 1993b). It also enabled me to develop my own interpretations of this material (Piggot-Irvine, 1995). Associated with, and enhancing, this experience were increased invitations for me to conduct workshops and consultancies on reducing defensiveness in other sector organisations.

In 1995 the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced the first stage of appraisal implementation in schools. Initially through UNITEC, and later independently in my own consultancy, I was contracted during 1996-1999 to facilitate the training associated with the introduction of this implementation (see Cardno, 1999a, for a review of the UNITEC based training). As preparation for the contracted training, I collected initial data on the implementation status of appraisal early in 1996. The 1996 results provided me with some idea about what was required, and also alerted me again to the realisation that some aspect of the training needed to be about helping appraisers to establish trusting, open, relationships. During 1997 further guidelines for appraisal were developed by the MoE. These guidelines emphasised a stronger accountability focus, and my interest in the impact of this led me to continue to collect data on the status of implementation. This tightening, or strengthening, of accountability further increased in 1998 and 1999, and thus my data collection continued. This led to an extended

reconnaissance, or state of play, examination which is reported in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis.

Whilst I was continuing to collect this reconnaissance data I was also facilitating short-term (maximum nationally funded allowance of four days) training with schools. Part of this training specifically focused on helping appraisers to develop non-defensive interactions. These “productive” (Argyris, 1985, 1990, 1992; Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1996) types of interactions were designed to be educative: to assist appraisers and appraisees to bilaterally confront problems and concerns by using direct, evidence-based, feedback and by being explicit about the reasoning associated with this feedback. The focus was also on finding ways to resolve these concerns, by bilaterally planning for improvement and monitoring this improvement. It was hoped that this educative process training would lead to the openness and trust which is so important in appraisal, and to problems actually being tackled and resolved. The latter I have described as potent outcomes in appraisal. The impact of this short-term training is examined and reported on in Chapter Five of this thesis.

As a developer I was well aware that short-term training might have little impact on appraisers. With this in mind, and as a practising action researcher (I co-ordinate the New Zealand Action Research Network, NZARN), I decided to implement a longer-term approach to assist appraisers to become more productive in their interactions with appraisees. The action research approach adopted to achieve this, and the impact of this, is described in Chapters Six to Eight of the thesis.

## **BACKGROUND TO APPRAISAL IN NZ SCHOOLS**

In 1989 NZ education in the school sector was reorganised and reformed following the Tomorrow’s Schools Report (Government of NZ, 1988a), and the Education Act (Government of NZ, 1989b). The major feature of this reform was the devolution of decision-making to the schools themselves. Schools became more accountable to the community for their performance.

As part of the reforms, Boards of Trustees were established to govern each school. The Board is a democratically elected body with a governance role as employer of the principal and staff, which involves essentially:

... the development and oversight of school policy, the responsibility for the employment of all staff of the school, including the principal. The principal was appointed as chief executive of the Board, with responsibility for implementation of the policies developed by the Board and for the day-to-day management of the school. (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997:21)

In the appraisal context, as explained more fully in Chapter Two, the Board develops policy and carries legal responsibility for ensuring that policy is implemented. The principal, in turn, has responsibility for managing this implementation: for either directly, or indirectly through delegation, ensuring that appraisal is conducted as an annual cycle of dual development (setting and achieving improvement objectives) and accountability (assessment of job description tasks) activities with all staff in the school.

## **WHAT IS APPRAISAL?**

Appraisal is an element of what is referred to in NZ as the wider performance management function in organisations (Government of NZ, 1996). This performance management function, the set of human resource or personnel management activities, encompasses “systems to manage appointment, appraisal and development, discipline and dismissal of staff” (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997:9). Appraisal is central to, and has links with, all of these performance management functions. The Education Review Office (ERO) report, *Managing Staff Performance in Schools*, locates appraisal in this wider context of performance management in the following way:

Between the entry and exit of staff to and from a school is a wide and complex area of performance management relating to their appraisal, supervision, control

and professional development. This area of performance management is concerned with board's understanding of what its staff should know and do, what they do know and do, the quality standards they are expected to meet, and the board's ability to define and bridge that gap. (ERO, 1995:6)

Definitions and descriptions of appraisal abound (Bosetti, 1994; Fullan, 1988). In Cardno & Piggot-Irvine we describe it broadly as involving:

... introducing a staff member to the job, outlining expectations of performance, monitoring performance, and assisting them through formal and informal staff development to do the job well. (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997:11)

The dual development and accountability purpose suggested in this latter definition is in keeping with Musella's definition. He describes it as:

... the process by which an organisation supervises and monitors individual employee's behaviour and accomplishments for the purpose of improving the organisation's effectiveness. (Musella, 1988:177)

The strong focus on accountability to the organisation in Musella's definition, would perhaps not sit as easily with many teachers as Poster & Poster's inclusion of a more balanced individual and organisation focus.

... a means of promoting ... the organisation's ability to accomplish its mission ... while at the same time enhancing staff satisfaction and development. (Poster & Poster, 1991:1)

Whatever the definition, effective appraisal is a complex evaluative activity which "involves participants in continuous dialogue about performance" (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997:14).

## **TIGHTENING ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEGISLATION IN APPRAISAL**

In the post-reform (post-1989) period in NZ we have seen a movement towards increasingly tight, or accountability focused, appraisal requirements for schools. Although this is described in greater detail in Chapter Two, the following summary will highlight the extent of this tightening in accountability in appraisal.

The initial legislation for appraisal provided little direction about what schools were to do. The State Sector Act (Government of NZ, 1988b) provided a generalised, loosely worded, requirement for Boards to be “good employers” of staff by operating personnel policies. This Act (Section 77C) also designated that the government department of the MoE might prescribe “matters that are taken into account” in assessing performance. No such prescription occurred until 1995. From 1989-1995, the National Administration Guidelines (MoE, 1993) provided the only direction in appraisal for Boards when stating, in Section 2(ii), that they “be a good employer under the State Sector Act 1988 and comply with the conditions contained in employment contracts”. Ironically, no conditions for appraisal existed in the then current employment contracts. It is not surprising that reports of confusion, and lack of direction and clarity (Alcorn, 1990; Battersby, 1991) dominated this period. In addition, the meagre research conducted on appraisal during this time (ERO, 1995; Peel & Inkson, 1993) revealed an erratic picture of implementation.

In June 1995 the Minister of Education, Dr Lockwood Smith, announced the Government’s intention to ensure that all schools had developed and implemented appraisal systems by 1997. Draft National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools (DNGPMS) were established in 1995, but as the name “Guidelines” suggests, they were non-prescriptive and able to be locally interpreted. As described in Chapter Two they were predominantly developmental, or improvement oriented, in intent.

In December 1996 the Secretary for Education, Howard Fancy, gazetted (Government of NZ, 1996) a more prescriptive outline of matters to be taken into account by Boards in assessing teachers. Since accountability elements were more predominant in this prescription, it signalled a tightening of control, which was further emphasised in requirements which closely followed. I refer here to the introduction of specific guidelines for performance, or professional standards, in the primary sector (MoE, 1998) and the secondary sector (Post Primary Teachers' Association, PPTA, 1999; MoE, 1999). The checklisting of performance against these Professional Standards, and an associated remuneration link, established appraisal as a predominantly accountability-based process in schools. Duncan (1999:33) summarises this shift by stating that "however commendable the principle of maintaining high professional standards and of maintaining professional accountability, the regulatory environment is now a good deal more stringent than formerly". This increased accountability emphasis has fuelled the negative debate which has surrounded appraisal in the last decade.

## **THE DEBATE SURROUNDING APPRAISAL IN NZ SCHOOLS**

General negativity about appraisal, especially at the earlier stages of the introduction of the DNGPMS in NZ, was articulated widely and vociferously (refer, for example, to O'Neill, 1997; New Zealand Education Institute, NZEI, 1996), and led to widespread support for the following type of sentiment: "... teacher evaluation is a disaster. The practices are shoddy, and the principles are unclear" (Fraser & Streshley, 1994:51)

Central to this general negativity was a debate which focused on two major concerns. The first was that increased accountability would lead to increased hierarchical control, and a subsequent reduction in the autonomy and collaboration, of staff. This concern is not localised to NZ. Down, Chadbourne, & Hogan (2000:215), for example, reported that the Australian teachers in their study were "suspicious of the motives behind performance management; they fear it could easily be used to disempower and control teachers". In NZ, such concern was exacerbated by confusion and vagueness about the purposes of

appraisal (whether accountability, development, or both) in both the draft and the final gazetted guidelines.

In 1996 the primary teacher union, New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), warned that imposed accountability would not work because it

... assumes that changes which are imposed can make a difference...the top down approach is not the best way to motivate teachers...appraisal should be part of collegial support...(NZEI, 1996:3)

Additionally, the Teacher Registration Board (TRB), in its submission on the draft guidelines, indicated that the imposition of increased hierarchical accountability, where the appraisee “undergoes” appraisal (p.8), would be detrimental. They stated “A strictly hierarchical model of teacher appraisal ..... would not be in the best long term interest of students”.(TRB, 1996:7)

Underpinning these fears of increased accountability were concerns about appraisal leading to more work, and appraisers being required to focus on the identification of inadequacy and incompetence. Some suspected a hidden agenda of linking performance pay to the appraisal process. Fuelling these fears, as mentioned earlier, was a substantial lack of clarity over the purposes and roles of appraisal, both in the nationally prescribed requirements, and amongst staff themselves in schools. This lack of clarity led to confusion over the role of accountability and development in appraisal, and the confusion was deepened in NZ by frequent misuse of the terms formative and summative associated with these purposes in appraisal.

There are often two roles that can potentially be used in any evaluative process. These are formative, or during activity evaluation, and summative, or conclusion activity evaluation (Scriven, 1991, in describing Stake’s, 1967, definition of the terms). In appraisal in schools, formative is often equated with the more gentle, less threatening,

development function; summative with management decisions and accountability (specifically those linked to promotion or pay). In Cardno & Piggot-Irvine (1997:14) we argue that this is a misinterpretation of the use of these terms, leading to inaccurate and oversimplified boundaries being drawn between the two roles. We suggest that all evaluation is inherently summative, and that appraisal must “extend over both the formative and summative dimensions if it is to be effectively employed” (p.16). Such overlap currently exists in the mandatory guidelines, with for example job description review, establishing and measuring objectives, and writing an appraisal report all being summative activities combined with development, or formative, activities. Few staff in the approximately fifty schools in which I have worked during the last six years had concerns linked with the combining of these activities. What they have taken issue with was remuneration linked activity, and this is just one component of summative evaluation.

The second major concern in the debate about appraisal related to the fear of ineffective outcomes in terms of problems remaining unresolved. As noted later in this chapter there is little evidence that appraisal improves performance, and until such evidence exists this concern will perpetuate.

The research reported in this thesis aimed to provide evidence that approaches can be developed in appraisal which can not only reduce the hierarchical control feared by staff, but also lead to problems being confronted and resolved. But first the issue of effectiveness in appraisal is examined.

## **WHAT IS EFFECTIVE APPRAISAL?**

Appraisal is a complex process which is widely described as difficult to conduct effectively (Fullan, 1988; Harrinton-Mackin, 1994; Marshall, 1995; Middlewood, 1997; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Townsend, 1995). Descriptions of what makes appraisal effective abound (see for example Bollington, Hopkins, & West, 1990; Edwards, 1992; Humphreys & Thompson, 1995; Irons, 1993; Ker, 1992; Mortimore & Mortimore, 1991;

Musella, 1988; NZEI, 1995; Poster & Poster, 1991; West-Burnham, 1995). Generally, the key elements can be categorised according to the idea that appraisal should be: established in an existing culture of support and openness; situated in effective interpersonal relationships; well developed (consultatively) and prepared for (initiated), including training; supported by clear and constructive processes and purposes; linked to planned developmental activity (for both the school and individual) based on agreed targets; employing shared decision-making based on concrete evidence; leading to positive outcomes; related to students and the learning process; and an integrated and embedded function (institutionalised).

In 1990, a group of practising NZ principals described the features of effective appraisal to assist the implementation of 'Tomorrow's Schools' (Government of NZ, 1988a) policy. Their booklet 'A Guide to Personnel Management' states:

Appraisal is a developmental, supervisory, and evaluative activity.

\* the **foundation** on which appraisal is based is that of clarifying roles ...

\* the **process** of appraisal involves the participants in gathering and sharing information about performance;

\* the immediate **outcomes** of appraisal are mutually agreed targets for individual development ...

\* the **goal** or **purpose** of appraisal for the individual is enhanced performance.

The success of any appraisal scheme depends upon it being seen and accepted as improving the quality of staff performance: particularly ... teaching and learning of students. (MoE, 1990a:31)

According to the authors of this booklet, appraisal should involve clarifying, sharing information on performance, and agreeing targets for development. However, the authors, like many others, do not describe **how** this would occur. I suggest that it is essential first to establish what I am describing throughout this thesis as an educative relationship between the appraiser and appraisee where openness, shared (bilateral)

control and reduced defensiveness exist, and, in turn, where problems can be confronted and resolved. Such a relationship could lead to the establishment of the trust required to make the appraisal process effective in the terms described by the Principal's Implementation Taskforce booklet (MoE, 1990a).

The authors of this booklet also state that to be effective, appraisal needs ultimately to improve the teaching and learning of students. This is also in keeping with the view of effectiveness adopted in this thesis, that is, effectiveness is linked to an educative process and potent outcomes in terms of problems being resolved and improved practice. Both of these features of effectiveness are expanded further.

### **Appraisal Effectiveness Linked to Educative Processes**

Recent writing on the effectiveness of appraisal has increasingly confirmed the importance of good interpersonal relationships (Bennett, 1992; Cardno, 1994, 1997; Edwards, 1992; Immegart, 1994; Marshall, 1995; Middlewood, 1997; Nathan, Morhman, & Milliman, 1991; Sarros & Sarros, 1991; Scriven, 1991; Timperley & Robinson, 1998; Townsend, 1995; Wildy, 1996). Respondents in a study by Down *et al.* (2000:216) for example maintained that "the success of performance management depended on the quality of relationships amongst the staff". Despite the importance placed on such good relationships by these, and other authors, much research on appraisal has generally ignored, or underplayed, this interpersonal context - the context which, I believe, holds the key to appraisal success.

Little research-based evidence exists about **how** to establish effective relationships in appraisal contexts. Even in positive contexts, appraisal can be a highly personal, and anxiety-provoking process (Bosetti, 1994; Cardno, 1995). In NZ, where, as mentioned earlier, there has been heightened threat and resentment about the process, this anxiety is likely to be further exacerbated. In the current NZ climate of increasing regulatory control, one must ask whether it is possible to develop the interpersonal relationships necessary to make appraisal effective.

The NZ legislation presumes good relationships, with the mandated guidelines for appraisal stipulating the need for a “common understanding ... common agreement” between appraisers and appraisees (MoE, 1997:14). The requirements offer no expansion of the specific nature of such common understanding and agreement or how this might be developed in a climate of threat and anxiety. This high threat climate in appraisal in NZ underscores the need to explore ways in which appraisers and appraisees can reduce the anxiety and threat in their interactions. Developing an educative process for interactions is one way to reduce this anxiety. Here high trust, openness (particularly in dealing with problems), shared control (or bilaterality), and low defensiveness are the norms. An educative process should include a type of “dialogue” that hopefully overcomes the sort of prevailing condition of “discussion” in appraisal which Garmston and Wellman (1998:32) suggest is a form of “hurling ideas at one another”.

The educative process, as I am describing it, is complex, involving an enormous range of activity which has been described by previous authors. Such activity is stated to: be valuing and negotiated, and joint (Poster & Poster, 1991); involve dialogue which is genuinely two-way (Bennett, 1992); be based on staff being appreciated; be established in a culture of routine help, support, and openness (Bennett, 1992, Harrison, 1995; Humphreys & Thompson, 1995); occur where the appraisee is able to discuss genuine concerns as well as successes (Bennett, 1992); involve feedback and judgement that is data-based and specific (Cardno, 1995; Frase & Streshley, 1994); be associated with the adoption of listening and reporting skills based on confidentiality (Bennett, 1992, Irons, 1993; Fidler, 1995); and occur when problems are confronted rather than avoided (Cardno, 1995; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). **How** these activities are developed as a unified educative process is a central feature of this research, as is the issue of whether such a process can lead to potent outcomes, which is the next feature of effectiveness to be examined.

### Appraisal Effectiveness Linked to Potent Outcomes

The jury is still out as to whether appraisal can lead to any potent (problems solved, improved performance) outcomes.

Whether performance appraisal reviews actually change subsequent employee performance ... is still very much an open question. (Nathan *et al.*, 1991:252)

Most often, ineffective outcomes of appraisal have been reported. Down *et al.* (2000), for example refer to the work of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Britain, 1996, and Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997, and state that:

... despite the official rhetoric of professional growth found in the policy, there is little evidence that performance management systems of this kind are effective in enhancing teachers' learning and their capacity to improve their classroom practice ... Empirical studies of teacher appraisal and performance management show that the impact of appraisal on teaching and learning has not been substantial. (Down *et al.*, 2000:213)

Down *et al.* elaborate that the study in Britain by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, in 1996, found that observable improvements only occurred in 20% of schools. Further, the results from their own study indicate that only one out of the nine teachers in the study was able to describe an instance where performance management had enabled them to change classroom practice. A flaw in the Down *et al.* argument exists due to their failure to make the link between this inadequate outcome and ineffective appraisal interactions in terms of the type of educative processes described in this thesis. This link was not made, despite the fact that two respondents in the Down *et al.* study made statements concerning the importance of tackling deeper issues in appraisal. One of these respondents noted that "none of it had been about deep and meaningful teaching" (p.219). Another commented:

Teachers are not putting forward things they really need to work on, they're not admitting to genuine faults, they find something that's popular, that's easily demonstrated, so it's strategic selection ... I guess they're acquiring skills along the way, but it becomes an exercise of showcasing. (Down *et al.*, 2000:218)

These comments clearly indicate that it is not appraisal as an approach which is inadequate, but, for whatever reason, the avoidance of addressing significant issues or problems.

Most other writing concerning the improvement in practice is largely in the form of unsupported conjecture only. Such conjecture includes that: incompetent teachers remain unidentified; inflated evaluations are made of teaching competence; there are unclear standards leading to rewarding of activities rather than results; appraisal systems become ritualistic over time; it is a time wasting process; it provides little feedback for staff improvement; and it offers little influence on personnel development or teaching. Frase & Streshly (1994), Timperley (1998), and Harrinton-Mackin (1994) all summarise research covering several of these latter facets.

With little evidence in existence to show that it does lead to potent outcomes, the cynicism about effective outcomes in appraisal will remain. The following analysis reveals just how little research we have available to support the claim that appraisal can lead to effective outcomes. Stiggins & Duke's work (1988) in North America indicates the conditions that promote growth outcomes, for example, the development of separate accountability and growth systems, and separate systems for new and probationary teachers to those of the more experienced. However, these authors provide no empirical evidence of actual achievement of any outcomes linked to these conditions.

Similarly, the Nathan *et al.* (1991) longitudinal research, also in North America, provided indications for the process that leads to effective outcomes. They showed that it is an ongoing high quality interpersonal relationship which has the greatest impact on effective

outcomes of appraisal. Their study went further than that of Stiggins & Duke's work, by demonstrating that the efficacy of the appraisal outcomes (based on changes in employee performance and job satisfaction) could be linked to these high quality interpersonal effectiveness. Although this research provides support for placing an emphasis on improving interpersonal effectiveness in appraisal (as outlined in the previous section), the research reported does not provide specific details about the processes that might be employed to improve the interpersonal relationship, and its non-school context limits its direct transferability to the context of this research.

Despite this meagre research which exists concerning effective outcomes, the rhetoric abounds as to what appraisal **should** achieve. These include the broader, more organisation wide outcomes:

... has the potential to provide organizations with the "climate" and "opportunities" ... can serve as a mechanism which enables organizations not only to come to terms with change but also to promote their vision of total quality. (Jones & Mathias, 1994:124)

The most widely held views about outcomes for appraisal are narrower, more individually focused, stating generally that appraisal should provide motivation, clarification for employees, increased competence, improved communication, correction of problems, ownership and responsibility, feedback, and a direction for improvement. The latter two outcomes are more in keeping with those in the earlier stated MoE (1990a) quote suggesting that the success of appraisal would be seen as linked to improving teacher performance and students' learning. Such outcomes are well supported as desirable. For example, Bosetti (1994), Mortimore & Mortimore (1991) both suggest that enhanced development of teachers and better student learning should be the predominant outcomes of the process of appraisal in schools. To simply suggest, however, a desired outcome of improving either teacher performance or the learning of students is, in my opinion, an

oversimplification of a complex issue. Such a statement of outcome alone fails to emphasise the circuitous and often difficult journey required to reach this end point goal.

This journey contains multiple facets, not the least of which include developing self-reflection and self-awareness, and clarifying the aims and priorities for what needs to be improved (Harrinton-Makin, 1994; Mortimore & Mortimore, 1991). It also includes clarifying the responsibilities for reaching priorities, establishing shared approaches based on good communication to achieve this, and confronting and resolving problems, rather than leaving them undiscussed (Bennett, 1992; Harrison, 1995). An examination of the appraisal literature has revealed little indication of how the latter multiple facets need to be addressed along the journey to this improvement. I believe that this gap is a central key to addressing the impotent outcomes of appraisal.

It is my contention that it is not appraisal per se that should be under on-going attack as an inadequate managerialist system (see Down *et al.*, 2000), but the inadequate attention paid to addressing much more fundamentally damaging interpersonal relationships which the appraisal process surfaces. In my research, as discussed in the previous section, the use of an educative process was employed to help appraisers to address the issues linked to interpersonal relationships which would, in turn, lead to the establishment of the sort of high trust, open, interactions that could create an environment for improvement. A particular emphasis in this educative process establishment was on confronting and dealing with problems.

### **Solving Problems as an Indicator of Potent Outcomes**

As early as 1986 Darling-Hammond was urging that a professional conception of teaching involved:

... establishing a continuous dialogue about problems of practice among the practitioners themselves. (Darling-Hammond, 1986:549)

Appraisal can be the ideal vehicle for discussing such problems, and therefore may be a key to professionalism. However it is not just the discussion of problems which is imperative. This resolution is vital if appraisal is to lead to potent outcomes. Whether appraisal can lead to such potent outcomes was another major area of interest in this research. It aimed to determine whether evidence could be provided to show that if appraisers could establish educative process interactions which could help appraisees to solve problems, and if solving problems led to improved teaching and learning, then appraisal could no longer be deemed ineffective.

This specific issue of enhancing the interpersonal effectiveness of appraisal by addressing teachers' problems has also been examined by a small number of other researchers. They include Cardno (1995) who worked with appraisers in confronting problems rather than avoiding them. The fact that there is little research on dealing with problems in appraisal is not surprising because the problem-solving field is a contentious area, and, as this research has found, it is often threatening to teachers to discuss problems even in a non-specific, neutral context. As a participant in one of my 1998 training courses expressed it:

*... we don't use the word "problem" in our school ... it's creating a very negative feeling in this group by you even mentioning the word. You're just going to get resistance to this training if you continue to talk about this.*

Regardless of the dearth of research on this area of dealing with problems, or the reluctance of appraisers and appraisees to confront this, it is an imperative issue for examination if we are to have effective appraisal. As one of the veteran teachers in Bosetti's research states:

*... but the evaluation process rally (that is, the proponents) falls short of helping teachers to deal with their problems....if they (the appraisers) don't actually get in*

there and help them then there likely will be little change in the classroom.  
(Bosetti, 1994:54)

This research determined whether training in an educative process assisted appraisers to confront and resolve problems, and whether this in turn, led to potent outcomes in appraisal.

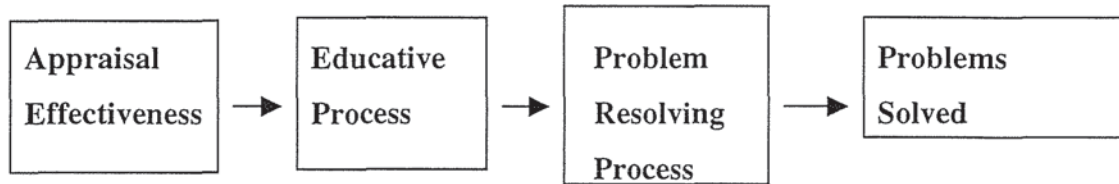
### **Summary of Causal Links in Appraisal Effectiveness**

In this thesis, the overarching research question is:

How can we develop approaches which overcome the negative climate of fear associated with increased hierarchical control, reduced autonomy and collaboration, and inadequate outcomes often associated with appraisal?

I believe that the employment of educative process skills in appraisal is a key to the resolution of many of the control difficulties. Educative process skills is a term which I use to describe a relationship between the appraiser and appraisee that is based on well-established trust and confidentiality, shared (bilateral) rather than hierarchical control, common understanding, reduced defensiveness (especially threat) and anxiety, and openness concerning purposes, processes and outcomes. Such an open, bilateral relationship enhances the chances of problems being confronted rather than avoided. The confronting of problems, in turn, should lead to effective, or potent, outcomes in appraisal, where problems are actually solved. Problems solved should mean that appraisal has improvement outcomes for teaching, learning and management in schools. This causal link is shown in Figure 1.1:

**Figure 1.1: Causal link diagram of appraisal effectiveness**



Returning to the overarching research question, in summary, if the educative process approach employed in this research leads to problems which are confronted and solved, then this research will provide important support for the acceptance of appraisal as an effective developmental and accountability process.

## **RESEARCH PROCESS OVERVIEW**

The research reported in this thesis initially sought to examine the impact of increased accountability on the implementation of appraisal in schools during the four year period in which tighter requirements for accountability in appraisal were introduced (late 1995-1999). This first phase of the research, described as the Reconnaissance phase, used a longitudinal study conducted over four years (1996-1999) with approximately 50 managers in schools, to explore whether the increased accountability had led to the undesirable impacts of increased control predicted by Argyris (1996b), Robinson (1992), and myself. Specifically, these predicted negative impacts include an increase in defensive responses (Argyris 1996b), and low internal commitment (Robinson 1992). Based on my own experience, I have added also the impact of an increased likelihood of inconsistent adoption as another response to the tightening of control. Although the results of this Reconnaissance phase provided evidence that most of these negative impacts had not occurred in NZ schools during the period of tightening of accountability, they did indicate that inconsistent adoption was common and that the institutionalisation of appraisal (where the process is accepted and operational) was low.

One particular area of the results from this Reconnaissance phase that was of interest was the reported poor implementation and institutionalisation of what respondents described as effective training. Further informal investigation revealed that appraisers perceived that such effective training was associated with helping appraisers to develop open relationships, in which confronting and solving problems with appraisees was practised. This was in keeping with my own perceptions of appraisal effectiveness generally, as demonstrated in the Causal link diagram in Figure 1.1 (p.20). It is this area of the development and implementation of training in educative process skills which became the focus for the second, Change phase of the research.

In this Change phase of the research (1997-1999), two types of training intervention were introduced to assist appraisers to conduct educative processes where non-defensiveness, shared control or bilaterality, and the confronting of problems existed. The first type of intervention (#1) was a short-term, one to two day training, conducted with 219 appraisers, which conformed to the time and cost restrictions in schools. The second intervention (#2) was a more intensive, year long action research approach with five appraisers and appraisees from one school. Neither of these intervention approaches focused on the skills-based training alone, but instead were directed at a deeper value and behaviour shifting level.

The theoretical underpinning which influenced the design of training for the two interventions, a productive reasoning approach, is discussed in detail in the Change phase literature review chapter. Briefly, Argyris' work (1985, 1990, 1992), that of Argyris & Schön (1974, 1996), and selected others (Cardno, 1994; Piggot-Irvine, 1995; and Robinson, 1986, 1992, 1993a,b) provided a strong theoretical underpinning for the training approaches adopted for an educative process in this Change phase.

A particular focus in the evaluation of both interventions was to determine whether these educative processes could, in turn, lead to the discussion and resolution of problems, and whether this could lead to the improvement of teaching or management practice of

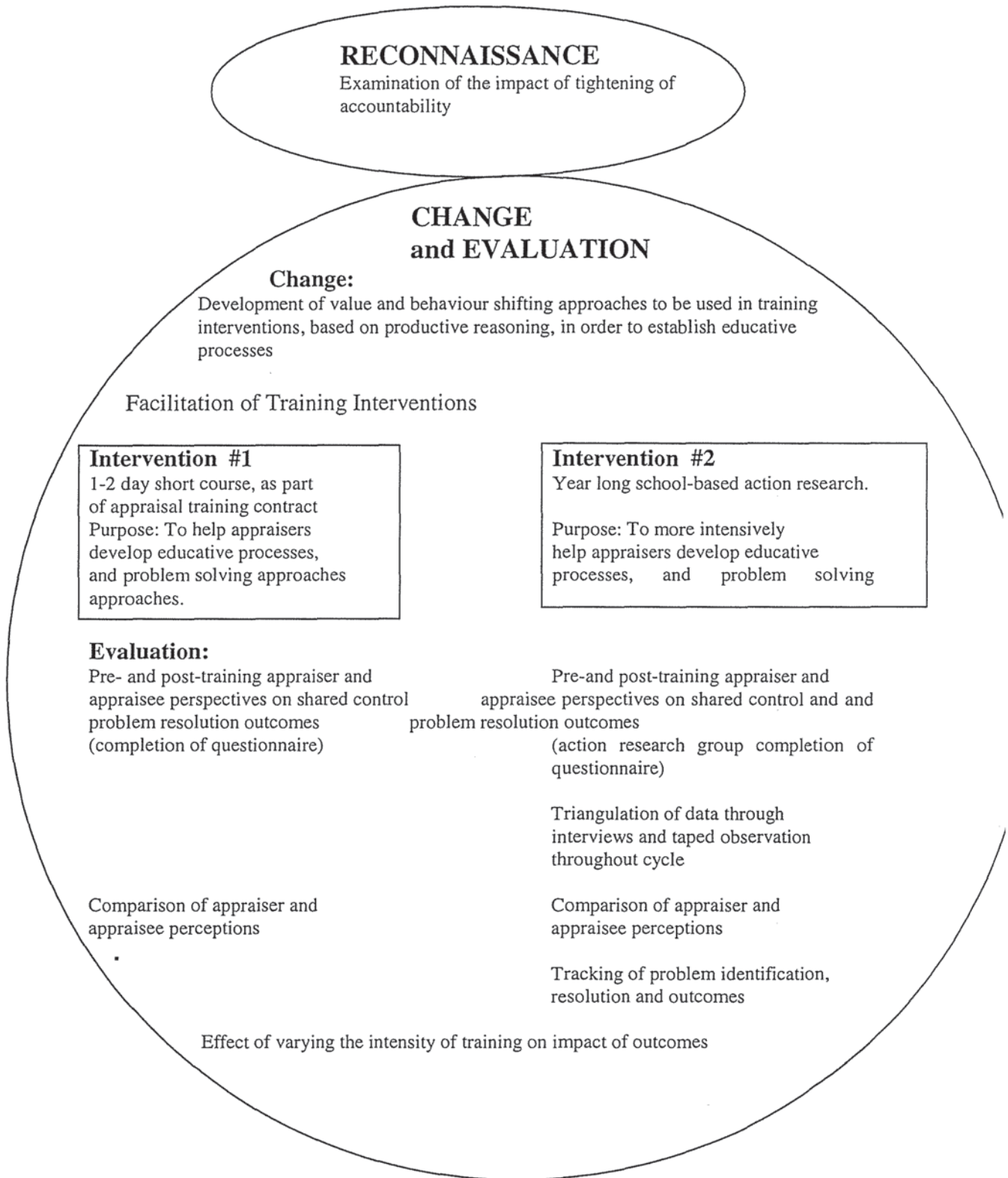
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appraisees. This examination of consequences, or outcomes, constitutes new research in the appraisal field.

Figure 1.2 diagrammatically represents the stages of the research.

**Figure 1.2: RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

**Appraisal: Sharing Control - Enhancing the Impact**



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS

The following research questions were designed to provide direction for each of the Reconnaissance and Change phases.

(1) What is the context for appraisal, in the NZ school sector, related to the two concerns of tightening accountability and effective outcomes?

Subquestions:

- a. What legislative requirements or imperatives exist for appraisal in schools?
- b. What is the nature of the debate concerning tightened accountability and effectiveness associated with these legislative requirements?
- c. What evidence exists concerning the impact of the tightening requirements (tightening accountability) on the implementation of appraisal in the post-reform (after 1989) NZ school sector?

(2) Are there ways of providing interventions which overcome the concerns, that is, which are educative in terms of establishing trust, openness (particularly about dealing with problems), shared control, and reduced defensiveness, and which lead to effective outcomes in the sense of resolving problems?

Subquestion:

- a. What value and behaviour shifting intervention approaches (especially those employing productive reasoning skills) can be developed which lead to educative processes and to effective problem-solving outcomes, whilst conforming to time and cost restrictions in schools?

(3) How successful have short-term and more intensive training interventions been in terms of leading to educative processes and enhancing the effective problem solving outcomes of appraisal?

Subquestions:

- a. What are appraiser and appraisee perspectives on whether these interventions have led to an educative appraisal process or to effective outcomes in terms of problem resolution?
  - b. Is there a difference between appraiser and appraisee perceptions?
  - c. Does other data (for example, my own analysis of appraisal interview data, and student feedback) support the appraiser and appraisee perspectives about educative processes, and effective outcomes?
  - d. Does varying the intensity of training from short courses (one or two day intensives) through to extensive programmes (action research over a period of a year) impact on the outcomes?
- (4) What are the implications of this research for policy and practice in appraisal?

## **THESIS CHAPTER CONTENT**

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter describes the Reconnaissance phase literature and the methodology employed in the research. The literature review section of the chapter examines the nature of the tightening of accountability for appraisal in NZ schools in the 1989-1999 period. The general impact of such tightening of control is explored, specifically looking at the report of particularly negative impacts such as increased defensiveness, reduced internal commitment, inconsistency in implementation. Finally, in this section of the chapter, the meagre research available on the implementation status of appraisal in NZ is discussed. Ideally, the research on the impact of tightening of accountability on implementation would also have been explored, but no such research exists in NZ.

The Reconnaissance phase methodology section of the chapter outlines the aims of the study which examined the impact of the tightening of accountability in requirements on the implementation of appraisal. This section also describes the duration of this longitudinal study, the participants involved, and the return rate for the checklist used.

The nature of the checklist itself is described, including its limitations, and its origins in the work of Fullan's change stages outlined. Finally, the piloting of the checklist and ethical considerations are covered.

### **Chapter Three**

This chapter summarises the results and discussion from the Reconnaissance phase, longitudinal study. Results for the 1996-1999 period from each of the categories (initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation), and subcategories, used in the checklist for the study, are reported in detail and related to the impacts reported by Argyris and others. The results include both quantitative data (as percentages of responses) and qualitative comment from respondents to support and/or clarify the quantitative data. In the final part of this results section there is a collation of the comments from 1999 respondents relating to their retrospective impression of the impact of the tightening of accountability.

The second section of this chapter provides a discussion of the results, linking these results with previous NZ research conducted on appraisal in the post-reform era. It concludes that, contrary to the wide spread debate about the first of the concerns in appraisal (that the increased accountability would negatively impact on appraisal implementation), this study provides clear evidence that the tightening of control in legislation has enhanced most areas of implementation. Finally, in this chapter, I discuss the way in which this Reconnaissance phase study informs the following Change phase of the research, and leads to the gathering of data to inform the second set of questions about the impact of appraisal.

### **Chapter Four**

This chapter describes the literature associated with Intervention #1. This intervention was the first component of the Change phase. The aim of this phase was to develop and implement training which could assist appraisers to confront and help appraisees resolve problems in appraisal via an educative process. The first section of this chapter reviews

the literature which informed the development of the training approach for both Interventions #1 and #2, particularly, Argyris (1985, 1990) work on productive reasoning. The approach to this training is outlined in the second part of the chapter. This covers the general principles of the productive reasoning training, the key facilitation skills required for training, the training programme itself, and benefits and issues in the training.

## **Chapter Five**

This chapter outlines the method employed to evaluate the effectiveness of Intervention #1. Here the evaluation instrument, that is the pre- and post-training questionnaire, is discussed, as are the sample groups, research site, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Five also covers the Intervention #1 results and discussion. The first section of the results provides an overview report on appraiser and appraisee perspectives on the extent of trust in their appraisal relationship. In the second section of the results more specific information is provided concerning the way in which appraisers implemented the values and strategies of sharing control (bilaterality) by increasing valid information in appraisal discussions, particularly when problems existed. The next section of the results reports on how the appraiser helped the appraisee to gain internal commitment to improvement. The extent of planning for improvement, and the way in which this occurred as a joint, or bilateral, responsibility between appraiser and appraisee, is also specifically discussed. Achievement of this by appraisers is another indicator of the success of the training in leading to an educative process.

Whether the training in productive reasoning had impacted on the way that appraisers were dealing with problems is also reported on. In particular, the factors that might have led to changes in the appraiser attitude and behaviour are examined. The extent to which appraisal resulted in any resolution of problems is the penultimate focus of the report on results. The final section more generally reports on appraiser and appraisee perceptions of how trust, openness, and problem solving can be enhanced in appraisal.

## **Chapter Six**

Chapter Six outlines the intended action research approach, the methodology planned for this more extensive, Change phase, intervention. The intended action research approach was designed for a collaborative group (myself and the six appraisers) to focus on the enhanced development of appraiser educative process skills using productive reasoning, and particularly the problem resolving aspect of this. The chapter discusses the aims of Intervention #2, its duration, and the events linked to the appraisal cycle during the school year. It then outlines the intended action research approach, or model, designed for this intervention, and its philosophical underpinning.

## **Chapter Seven**

This chapter begins by describing the action research group participants and the research site. The actual practice of the group is then compared with the Problem Resolving Action Research (PRAR) Model and its philosophical underpinning, using each cycle of the model to describe the action research group activities. In the final part of this chapter, I provide my own personal reflections on the match between the actual action research and the PRAR Model.

## **Chapter Eight**

A key feature of the action research intervention, as with Intervention #1, was to also gather data on whether this intervention helped the appraisers to further develop productive reasoning strategies, and whether these, in turn, led to effective or potent outcomes in terms of resolving problems (research question 3). The methods employed to collect this data are outlined in the first part of this chapter, followed by a description of the appraisers and appraisees, and ethical considerations. The second part of this chapter covers the evaluation results, and discussion of these.

## **Chapter Nine**

Chapter Nine draws conclusions and links them back to the research questions which were established at the beginning of the research.

## **Chapter Ten**

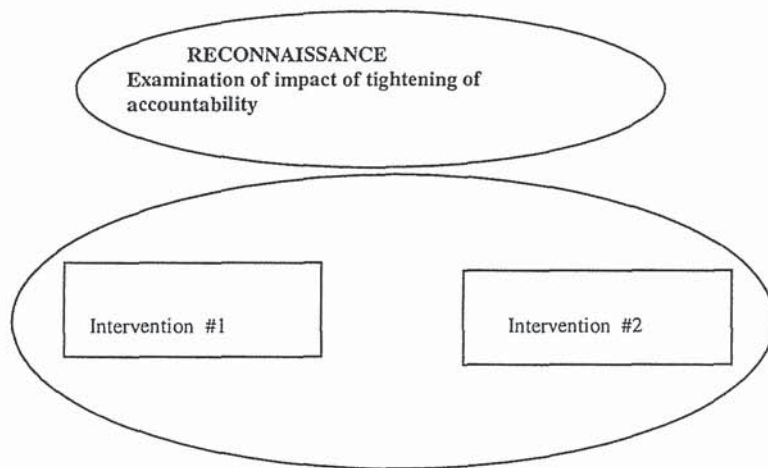
There are several implications from this research which may be considered for future policy and practice in both appraisal and action research, the methodology which guided Intervention #2. These implications are elaborated further in this chapter, and where appropriate, areas for further research are indicated. The final section of this thesis concludes with an overview of the contribution that this thesis has made to both our understanding of the effectiveness of appraisal itself, and of action research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RECONNAISSANCE: LITERATURE REVIEW

#### RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Appraisal: Sharing Control - Enhancing the Impact



The overview diagram above locates this Reconnaissance phase as the first set of activities in the research. In this phase the impact of the increased accountability in appraisal was examined. As noted in Chapter One a four year, longitudinal study was employed to collect data in order to determine the validity of my argument that increased accountability in appraisal would lead to the negative impacts reported by Argyris (1996b), Robinson (1992), and Timperley and Robinson (1998).

#### CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

...control systems drive conflict systems because once measures are developed to evaluate performance and compliance they invite manipulation. (Argyris, 1996b:83)

Argyris is just one author who considers that the tightening of control has a negative impact on both individuals and organisations. The precise nature of this negative impact is described later, but if Argyris is correct, one would predict that any tightening of control (tightening of accountability for appraisal) in NZ schools, would have a substantive negative impact on the effectiveness of appraisal. The Reconnaissance phase of this research was designed to determine whether this negative impact had occurred, and if so how it had occurred.

The impact analysis was an important pre-study in order to establish a picture of the effect of the tightening accountability on the current situation related to the general appraisal implementation in schools. It also helped to identify the areas which required improvement. This Reconnaissance phase involved an annual status check via the “State of Play” checklist, which used Fullan’s (1986) three stages of change as generalised categories for data collection. These three stages are initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation (maintenance of the change process and on-going refinement). This study was conducted longitudinally between 1996 and 1999, that is, the period over which the requirements for appraisal tightened in NZ schools.

The literature review section of the chapter initially outlines the nature of this tightening of accountability. It covers the changing post-reform (post 1989) context in appraisal, particularly from the period prior to the introduction of the late 1995 Draft National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools (DNGPMS), to that following the 1997 mandated guidelines. It also reports on the introduction of professional standards in primary schools in 1998, and secondary schools in 1999. It then describes the impact of such tightening control generally. Finally this chapter reviews the previous post-reform research conducted on the tightening of accountability and the implementation status of appraisal in NZ schools.

In NZ we have seen changing, and increasingly tightened, requirements for the accountability component of appraisal during the last decade, and this tightening is examined in order to demonstrate the origins of concerns about the process.

## **TIGHTENING POST-REFORM REQUIREMENTS FOR APPRAISAL**

Between 1995 and 1999 the requirements and legislation for appraisal in schools in NZ dramatically tightened, but in order to understand the context of this tightening it is important first of all to review the requirements for appraisal in the years immediately prior to this time. Pre-1989 no specific legislation or guidelines for appraisal existed for NZ schools. As already indicated in the previous Introductory chapter, in 1989 NZ education was reorganised and reformed following the Tomorrow's Schools Report (Government of NZ, 1988a) and the Education Act (Government of NZ, 1989b). The key change associated with appraisal in these reforms involved school Boards, as employers, being legally accountable to the community and government for the staff's performance. Boards of Trustees were established to govern each school - a role which made them the employer of all staff of the school, including the principal, who has the task of implementing policy and day-to-day management.

As an employer, the Board has many legal responsibilities similar to state sector employers. The specific requirements associated with appraisal are outlined in the State Sector Amendment (Government of NZ, 1989a), which refers to the employer's responsibility for the enhancement of development (Section 77A), maintenance of standards of integrity and conduct (77A), and the assessment of the performance of teachers (77C). The Act also makes provision for the MoE to prescribe elements of assessment of performance (77C). The relevant excerpts are noted as follows:

## 77A General Principles

1 Every employer in the education service shall operate a personnel policy that complies with the principle of being a good employer.

2 For the purposes of this section a “good employer” is an employer who operates a personnel policy containing provisions generally accepted as necessary for the fair and proper treatment of employees in all aspects of their employment, including provisions requiring:

[...]

(e) Opportunities for the enhancement of the abilities of individual employees

[...]

3 In addition to the requirements specified in subsections (1) and (2) of this section, each employer shall ensure that all employees maintain proper standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for:

(a) the public interest; and

(b) the well-being of students attending the institution.

## 77C Performance of Teachers

1 The chief executive of the MoE may from time to time, with the agreement of the State Services Commission, prescribe matters that are to be taken into account by employers in assessing the performance of teachers.

2 Before the chief executive of the MoE prescribes any matters under subsection (1) of this section, the chief executive of the Ministry shall consult with:

(a) the Teacher Registration Board; and

(b) the chief executive of the Education Review Office; and

(c) representatives of employers and teachers; and

(d) the organisations of teachers that represent teachers who will be subject to the matters prescribed under this section.

3        *Nothing in this section prevents the prescribing by an employer of matters to be taken into account in assessing the performance of teachers employed by that employer (being matters which are not consistent with any matter prescribed under this section by the chief executive of the Ministry and which apply to teachers employed by that employer).*

*(State Sector Amendment, 1989)*

This section of the Act means that Boards, as employers, are responsible for the development of the appraisal policy. Such responsibility, of course, does not imply that the Board does this on its own, and in most schools, development of policy is a consultative and inclusive process. The Board must also ensure that the policy is implemented. They do not carry out the day to day management of policy, but ensure that the manager (the principal) implements an appraisal policy which meets the requirements of being a good employer as stated in the Act.

The Board of Trustees also has other official obligations relating to appraisal of staff. In the post-reform era, each Board has developed a contract with the Government in the form of a charter. The document outlining the requirements for a charter, the Charter Framework (MoE, 1990b), has a personnel section which states that Boards must promote staff performance and the effective use of resources (Goal C), and should approve and support a staff development programme to enhance the educational opportunities of students and improve the capabilities of all staff (Goal D). Following the introduction of the Charter Framework requirements, there were further expectations. The school's charter must also demonstrate that the school and Board aims to implement the National Education Guidelines (MoE, 1993). These Guidelines establish a set of national goals (the National Education Goals, NEGs), and administrative guidelines for Boards of Trustees (National Administrative Guidelines, NAGs). The NAGs relating to appraisal indicate that the Board is required to develop policies which promote high levels of staff performance.

The National Administration Guidelines (1993: updated in 1999, but unaltered in this section), providing direction for Boards for appraisal, are as follows:-

2 *According to the legislation on employment and personnel matters, each Board of trustees is required in particular to:*

(i) *develop and implement personnel and industrial policies, within policy and procedural frameworks set by the Government from time to time, which promote high levels of staff performance, use educational resources effectively and recognise the needs of students;*

(ii) *be a good employer as defined in the State Sector Act 1988 and comply with the conditions contained in employment contracts applying to teaching and non-teaching staff.*

All of the preceding regulations indicate that the Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that appraisal occurs, both for the principal and staff. However, neither the State Sector Act nor the National Education Guidelines indicate a regulation for **implementation** of appraisal (the principal's role) and previous to 1997 there had been no prescription of specific requirements stated, despite the fact that the State Sector Amendment Act (Government of NZ, 1989a) made provision for the MoE to prescribe elements of assessment of performance (see earlier, section 77C).

This lack of prescription changed with the introduction of the DNGPMS which were developed in 1995, and piloted in schools in 1996. These Guidelines (Appendix 1) built on the recommendations of working groups which met in 1994 and 1995, and the 1995 Education Review Office (ERO) study on performance management in schools. The DNGPMS were purported to be based on "best practice" (p.13) in NZ schools but the lack of bibliography in the document offers little assurance of the credibility of this claim. As the name "Guidelines" suggests, this outline was not prescriptive, but an attempt to signal to schools what the requirements might be.

These DNGPMS promoted a strong developmental purpose for appraisal by stipulating the central importance of the establishment of objectives, self-appraisal, and discussion of achievement. They also built on accountability components which included the requirement for: a written statement of performance expectations; an alignment of personal, departmental and school wide goals; a classroom observation to occur; and the writing of a report. The accountability requirement was elaborated also in the stated preference for an hierarchical reporting system by suggesting that senior management and the Board needed to be informed of the outcome of appraisal. No link between appraisal and remuneration was made in this draft set of guidelines.

Each school was expected to work within the DNGPMS to develop an approach which suited their own situation. The vagueness of the minimum requirements in the DNGPMS was seen by many, including the ERO (1996), to be confusing. Both Collins (1996) and NZEI (1996) further suggested that the vagueness also extended to a lack of clarity about the purposes (formative or summative, or both) of appraisal to be used by schools.

The DNGPMS, according to Lockwood Smith, the then current Minister of Education, formed a "link between the personnel policies operated by Boards and the achievement of the overall goals and objectives for the school established by the Board each year", and assisted Boards to comply with the requirements of the NAGs (MoE, 1995). In summary the Guidelines were a step up in increased tightening in accountability from the previous soft legislation, but they were still largely loose and open ended for schools.

In December 1996, this looseness was tightened. The DNGPMS were promulgated in a mandatory format and circulated in 1997 in the booklet *Performance Management in Schools Number 1, PMS1* (MoE, 1997). A series of further booklets outlined the way in which appraisal would be implemented in specific contexts such as principal appraisal (PMS 3).

These mandatory requirements were more accountability driven (tighter in control), primarily because they were now official, but also because they more explicitly articulated the need for an accountability and development balance in appraisal. They were, however, still vague in prescription regarding implementation. They were rich in espoused values such as transparency and openness, but poor in direction for how these values might be enacted. The messages in the requirements were mixed and this is highlighted where they indirectly signalled an even tighter intent in the pre-amble, context setting section. The requirements did this by first of all omitting to clarify whether they were to be applied to appraisal alone or to the entire personnel management function, and second by diagrammatically locating appraisal alongside other personnel management functions (including remuneration management) but not stating any linkages. The latter, particularly, triggered extremely hostile and angry reactions in many schools in which I facilitated the introduction of these requirements. Many staff saw this lack of clarity about the remuneration links as a way of leaving the options open for further accountability tightening. Despite MoE (personal conversation, 1997) denial of a direct appraisal and remuneration link in the requirements, subsequent events have made this linkage a reality and confirmed the hidden agenda claims of critics of the requirements discussed in the Introduction chapter. Recent (1999) personal conversation with MoE staff involved in the development of the guidelines revealed that there was always an intended link to be made to remuneration.

In 1997, alongside the tightening of requirements for appraisal, two other increasing accountability processes were also occurring. These were the attestation process in the secondary sector, and the professional standards in the primary sector. The introduction of an attestation process to determine pay progression in the secondary sector was based on the school establishing and checklisting teachers' performance against set criteria. One of the criteria was that the principal or Board Chair signed off that the teacher had completed the appraisal process. Although there was no explicit or formalised requirement for this attestation process to be directly linked to appraisal (apart from the aforementioned signing off), many secondary schools themselves inadvertently (or maybe

advertently) made this link by combining the two processes for expediency. In doing so they immediately linked remuneration and appraisal, and brought about a much tighter accountability than the mandated requirements stipulated.

In 1998 the introduction of highly prescriptive professional standards for measuring performance in primary schools, the less resistant school sector, explicitly and formally linked the appraisal cycle to reward (MoE, 1998). These professional standards were nationally prescribed performance measures designed to be used annually to assess (the word “appraise” is used in the 1998 document) staff and to make decisions on salary progression. The gazetted notice stipulated that schools were not required to “operate two separate systems, that is, a performance appraisal system and a system for assessment against the professional standards” (MoE, 1998:2). This indirectly suggested linkage in systems firmly established the predominant role of appraisal as an accountability process with a remuneration agenda. Anecdotal evidence from the primary sector (personal conversations with principals in 1999) tentatively confirmed this to be the case with several suggesting that they had jettisoned the developmental, improvement, focus of appraisal and were using a checklist against the professional standards alone.

In July 1999 the secondary teacher union, the Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA), published a supplement to the collective employment contract as a guide to the implementation of professional standards in their sector. Despite PPTA’s resistance to these MoE directed standards (MoE, 1999), they adopted a stance that, since the standards were a *fait accompli*, they should be introduced in as constructive a way as possible. First of all they suggested the standards should be broad rather than based on narrowly defined elements:

the construction of generic and uniform standards separates teaching from its wider educational context and values ... rather than enhancing professionalism it may detract from it. (PPTA, 1999:2)

They also suggested that schools should "... seek to maintain a formative, confidential and professional appraisal ...” (PPTA, 1999:5).

The weakness in this document is that PPTA did not suggest **how** schools might retain this formative function of appraisal. Although they stated (p.10) that “schools endeavour to retain some degree of separation between the two processes” of attestation and appraisal, they then provided three examples of the way in which schools have tackled this, two of which directly linked the processes. By failing to emphasise the critical developmental component of performance management, in effect PPTA sold-out to teachers. Duncan expresses how this occurred in the following way:

The Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) has earned for teachers significant pay increases, but has surrendered a great deal of the protection that teachers enjoyed. The Association has not however at the same time been in a position to secure the provisions for professional development that might permit most teachers the maintenance of the standards necessary to operate effectively. (Duncan, 1999:33)

In summary, the post-reform legislation for appraisal has increasingly become more accountable in intent, and this has been further exacerbated by the introduction of professional standards which have directly linked appraisal to remuneration. The next section of this literature review examines the general impact of such tightening of control.

## **IMPACT OF TIGHTENING OF CONTROL**

The post-reform period in NZ schools has been a decade of increasing accountability generally. As Irons (1993:7, citing the work of Gordon, 1992) points out, the critics of this argue that such an increase will “...entail a loss of professionalism and ‘proletarianise’ teachers, turning them into workers to be controlled rather than professionals”.

Implied in this statement is a compliance type response in teachers, and this type of negative response has support from others outside NZ, and outside the education sector. For example, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Argyris, in drawing upon the work of March (1981), suggests that tightening of control systems has a considerable negative impact on individuals and organisations. He states that "...control systems drive conflict systems because once measures are developed to evaluate performance and compliance they invite manipulation" (Argyris, 1996b:83).

Argyris further states that people then create coalition groups to bring about and protect these self-protective processes of manipulation. The organisation's response, in turn, to such manipulation is to tighten control further. So how does such manipulation in response to tightening control manifest itself? The defensive responses of resistance, avoidance of unpleasantness, and increased controlling type behaviours (for example unilateral decision-making) described by Argyris (1990), are manifestations of this response. Increased threat and cynicism are also manifestations. These defensive responses, and how to overcome them, are described in more detail later in the Change phase Literature Review chapter.

Robinson (1992:345) indirectly suggests another negative impact of tightening control, if we consider that such tightening of control leads to controlling behaviours. Controlling relationships, she states, are incompatible with the development of internal commitment. In appraisal, internal commitment, both at the organisation and individual level, is critical to all stages of successful implementation of this process.

To the impacts noted by both Argyris and Robinson, I have added another response to tightening control which I have observed. This is one of inconsistent adoption of the varied elements of appraisal. In the analysis of results I hoped to establish whether these observations could be supported.

The results from this longitudinal study have been examined to determine whether the tightening of control during the four year period under study resulted in any of the negative impacts noted above. Specifically, the results have been reviewed for evidence of resistance to the process, increased avoidance, controlling behaviours (particularly unilateral decision making), increased compliance, threat and/or cynicism, reduced internal commitment, and increased inconsistent adoption in appraisal. Other impacts, including positive, were also determined.

### **Post-1989 Research Conducted on the Impact of Tightening Accountability and Implementation Status of Appraisal in NZ Schools**

No previous research evidence exists on the impact of tightening of accountability on appraisal implementation in NZ. Somewhat meagre research exists on implementation status in general, and this is discussed in this section.

In 1990 the Lough Report (compiled by the Education Reform Implementation Review Team) stated that principals were not implementing personnel management reforms. Although lacking in specific data to support this statement, the report indicated that there were many reasons for this poor implementation in the early post-reform period. These included the lack of clear Board and principal roles, weak skills in personnel management, and lack of planning to implement policies. Alcorn (1990) added to this list by suggesting also the influence of Board and principal reluctance to assume the combination of both staff assessment and staff development roles. She believed this reluctance was a consequence of task overload, the volume of change, staff suspicion, and discomfort with the requirement to formalise personnel procedures. Battersby (1991) further suggested that it was the lack of precedents or guidelines, which was preventing implementation of appraisal.

Despite these statements of concern relating to implementation, the little research conducted between 1990 and 1995 indicates a dramatic increase in the extent of implementation of appraisal in NZ schools in this period. For example, the Peel &

Inkson (1993) survey conducted in mid-1991 showed that about 50% of the 82 schools in their study reported that they had formalised appraisal systems, or were expected to have them by the beginning of 1992.

The reported situation would appear to have changed in the intervening years when 1994-1995 ERO data was aggregated for 54 schools. This data is considerably different from that reported in the earlier Peel & Inkson, or later, research. The ERO (1995) study indicated that all but three of the total schools studied had systems implemented. This report also stated that most schools had a system in place which was developmentally focused in intent. These results are so much more positive than earlier and later findings, that one questions whether the schools anticipating an ERO visit had developed systems for the Review Office approval alone - a compliance activity to meet external auditing and review requirements for this Office.

In 1996 Timperley & Robinson found that only 35% of secondary principals (out of a sample of 188) reported that appraisal had been used in their schools. These results are reasonably consistent with those in the earlier Peel & Inkson study. Timperley & Robinson (1996) also recorded that the principals of the majority of schools (66%) stipulated that they had appraisal systems with a developmental purpose only, despite the fact that most of the schools had managers as appraisers. The authors see this as reluctance to acknowledge the accountability role. Only 34 % of the schools in their study had a combined developmental and accountability purpose, and none had an accountability purpose alone. These findings are consistent with the 1995 ERO conclusion that most school systems had a developmental intent.

None of these three latter studies distinguished how the tightening of accountability for appraisal had impacted. Nor is there any mention of how specifically any appraisal components were implemented. Where mentioned, the data collected refers to implementation as an entirety, and does not break this down into distinct initiation, implementation, or institutionalisation activities. Because all three studies were

conducted prior to the introduction of the DNGPMS for appraisal, they are only useful in providing a comparative analysis with the 1996 data collected in this longitudinal study.

The only NZ research which has investigated the initiation and implementation phases of appraisal is that of Irons (1993). In terms of initiation activity, in her small scale investigation of appraisal in four primary schools, Irons reported that most (70%) teachers felt that they had been involved sufficiently in the setting up their appraisal system. In implementation activity, Irons specifically reported on training received by teachers. She stated that none of the schools involved outside consultants for training, and that the majority of training was discussion. Irons also indicated high rates (85%) of self-appraisal and lower rates (51%) of assemblage of data for appraisal. All of these results will be compared with the longitudinal study data. Irons did not examine any institutionalisation (on-going) activity, nor did she examine any impact of the tightening of accountability.

A small piece of NZ research has been conducted on the institutionalisation of appraisal. Reid (1995), a practising principal, conducted a survey with senior managers from 16 schools on various aspects of appraisal, as part of a year long action research project for the Diploma in School Management at UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland. In determining why there was poor institutionalisation of appraisal, he reported that the two most frequent reasons cited by the managers were that policies and practices were imposed and therefore not owned by staff, and that the impetus for implementation had lapsed (in his terms indicating a lack of importance placed on either policy or implementation). The following comment by one of Reid's respondents exemplified the second reason: "*When the Senior Management Team lost interest so did the staff*".

In Reid's examination of what contributed to good institutionalisation the following reasons were stated: good quality feedback is given; teachers enjoy the process; the process is regular and goals are set; there is an acceptance of a need for accountability; appraisal is timetabled and the procedures are clear and followed; staff have grown and

developed because of the process; there is an assurance of support from senior management; and staff helped develop, and therefore own, the process.

This latter information from Reid clearly confirms that, like any change initiative, for appraisal to become well institutionalised it is important for staff to have ownership in the initiation and implementation stages, and for the process to be supported by senior management, systematised and sustained, at the institutionalisation stage. Reid's action research was conducted prior to the introduction of the DNGPMS and so is unable to be analysed for the impact of tightening of accountability.

## **CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review of the literature indicates that the accountability requirements for appraisal in NZ schools have increasingly tightened in the post-reform period. The general impact of such tightening of control is reported elsewhere to be that of enhancing defensive responses (particularly increased resistance, compliance, avoidance, controlling behaviours, cynicism and threat), decreasing internal commitment to the process. In NZ little research to date has been conducted to determine the precise implementation status of appraisal in schools either before or during the period of tightening of accountability. No research has examined the impact of the tightening of accountability. The following chapters (Reconnaissance Methodology, Results and Discussion) report on the longitudinal study which investigated these issues. The evidence provided in this study, particularly that from 1996 and 1997, led to the decision to develop training interventions, designed to reduce a component of the negative impacts linked with tightening of control.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **RECONNAISSANCE: METHODOLOGY, RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

### **CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the methodology, results and discussion of the Reconnaissance phase longitudinal investigation into the impact of tightening accountability in requirements on the status of appraisal in schools. The background to the tightening accountability and design of the study has been examined in the earlier Literature Review chapter.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This section of the chapter examines the aims of the Reconnaissance phase investigation on the status of appraisal implementation in NZ schools. It then describes the duration of the study, sample group and return rate, and the checklist used (including piloting, limitations, and ethical considerations).

#### **Aim of Study**

This longitudinal study was conducted as a reconnaissance exercise in the overall research (see Research Overview diagram, Figure 1.2, p.23). As mentioned earlier, it was designed to collect information on the extent to which tightening accountability in the requirements for appraisal had impacted on the stages of initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation of appraisal.

The study aimed to answer the following research question 1(c):

What evidence exists concerning the impact of the tightening requirements (tightening accountability) on the implementation of appraisal in the post-reform (after 1989) NZ school sector?

### **Duration of Study**

The study was conducted over a four year period between early 1996 and 1999. This period covered that just prior to the introduction of any guidelines for appraisal in schools, through to introduction of the draft guidelines, DNGPMS, then the 1997 mandated guidelines, and finally the introduction of a stronger accountability component in the form of professional standards (in the primary school sector 1998; secondary sector 1999).

### **Participants and Return Rate**

The participants responding to this reconnaissance investigation each year were middle and senior managers in schools from throughout NZ enrolled in management development courses at the Education Management Centre, UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland. These managers (a different group each year) came from both the primary and secondary sector, and from schools of varying size, decile rating, and location.

No selection criteria were used in this study, nor any representative sampling process. This was not random sampling because the entire number of schools in NZ were not used as the original population pool, but rather what Bouma (1996:117) describes as a non-random, accidental sampling process. The group was selected because they were available. Bouma argues that this can be problematic because the researcher does not know the ways in which the sample is biased. I acknowledge this as a limitation but in my opinion this non-random sampling is justified because the group in itself was diverse and a microcosm of the NZ school sector. On average 55 schools were represented each

year in this study, and this is a considerable sample on its own. It is acknowledged however that the participants in the study, as enrolees in a graduate programme on educational administration, were potentially more interested and informed about the issues of appraisal than other staff in equivalent status might have been. This may have enhanced their potential influence on the school's appraisal system, and this, in turn, may have led to a more positive reception of appraisal.

Checklists were issued to participants whilst on block courses at UNITEC. This ensured the high return rate indicated in the following Table 3.1:

**Table 3.1: Return Rate Profile**

Year	Total Number Issued	Number Returned
1996	64	60
1997	60	57
1998	57	49
1999	60	50

### **“State of Play” Checklist**

Performance appraisal has to do with improvement. Improvement means change. (Fullan, 1988:71)

Performance appraisal, as a change process, is subject to the same criteria that determine success in other educational change initiatives. As mentioned in Chapter One, Fullan's (1986) theory stipulates three stages in change: initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. The initiation stage involves establishment of the change project, its policy and goals; implementation involves action associated with change, and institutionalisation involves maintenance of the change process, review, and on-going refinement.

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The “State of Play” checklist (Appendix 2) used in this study was developed based on Fullan’s stages. The subcategories under each of these stages were established primarily from a literature review of the elements constituting effectiveness in the appraisal process. In addition, my own experience as a consultant in appraisal, and that of Dr Carol Cardno, my colleague at the Education Management Centre during early 1996, was also used to provide input to the checklist content.

The development of this checklist involved the varied components of planning, writing, and piloting. The wording of the questions was precise in order to avoid misinterpretation and to “ensure they mean the same to all respondents” (Bell, 1993:73). Many points were considered in the checklist writing including: using a brief and clear introduction and instructions, and care in selecting question types (open and closed options, qualitative and quantitative). This combination of options was designed to elicit quick responses which would be easier to fill in and to collate, and more searching responses which, although more time consuming to both answer and collate, allowed for more comprehensive and hopefully deeper data.

In the design of the checklist there was an avoidance of questions which could lead the respondent. Consideration was also given to the use of non-threatening language, well reasoned positioning of questions (somewhat in keeping with the sequence of an appraisal cycle), and the thematic grouping of question types (specifically under the three stages). As well as the latter points, the clear layout of the checklist was also considered, including that it “appeal to the eye” (Burns, 1998:475), and was easy to complete.

### **Piloting**

Once the checklist was designed and written it was then piloted. Babbie (1990:226) describes this as a sort of “miniaturised walk through”: a “dress rehearsal” (Moser and Kalton, 1993:48). As Bell (1996) suggests it is important that all checklists should be

piloted to check clarity, timing, and usability. The pilot was also employed to “reveal confusing and other problematic questions” (Burns, 1998:481).

In this study the pilot group, in late 1995, were managers attending a one off management development contract at UNITEC Institute of Technology. They were issued with the checklist in “exactly the same manner as that intended for the final survey” (Babbie, 1990:226). The group completed the questionnaire during a teaching session and were specifically asked not to discuss their answers with others in the room. They were briefed to provide clear feedback about the type of issues such as those stated earlier covering the elements of a good checklist. This group offered no suggestions for change.

### **Limitations**

This checklist had a major limitation. It was developed in late 1995 prior to the development of any mandated national guidelines in appraisal, and therefore contained no specific reference to the elements of appraisal later stipulated in the mandated guidelines. Because of the longitudinal and comparative nature of this study, the checklist needed to meet reliability requirements, in other words, it needed to be used in much the same way each year. It was therefore inappropriate to alter, or update, the checklist in order to match it to the changing national requirements. Having said this, one additional question was added in 1999, in order to seek feedback on how the further tightening in accountability had impacted on appraisal.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The use of the checklist met approval criteria of the Auckland University Human Subjects Ethics Committee. Prior to participants completing the checklist, formal consent was gained for involvement (Appendix 3). Both verbal and written information (Appendix 4) was given to all participants to background the research.

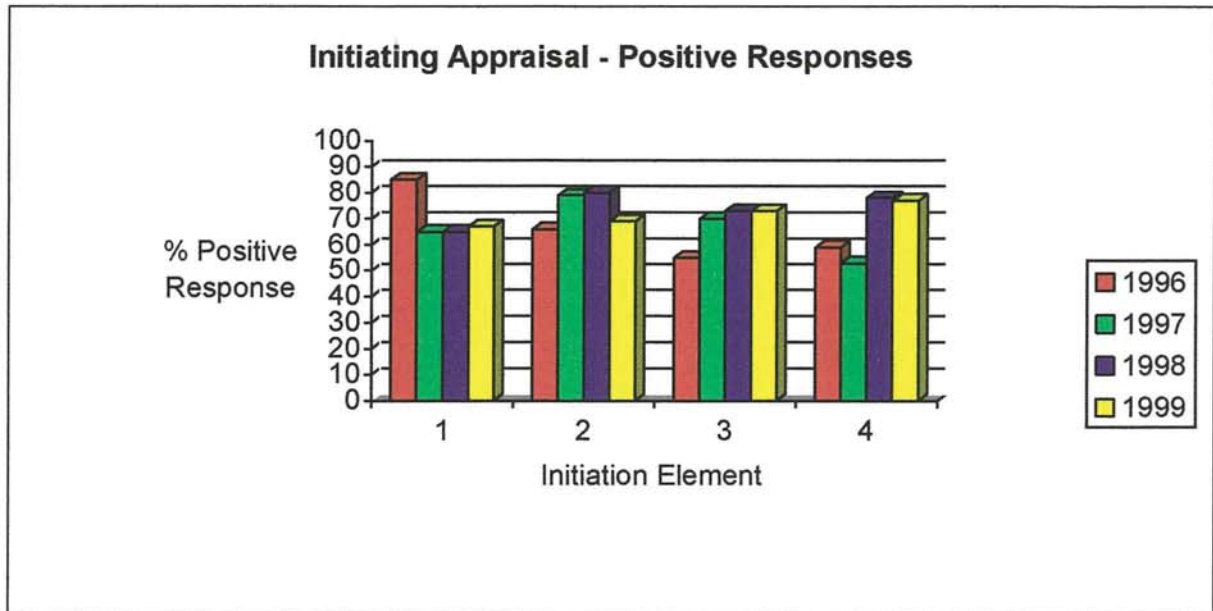
This process of gaining informed consent was guided by six components developed by Anderson (1995) . These included an explanation of the procedures used in the research

(the filling out of the checklist), and a description of any foreseeable risks or discomforts or benefits to the participants. The latter was unnecessary for the risks because there were none foreseeable, but I acknowledge that the benefits could have been made obvious. There was a disclosure of any alternative procedures that may be advantageous (there were none), an offer to answer any questions, and a statement that participation was voluntary (both noted on the information sheet). As can be noted in Appendix 3 I also assured anonymity on the consent form.

## **RESULTS**

The results from the “State of Play” checklist are reported under the headings of each of the impacts of tightening of control, that is, increased resistance, compliance, avoidance, controlling behaviours, threat, and cynicism, reduced internal commitment, and inconsistent adoption. Fullan’s phases of initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation provided the categories for the elements of appraisal examined for each of the impacts noted (see Appendix 1 for the full checklist categories and numbering). Quantitative data is presented as percentage response, with qualitative data (participant comments) used to support and expand this. The fully collated quantitative results are presented in Appendix 5. Graphed summaries of the positive responses are presented and discussed in the following section.

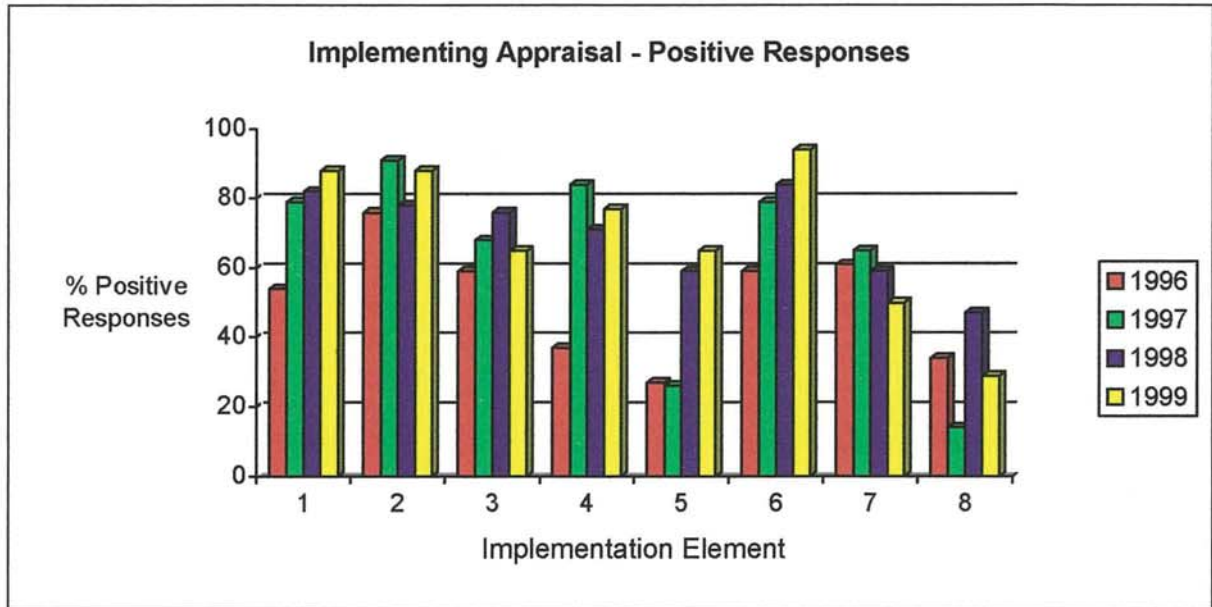
**Figure 3.1: Initiating Appraisal Summary**



Element:

1. The current system has been evaluated
2. Awareness has been raised about what needs to be done in appraisal
3. Purposes and plans for proceeding have been discussed and agreed
4. A committee or task group has worked on policy, system design and issues

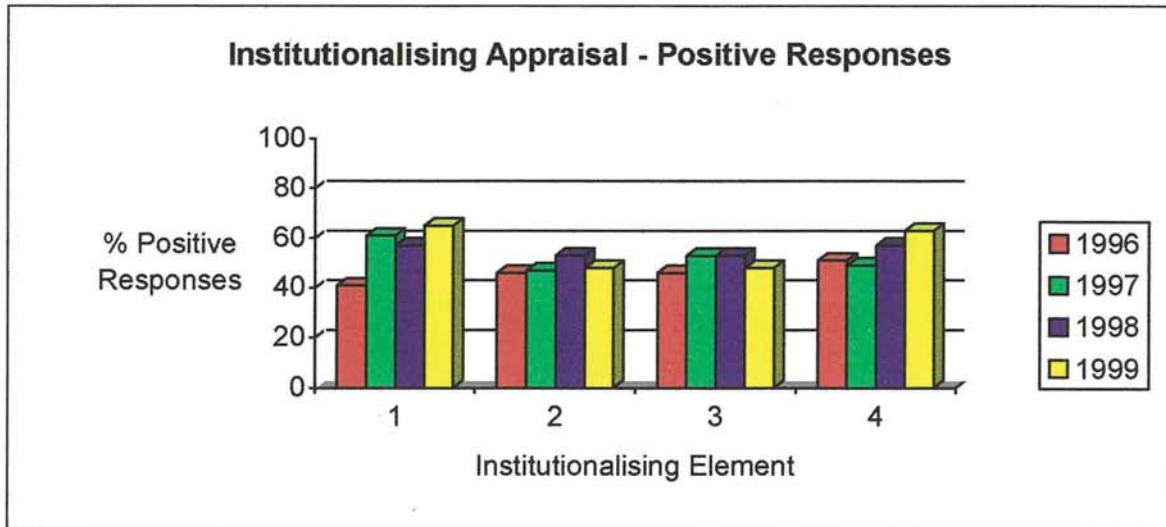
**Figure 3.2: Implementing Appraisal Summary**



Element:

1. Policy has been written and agreed to by staff and Board
2. Staff with management responsibilities have job descriptions
3. Job descriptions contain objectives and state measurable outcomes
4. All staff have job descriptions
5. Objective information is assembled
6. Appraisal interviews are conducted
7. Staff engage in self-appraisal
8. Staff have received training in appraisal.

**Figure 3.3: Institutionalising Appraisal Summary**



Element:

1. Appraisal and feedback are norms in the school
2. Appraisal training is being continued
3. The process is being monitored and problems acknowledged and resolved
4. Dates for regular reviews of policy and the appraisal system have been set

In particular, the qualitative comments from respondents in each of the four years of the study were analysed to determine the incidence of statements suggesting the existence of increased resistance, compliance, avoidance, controlling behaviours, threat, cynicism, or reduced internal commitment. Where possible quantitative data is used to support these qualitative comments. The analysis of each of the negative responses is reported under the initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation categories of the study.

### **Increased Resistance**

Resistance is interpreted as meaning reluctance or blockage. Increased acceptance may also be an indication of reduced resistance. As noted earlier increased resistance is a feature of a defensive response.

### **Initiation Activity**

The initiation phase, when a school prepares its own model for appraisal is a crucial one. Here the tone is set for consequent discussion, planning and action. (Battersby, 1991:15)

There was no evidence of resistance in initiation activity during any of the four years of the study. On the contrary, in the element of raising of awareness particularly, of the 42 comments which were made by respondents in 1997, 33 comments indicated increased awareness. In all but three of these 33 comments, respondents noted that some form of collaborative discussion (for example meetings) had resulted in this raised awareness.

### **Implementation**

Only two of the elements of implementation showed evidence of resistance in the qualitative comments, and both cases this occurred prior to the introduction of the DNGPMS. The first of these was in the area of the development of a school-based policy where in 1996 one respondent stated that there was:

*A good deal of reluctance on behalf of staff so not really agreed to as such.*

There was no evidence of such resistance in the following three years.

In the second element, the area of staff receiving training in appraisal, there was an indication of resistance from just one respondent in 1996 who noted that, in their school, there was a lot of staff resistance to training in that year.

### Institutionalisation

In the institutionalisation elements, resistance was evident only in the area of appraisal and feedback being the norm, and even then that diminished over the period of increasing accountability. For example, in 1996 all comments from participants suggested that appraisal and feedback were not the norm in schools. In 1997, 20 of the 24 comments indicated that there was a positive, or developing, acceptance by staff. The following comments demonstrate this:

*Well-established and accepted;*

*Spasmodic, but improving;*

*Is beginning to be accepted by staff as a norm; and*

*Not a norm yet, but getting close.*

Just one respondent in 1997 pointed out that continuing resistance was apparent. In 1998 and 1999 all but one of the respondents again indicated either a positive or developing state for this element, with no comments related to outright resistance. The fact that there was a 20% increase in the feature of appraisal and feedback considered to be the norm immediately following the introduction of the DNGPMS (see Figure 3.3, element 1, p.52), and a further increase in 1999, demonstrates on its own, acceptance rather than resistance.

### Increased Compliance

Increased compliance is another example of a defensive response. It was not possible to determine whether this response was apparent in the quantitative results, but the qualitative comments were analysed for examples of indicator phrases or words which showed that staff went along with the changes even though they were not agreed to, or felt that the changes were imposed (particularly due to lack of consultation). I looked in the results for comments which showed that staff passively, or otherwise, were resigned to having to accept and engage in appraisal.

### Initiation

The only element of initiation activity which showed any indication of compliance response was that of discussion and agreement over the purposes and plans for appraisal, and this again occurred prior to the introduction of any national guidelines for appraisal. All comments for this area from the 1996 group suggested that this discussion and agreement had an imposition element. As one respondent noted:

*...it was going to be imposed.*

However, such comments indicating imposition were not evident in later years in the study.

### Implementation

The only area in which respondent comment showed compliance was that of the policy having been written and agreed to by staff and Board of Trustees. Here, I am interpreting that lack of agreement by staff, due to lack of consultation, means that staff felt that they would need to comply. Nine comments from participants in 1997 indicated that consultation over the policy did not occur, as suggested by this respondent:

*Has it? Apparently meetings held last year did this but really policy was put together fairly quickly following publication of guidelines etc in the Gazette.*

A drop off in numbers of similar comments in 1998, may indicate that staff were consulted more fully. In 1998, only the one following comment alluded to this continued lack of consultation:

*Written yes, agreed to - no.*

### Institutionalisation

In the institutionalisation elements, increased compliance, like increased resistance, was evident only in the area of appraisal and feedback being the norm, and even then there few compliance type responses. For example, in 1996 the following single comment indicated that appraisal was carried out for compliance reasons:

*No (not the norm), but recognised as a necessary evil because of accreditation.*

In 1997 two comments suggested that compliance was evident. One noted that:

*Staff only accepts this as a necessity.*

Only the one following comment in 1999 suggested a hint of compliance:

*I feel its still very much a because 'we have to' attitude.*

### Increased Avoidance

Both avoidance, and the next increased control impact, are perhaps the most significant features of defensiveness. In this situation, avoidance can be considered to involve an emphasis on development alone, as opposed to the intended development and accountability balance in the requirements for appraisal. It can also involve anything

from outright rejection through to very loose implementation, to the other extreme of failing to acknowledge that a particular feature exists. For this avoidance impact analysis, qualitative comments were analysed for phrases and words which suggested any of these avoidance characteristics . The quantitative results were examined for particularly low rates of implementation as an indicator of avoidance.

### Initiation Activity

For the component of avoidance involving emphasising development alone and ignoring, downplaying or rejecting accountability requirements, the only evidence of this type of activity existed prior to the tightening of accountability in the element of policy and systems design in appraisal. Three of the 1996 comments for this element indicated that systems were either voluntary, peer appraisal, or self appraisal only. There was no indication of such avoidance in the 1997-1999 period.

### Implementation

The only implementation element which showed avoidance was that of assembling objective information. This had one of the lowest rates of implementation of appraisal activity (27% in 1996, 26% in 1997, 59% in 1998 - see Figure 3.2, element 5, p.51), and the highest indication of avoidance reported in respondent comments. In 1996, half of the respondents stated that information collection generally was variable, if it occurred at all, and despite the fact that this was an official requirement, one noted that observation was conducted in a loose way:

*Only informal casual observations.*

In 1997, the majority of comments revealed a similar theme, but they were much more specific than those in 1996. Although exactly half (21 of the 52 total) of the comments noted that observation was a definite part of the assemblage of information, only eight respondents suggested that student evaluation formed part of the information, and two

that peer evaluation was collected. Indications of avoidance, particularly of the use of student evaluations, was apparent in the following comments from respondents:

*Yes and no, we're soft in this area:*

*Student comment has not been considered; and*

*Student comment not appropriate.*

Both in 1998 and 1999 there was an increased indication that schools were now considering assembling objective information, with just over half of the comments in each of these years suggesting that this was now being worked on, albeit in some cases still with some caution, as this comment suggests:

*We are in the process of evaluating the objectivity status of feedback.*

#### Institutionalisation

There was no indication of avoidance in any of the comments for institutionalisation activity in appraisal.

#### **Increased Controlling Behaviours**

One indication of increased controlling behaviour which was examined in these results was that of unilateral decision-making. In such decision-making one person or group (often in a hierarchically superior position) dominates or imposes in the process. They usually fail to involve others, to consult or discuss, or to expose their decision, or the logic that led to it. Only the qualitative comments could be examined for such unilateral approaches.

#### Initiation Activity

The results from this study indicated that unilateral decision-making was evident in the element of policy and systems design in appraisal. Over half of the 1996 comments showed that senior managers had largely made decisions about the appraisal system. This

senior management domination did not change throughout all four years. In 1997 the majority of participants (25 out of 30) who responded stated that it was still mainly the senior management team or the principal alone who had worked on the policy and systems design. In 1998 and 1999 this situation remained unchanged. All but one comment in 1998, for example, indicated that the decisions had been made at the senior management level. This person, however, alluded to a shift occurring in the following way:

*In 1996 the principal did this, the senior management team in 1997, and now staff's collected thoughts are collated and the policy and procedures altered to suit.*

In 1999 all but one respondent suggested that staff had not been involved in this decision-making. The one conflicting response, reported below, is still not commenting in a favourable way on the employment of a bilateral control process:

*We were given a package that was rushed through in order to prepare for an ERO visit, and this being an area that they would be focusing on.*

In contrast to the unilateral decision-making demonstrated with this latter element, in another initiation element, that of awareness raising about what needed to be done in appraisal, there was considerable evidence from each year that this happened in very inclusive, bilateral, ways. These included discussion at staff meetings (almost all comments from each year reported this), collaborative review against guidelines, discussions on an individual basis, in-service courses, and guest speakers.

The fact that there was a distinct increase in discussion and agreement (bilateral characteristics) over the purposes and plans for appraisal between 1996 (55%) and 1999 (73% - see Figure 3.1, element 3, p. 50), indicates that there was a decrease in unilateral decision-making. Prior to the introduction of the DNGPMS, unilateral control

was evident. All comments from the 1996 group suggested that this discussion had an imposition element, as this respondent notes:

*Was going to be imposed.*

The 1997 comments demonstrate a considerable shift, with approximately two thirds of the respondent comments indicating that some form of discussion and agreement had been conducted with staff. The content of these discussions in this year, however, may not always have been unproblematic, as this respondent implies:

*Has been discussed - a lot of heated discussion on implied link to attestation.*

#### Implementation and Institutionalisation

There were no indications of increased controlling behaviours in either the implementation or institutionalisation activities.

#### **Increased Threat**

Threat is another defensive response. It is often associated with the “fight or flight” response in dangerous or fearful situations. The “fight” response could be demonstrated in angry, retaliatory type comments. The “flight” response could be demonstrated in some of the avoidance type responses mentioned earlier. Both of these types of responses were looked for in the qualitative results.

#### Initiation

There was no indication of increase in threat in any of the initiation activity examined in this study.

#### Implementation

As noted earlier, the lower rates of implementation activity and participant comment in the element of assembling of objective information revealed avoidance of

implementation, and avoidance on its own could be seen as a response to threat. A small number of respondent comments indicated that threat was evident for this element. Even prior to the DNGPMS the following respondent reported that the use of student feedback was problematic:

*...hugely controversial amongst staff.*

In 1997, one respondent commented that observations were threatening:

*At this stage classroom observation is seen as too threatening for some staff.*

#### Institutionalisation

There were no direct indications of threat in any of the institutionalisation elements.

#### **Increased Cynicism**

Cynicism, once again, could only be demonstrated in the analysis of qualitative comments. I considered any statements which revealed a sense of doubt, inadequacy, knocking or mocking what was happening, suspicion, or negativity, to be indicators of cynicism.

#### Initiation Activity

There was no indication of an increase in cynicism in the initiation activity examined in this study.

#### Implementation

Cynicism was mildly apparent in the implementation element of conducting appraisal interviews, but only in the 1997 respondent comments. Three respondents in 1997 questioned whether the interviews occurred at all. One of these respondents indicated that there may have been a gap between the plan and the practice:

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*It is in the policy and planned for but does not always happen.*

There was no cynicism apparent in either 1998 or 1999 comments.

In the element of staff training, cynicism also existed. Comments over the entire four years were substantially negative about: training being provided for mainly senior staff, staff willingness to be involved in training, perceptions of the value of training, and the quality and quantity of training provided. In 1996, all comments were negative with half of the comments suggesting it was superficial, or introductory only. In 1997, of the 44 comments made 32 contained negative references. Almost all of these 32 related to the training being inadequate. The following comments are representative of this group:

*On discussion basis only;*

*Very poor - has been requested but senior management's response poor - not taking responsibility for this; and*

*Training in writing job descriptions based on examples from the Ministry literature, training in interviewing inadequate - based on videos produced by consultants, training in classroom observations was done by using own knowledge and experience - unaware of any external reference drawn upon.*

Six of the 32 cynical comments related to senior management only receiving training during 1997, but as the following comment reveals even that may have been inadequate:

*One senior manager went to a PMS course in interviewing.*

In 1998 only one comment was positive about the training, but all other comments showed that participants considered it to be inadequate, as this comment indicates:

*Just a handout of paper.*

Another comment was typical of those I had frequently received verbally about training:

*I am sceptical with regards to the effectiveness of training: does it actually solve problems?*

The 1999 comments repeated the trends of earlier years, but without any positive responses at all. Just over half of the respondents noted that only senior staff had been trained.

### Institutionalisation

Cynicism was also apparent in the area of institutionalising staff training, with comments overwhelmingly negative in 1996-1997. Two respondents in 1996, for example, stated that training was only continued if they personally initiated this. In 1997 just over half of the comments on continuation of training referred to it being inadequate, and 4 noted that it was budget dependent. The following comment is an example:

*Yes but blowing budget/when budget allows.*

As Figure 3.3 (p.52) shows, the further tightening of the requirements in 1998, or more specifically the national funding of training, would appear to have made a minor increase in the perception of training being a "norm" (from 47% in 1997 to 53% in 1998). Approximately half of the comments in this year reflected this small shift and also signalled less cynicism about this training, as indicated in the following two comments:

*Some departments are doing more than others; and  
People now attending courses.*

### Reduced Internal Commitment

Reduced internal commitment is possibly the least likely vocalised, and therefore reported, of the negative impacts. Qualitative statements were examined to reveal any

indication of low interest of staff. Reduced commitment can also be manifest through other features such as resistance, compliance, and avoidance. In this situation however, since these had already been examined, only the indication of low interest was looked for.

#### Initiation, Implementation, and Institutionalisation Activity

There was no direct indication of reduced internal commitment in any of the initiation, implementation, or institutionalisation activity comments provided in the study.

### **Increased Inconsistent Adoption**

In commenting on these results, inconsistent adoption is interpreted as fluctuating adoption over the four years. In this section the quantitative results (outlined in Figures 3.1 to 3.3) are drawn upon more extensively.

#### Initiation

The two elements in which inconsistent adoption in initiation activity were immediately apparent were those of evaluation of the current system, and awareness about what needs to be done in appraisal. In terms of evaluation of the current system, there was inconsistent adoption throughout the four years, with a drop off in post-guidelines implementation between 1996 (85%) and 1997 (65%)/1998 (65%), and a small rise in 1999 (67%).

Inconsistent adoption was also apparent in the initiation element of the raising of awareness about what needed to be done in appraisal. Between 1996 (66%) and 1998 (80%) a significant increase was evident. A drop off occurred in awareness raising in 1999 (69%), with little indication from the comments as to why this happened.

As Figure 3.1 (p.50) shows, in the areas of discussion of purposes and plans, and work on policy and systems design, there was a consistent overall increase in adoption, rather than decrease or inconsistent adoption.

### Implementation

Three out of the eight elements of implementation also showed consistently increasing adoption. These included the elements of school-based policy development, assembling objective information (although see the earlier note on its low adoption overall), and conduct of interviews. Inconsistent adoption was apparent in all of the other areas of implementation and each of these is described in more detail.

With management job descriptions there was a leap in implementation following the introduction of the DNGPMS (from 76% in 1996 to 91% in 1997 - see Figure 3.2, element 2, p. 51). However, in the subsequent year the existence of management job descriptions had reverted to similar levels to the pre-guidelines period (1998:78%), and then this rose again in 1999 (88%). Respondent comments provide no indication for why this drop off might have occurred in 1998, but half of the respondents in this year suggested that these job descriptions were being refined rather than developed, as indicated in the following comments:

*Being refined; and  
Still a few gaps but these are being addressed.*

Although not inconsistent adoption, an interesting trend, noted by seven out of the 45 respondents who made comment in 1997, was that towards **all** senior staff having performance agreements as well as job descriptions. Prior to 1997 no-one mentioned anyone but the principal having a performance agreement.

Overall, the results for this management job description section indicated a leap in activity associated with the introduction of the DNGPMS, and then again after the introduction of the professional standards. This is not surprising since both of these documents stipulated requirements which were directly linked to job descriptions. There

was no suggestion in participant comments that this was perceived as having any negative impact.

A similar trend of inconsistent adoption was also apparent in the element of job descriptions for all staff. The introduction of the DNGPMS had a significant positive impact on implementation (1996, 37%; 1997, 84% - see Figure 3.2, element 4, p. 51), and although this declined slightly in 1998 (71%), it rose again in 1999 (77%). In 1996, almost half of the comments from respondents referred to the fact that these job descriptions needed to be refined. In 1997 this had reduced to six out of the 19 comments, and in 1998 and 1999 only one comment for each these years was associated with refinement.

Inconsistent adoption also existed in the element of schools having job descriptions with objectives and measurable outcomes. This increased after the introduction of the DNGPMS (1996, 59%; 1997, 68%; 1998, 76%), but then dipped in 1999 (65%). In 1996, prior to the DNGPMS, all participant comments revealed the loose nature of these early job descriptions, as these examples show:

*Not much more than shelf documents;*

*Had general statements only; and*

*Most vague.*

In 1997 this improved somewhat with 12 of the 28 respondent comments indicating that no objectives and measurable outcomes were stipulated, and a further three suggesting that further refinement was needed. The following are representative of these 1997 comments:

*Objectives are stated but I believe there is room for development in writing statements with measurable outcomes;*

*This is in a state of transaction at present. Principal cannot see the needs, thinks you can't measure outcomes. We're working on it; and Objectives are a bit broad.*

The comments during 1998 continued to demonstrate this refinement aspect. In 1999 just under half of the comments referred to job descriptions currently being rewritten. This is not surprising because the introduction of the new professional standards had led many schools to reconsider incorporating greater measurability in job descriptions. This may explain the dip in implementation for this year. Again, there is no indication from the comments in any year that participants saw the feature of job descriptions containing objectives and measurable outcomes as negative. The only exception is the comment quoted from 1997 referring to the principal's negativity about measuring outcomes - but note that this did not come from the principal him/herself.

Inconsistent adoption was also apparent in the aspect of self-appraisal (self-evaluation) in the results. As Figure 3.2 (p. 51) shows this area remained relatively unchanged between 1996-1998 with just over 60% average implementation, a rate of implementation much lower than those of 85% reported in an earlier study by Irons (1993). The comments prior to 1999 revealed substantial diversity in how and when this self-appraisal occurred, but overall, participants provided positive statements suggesting that self-appraisal, when it was a feature of the process, unlike many others, was widely accepted by staff. In 1999, implementation in this area declined (1997, 65%; 1999, 50%) and the comments were less positive, with all but one respondent indicating that this was most often unprepared, informal, and irregular, as these two following comments indicate:

*Not enough or focused; and  
Last minute and not fully prepared for.*

Staff training in appraisal was also inconsistently adopted. In 1997 this element of implementation was extremely low (14%), with 32 of the 44 comments indicating that

more training was required for all staff. As noted earlier, many stated that at that point only senior managers were receiving training. This training increased in 1998 (47%), coinciding with MoE funded training availability, but somewhat predictably dropped again in 1999 (29%) to low levels of implementation.

Finally, in this section of implementation results, it is worth noting a particularly positive aspect of **consistent** implementation. The steady increase in conduct of interviews occurred over the four years (1996, 59%; 1997, 79%; 1998, 84%; 1999, 94%), and there was considerable evidence from respondent comments of this also being carried out in increasingly diverse ways. Prior to the DNGPMS the only comments related to this area suggested that it was an ad hoc arrangement, as this response shows:

*In a loose form - not linked to any job description.*

The 1997 to 1999 comments suggested that there were a wide range of approaches adopted for the timing of the interview. Analysis of the comments (particularly in 1997 and 1998) revealed an even spread between interviews being conducted once, twice or three times a year, with one participant reporting that they met monthly as both a group and in individual pairs. All but two of the respondents in all of the four years stated that either middle or senior management conducted this interview.

### Institutionalisation

Although there had been an overall increase in all elements of institutionalisation of appraisal since the introduction of the DNGPMS, institutionalisation per se consistently rated lower in adoption overall in comparison with the initiation and implementation results. For example, in 1999, the two elements which showed the greatest increase, that is, where appraisal and feedback were considered to be the norm (1996, 41%; 1997, 61%; 1998, 57%; 1999, 65%), and review of appraisal policy and system (1996, 51%; 1997, 49%; 1998, 57%; 1999, 63%), were both lower than any levels of initiation activity and most implementation activity.

Inconsistent adoption was particularly evident in the element of continuation of training (1996, 46%; 1997, 47%; 1998, 53%; 1999, 48%), and the results for this section mirror those for training conduct in the implementation section. As noted earlier, four of the 1997 comments referred to budget limitation linked to institutionalisation. In 1998 a minor increase in continuation of training occurred, and this was probably linked to availability of MoE funding allocated to training in this year. In 1999 the availability of funding for training ceased and half of the comments were negative about continuation, for example:

*A large training programme was implemented in 1998, not so much this year, but will continue with refreshers next year; and  
Not so much this year.*

In the element of monitoring of the process (see Figure 3.3, element 3, p. 52) institutionalisation of the process was also low and inconsistent, and the variable comments provided little indication of the reasons for this. Because about half of the participants responded positively to this being a norm throughout all of the four years, predictably the comments reflected an almost even split between those noting that this occurred and those who suggested it did not:

*We encourage open dialogue;  
Regularly;  
Haven't seen any evidence of this;  
Very little monitoring;  
Staff didn't value it highly and put it off; and  
No time provisions have been made and this issue has not been addressed.*

A small increase in adoption in the element of review of appraisal (see Figure 3.3, element 4, p. 52) was apparent as a result of the tightening of accountability (1996, 51%:

1997, 49%; 1998, 57%; 1999, 63%), but respondent comments demonstrated inconsistent adoption. Comments from the 1997 participants suggested a more positive picture than the statistics reveal, with only one person stating that the review was not regular. Three of the 20 respondents who made comment in this year noted that the review occurred biannually, and eight that it occurred annually. In 1998, although the percentage increased, more comments indicated that review was not evident at all, or that this would happen. In 1999 this same trend was apparent as indicated in the following selected comments:

*Must do this;*

*No we're just going through the motion.*

### **Retrospective Summary Comment on Impact of the Tightening of Accountability**

In 1999, participants were asked to answer the following additional question on the checklist:

“How do you think the tightening of legislation for appraisal in the last three years has impacted on any of the above areas?” The above areas referred to were the initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation categories and elements. Forty one out of the 50 respondents in this year answered this question. Of this 41, 27 respondents noted that there had been a positive impact from the tightening of accountability, 13 indicated varied responses, and only one respondent categorically stated that the impact had been negative. Further expansion of each of these sets of responses reveals the detail of the perceptions of this 1999 group.

The positive responses to the tightening of legislation indicated multiple impacts (the bracketed numbers following each area indicate the number of multiple similar responses). These included that there was: increased accountability (3); raised awareness about what was required (3); a greater number of staff who knew expectations (2); greater awareness of the process for appraisal and its outcomes; heightened awareness of

professional development and benefits of appraisal (2); provision of guidance (3); and a prompt to make the school get the process implemented (7). The latter impact is illustrated in the following comments:

*It wouldn't have been implemented fully in this school without the legislation; and Little implementation would have occurred without it.*

Other positive impacts which were noted included that there was: a push to ensure that the existing system was more effective; an adherence to time frames from the leaders in the school; increased funding available for training; greater numbers of staff doing training; standardised expectations with the professional standards (2); a standardised system generally in the school and between other schools; greater transparency of systems in place (2); an increase in formalised and written processes in place; greater staff awareness about their own performance; linkage now made between appraisal and professional development (2); more focused staff development; and better identification of staff strengths and weaknesses, as this respondent notes:

*An avenue to help staff identify future developments and highlights strengths/weaknesses.*

Respondents also stated that there was more regularised classroom visiting and feedback (including 360° feedback); an enhancement of staff taking more responsibility for their own academic well being; an affirming of staff in the process; greater positive mentoring/assistance (3); and improvement in staff performance, as suggested by one respondent:

*...quality of assistance/guidance and professional development have benefited.*

Overwhelmingly, these comments suggest that the tightened requirements for appraisal provided an incentive for schools to implement a system, and that this had many positive impacts.

The predominant negative impact noted from the tightening of legislation was related to time to conduct appraisal, as shown in the following comment:

*...staff resent the fact that it is another job they cannot do well due to the lack of time given.*

Other negative impacts noted included comment from three respondents that it had made the school more compliant (but even one of these also stated that now it was seen as an affirming process), that it was neither effective or efficient, and that rushing the implementation had consequences, as this person commented:

*We have as a consequence been very good at implementation but not so good at policy establishment and review.*

## **DISCUSSION**

In this section the results are discussed in terms of the overall impact of tightening of accountability, and compared and contrasted with the small amount of previous research that has been conducted on the implementation of appraisal in NZ in the 1989-1999 period. At the end of this chapter links are made with the next Change phase of the research.

### **The Overall Impact of Tightening of Accountability and Links with Previous Research**

Responses to the final component of the 1999 “State of Play” checklist used in this study provide a representative summary on the impact of the tightening of the accountability in appraisal in schools. The majority (66%) of these respondents suggested that this had a

positive impact. What this tightening had provided in NZ, according to these respondents, was a push which has led to higher rates of implementation, clearer requirements, more trained staff in appraisal, more effective processes, better professional development, and, according to one person, improved staff performance. Contrary to the predictions of Argyris (1996b), and Robinson (1992), these respondents in 1999 did not confirm that there have been substantial negative impacts from the tightening of accountability. For example, only 32% of these people noted negative impacts, and even then the majority of their comments were varied or neutral responses. Only one person, amongst all of those responding, was categorically negative. These summary comments were consistent with the detailed impacts noted throughout the four years of this study, as reported on in the previous section.

The tightening of accountability did not have the predicted negative resistance or compliance impact on the initiation, implementation, or institutionalisation activity in the appraisal process. In fact, the results showed an increasing acceptance over the years following the introduction of the DNGPMS.

Avoidance was apparent only in the element of assembling objective information, but again the introduction of tightening control may not have altered the already existent avoidance (and threat) associated with this feature, particularly associated with the use of student and peer evaluations. This is of concern for the future well-being of appraisal in schools. Unless appraisal discussions are based on factual, objectively collected information then I believe we will see a reversion to subjective decision-making, and this will be particularly dangerous if promotion decisions are linked with appraisal.

There was report of increased controlling behaviour (particularly unilateral decision-making) in the initiation element of policy and systems design. Here, clear evidence existed, in every year, of the lack of involvement of staff below senior management level. In contrast, extensive bilateral decision-making was evident in the elements of awareness

raising about what needed to be done in appraisal, and discussion and agreement over purposes and plans.

There was mild evidence of cynicism in 1997 in the implementation element of conducting appraisal interviews. Cynicism was more apparent throughout all four years for both the implementation and institutionalisation of training.

Although there were no indications of reduced internal commitment to appraisal associated with the tightening of accountability, the impact on consistent adoption was more marked. The data collected in this longitudinal study shows that schools have consistently increased adoption in half of the initiation activities, and in three out of eight of the implementation activities, in appraisal since the introduction of DNGPMS, albeit at a rate somewhat lower than the previous ERO research had suggested. The 1994-1995 ERO data which was aggregated for 54 schools showed that all but three of the total schools studied had systems implemented. This is higher (and note that this is prior to the DNGPMS) than any of the results collected in this longitudinal study, and leads me to suggest that either these ERO results are based on what appears to be a loose description of what appraisal entails, or the schools were misreporting their level of implementation in order to meet the ERO auditing requirements. It is difficult to see, for example, how *most* of the schools studied by the ERO could have systems based on job descriptions when only 37% of respondents reported in 1996 in this study that they had these fully established. The initial implementation results from this study are reasonably in keeping with those reported by Irons (1993), and the Peel and Inkson (1993) survey conducted in mid-1991. The latter authors indicated that about 50% of the 82 schools in their study had formalised appraisal systems or were expected to have them by the beginning of 1992.

Inconsistent adoption (interpreted as fluctuating adoption) was evident in several of the initiation elements. In the evaluation of the current system, in 1997 and 1998 there was a drop off in this activity, and then a small rise in 1999. The reasons for this are not

apparent in the comments section. It could be that participants' awareness of any criteria used for evaluation was not evident before the introduction of the DNGPMS, and that there may have been some degree of naivety, and false positiveness, about the type of evaluation that had occurred prior to 1997. It is feasible that what these schools considered to be evaluation in 1996 may have been simply an assessment of whether they had any system at all. There was some evidence to support this assumption because in 1996 no participants suggested in the comments section of the checklist that they had used specific guidelines for evaluation, yet in 1997, nine comments referred to the use of the DNGPMS as a basis for evaluation. Why the small increase in 1999? I would suggest that this rise was possibly associated with the fact that in this year the ERO began auditing the implementation of appraisal, and as a consequence any schools involved in ERO reviews would have carried out an evaluation of their current system.

Inconsistent adoption was also apparent in the initiation element of raising awareness about what needed to be done in appraisal. It was somewhat predictable, that there was an increase (1996, 66%; 1997, 79%) following the introduction of both the DNGPMS and the mandated guidelines, because these documents, as the names suggest provided a guide. In late 1998 in the primary sector, and mid-1999 in the secondary sector, I believe this clarity was confused by the introduction of professional standards and associated conflicting statements about how they could be linked to appraisal. In the secondary sector for example, as noted earlier, there were mixed messages about the type of systems that could be adopted in schools. This confusion was certainly apparent in the many schools I consulted with during this year, and I believe that this explains the drop off (1998, 80%; 1999, 69%) in this awareness raising element during the 1999 year.

In summary, for both of these two latter initiation activities in which inconsistent adoption was evident, I would suggest that it was not the tightening of control which influenced this fluctuation. More likely it was lack of, or altering, clarity over expectations which led to the fluctuations.

Evidence of inconsistent adoption was also apparent in the implementation activities relating to job descriptions, interviewing, self appraisal, and training. Up until 1998, an increase in activity associated with both senior management and staff job descriptions could be linked to the introduction of the DNGPMS. Again, this increase could be attributed to altering expectations rather than increased accountability. Comments from respondents in 1999 indicated that the introduction of the professional standards led schools to reconsider their job descriptions, hence the dip in the adoption for this year.

The inconsistent adoption results for self-appraisal are in keeping with what I have observed in schools, and this is a concern for the future effectiveness of appraisal because without reflection the process is likely to become superficial, or surface (Piggot-Irvine, 1999) in approach, as opposed to the deeper and more improvement orientation for which it holds potential.

Inconsistent adoption occurred for both the implementation and institutionalisation elements of training. The further dip in continuation of training in 1999 (1998, 53%; 1999, 48%) signals concern. It appears that when MoE-funded training was not offered in this year the commitment from schools to train staff diminished. This happened at a time when, from my observation, schools were just starting to get their systems well established (as indicated in most other areas of implementation results). I believe that unless this training continues in schools then the gains shown in this study in the overall increase in many elements of appraisal could quickly reverse. For example, if new staff undertaking appraisal roles are not formally trained, but are expected to somehow absorb what to do, then not only will we have a growing body of appraisers who lack understanding and ownership of the purposes and processes of appraisal, they will also fail to effectively implement it because they lack the skills required. The resultant diminution of both initiation involvement, and implementation skills, will inevitably lead to the thwarted institutionalisation of appraisal. Should this happen, the concerns in the debate in appraisal about it being an ineffective process in terms of solving problems will be realised. If this occurs I predict that most schools in NZ will omit to link the demise of

the appraisal process with inadequate training, but only perceive it as another MoE led failure.

The results in this longitudinal study indicate that the institutionalisation of the process, while improving slightly overall since the tightening of accountability, had increased at a rate considerably lower than the other stages of the change. These results from this institutionalisation section contradict the ERO (1995) data which superficially indicated that appraisal was widely practised in schools in the 1993-1994 period. The results challenge whether the ERO analysis of aggregated data probed deeply enough to determine institutionalisation aspects of appraisal, or whether they only investigated data on implementation. I believe that there may be a more compounding and subtle reason for the inaccuracy of the ERO data. Anecdotal evidence from the participants on my own appraisal courses during that period suggested that within many schools there has been a practice of effectively "hoodwinking" the ERO into believing that the school had well institutionalised appraisal systems, when in practice they barely existed beyond the paper policy and rhetoric.

Overall, the results from this study provide clear evidence that in NZ schools, the concerns about increased accountability in appraisal leading to negative impacts linked to tightening control cannot be strongly supported - at least up until the end of 1999. The tightening of accountability had an overall considerable positive impact on almost all aspects of initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation of appraisal. In summary, the first concern in the debate about appraisal, that is, the concern that tightening accountability would lead to negative impacts, has largely been refuted by these results between 1996 and 1999.

My prediction is that this positive response to the enhanced accountability may not continue in the future unless ERO's latest commitment to providing a more balanced approach to assist and assess (Rivers, 2001) is implemented. In 1999 and 2000, the closer auditing of appraisal systems by the ERO created a flurry of activity in schools which I

would describe as 'compliance obsession'. It saddened me to watch schools become absorbed with meeting the paperwork requirements for the ERO visits, particularly ERO's emphasis on stronger accountability requirements than even the MoE guidelines have stipulated. In doing this schools have often lost a sense of balance about the developmental and accountability intent of appraisal. Such compliance obsession is at odds with any internal commitment to appraisal, and shifted the "locus of control" (Schell, 1975: 262) from internal to external: from that of the individual teacher intrinsically wanting to engage, develop and improve through appraisal, to that of checklisting to meet the requirements of an external auditing body. It is this heightened auditing requirement, imposed by the ERO, which I believe has had the most significant impact in terms of tightening of control, and this only occurred from 1999 onwards. For this reason, I do not believe the 1996-1999 data may be presenting a totally accurate picture of the impact of tightening of control. I would recommend that continuing examination of the impact of further tightening of control needs to continue from 2000 onwards in order to monitor future trends.

## **WHERE TO NEXT?**

By 1997 there were strong indications, in my work with staff in schools, that the training associated with appraisal was largely superficial, and failing to help appraisers to deal with problems with appraisees. The results in this Reconnaissance study, including respondent comment (see the cynicism results earlier), confirmed this dissatisfaction. Training in 1997 was rated as the lowest level of implementation across all categories in the checklist (14%). Comment during that year suggested that more training was required for-all staff, not just senior managers, and that this training needed to be effective. This led me to investigate what effective training might entail in an environment in schools in which greater accountability was also associated with dealing with problems with appraisees.

The following Change phase of the thesis focuses on the results of this investigation (a Literature Review) into what makes training effective. It describes the way in which, for

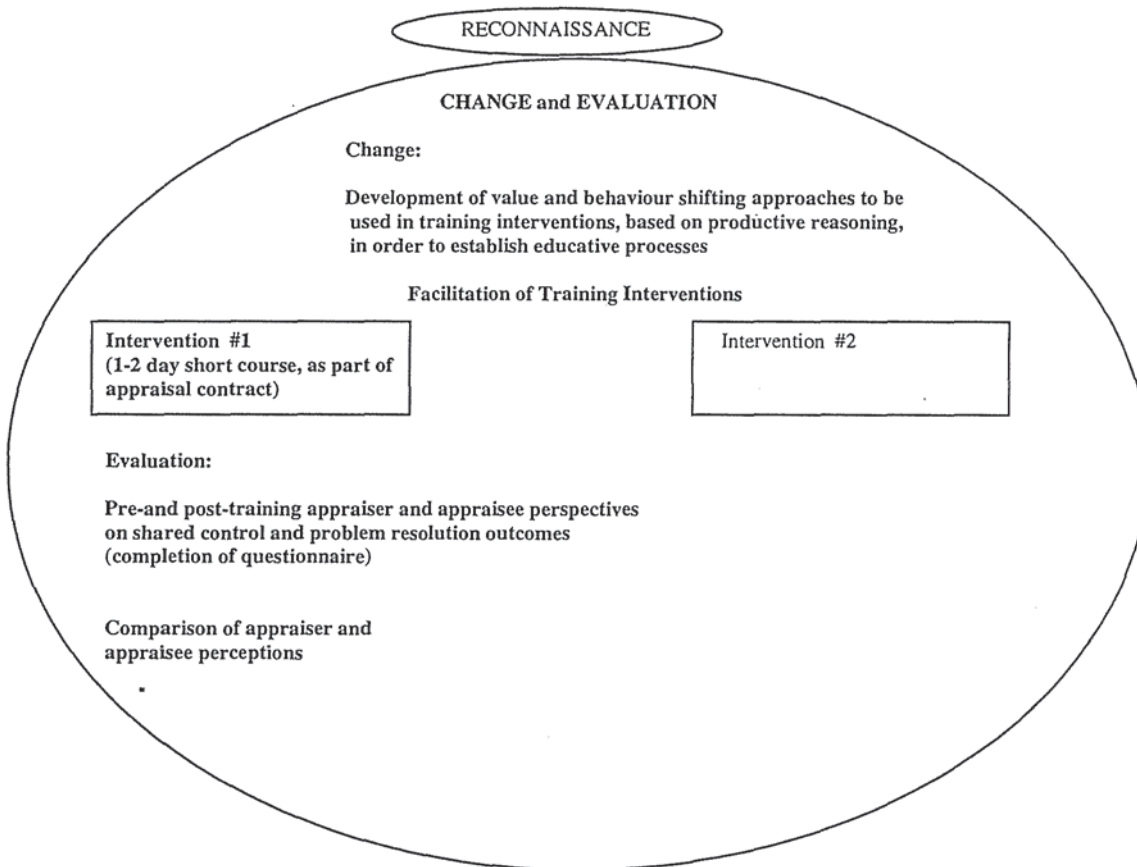
the purposes of sharpening the focus for this research, one specific aspect of the training, the little considered interpersonal effectiveness area was considerably narrowed down. Here the focus was that of developing a component of the training based on productive reasoning (Argyris, 1985, 1990) to create an educative relationship between appraisers and appraisees. More specifically, such an educative relationship based on shared control, I argue, would lead to appraisers having more confidence to help appraisees to confront and resolve problems. Resolution of problems, in turn, would be an example of a potent outcome for appraisal. If this was the case then the second of the concerns in the debate about appraisal, that is, that it has ineffective outcomes, would be addressed.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## INTERVENTION #1: OVERVIEW and LITERATURE REVIEW

### RESEARCH OVERVIEW

#### Appraisal: Shared Control - Enhancing the Impact



## CHAPTER INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTION #1

The Reconnaissance phase results established that the increased accountability in requirements for appraisal had not substantially resulted in the negative impacts suggested by Argyris (1996b), Robinson (1992), or my own predictions. In the area of effective training, however, implementation was inconsistent over the four years studied, and respondent comments indicated dissatisfaction with the training provided. As noted in the conclusion of the Reconnaissance phase (Chapter Three), these results confirmed my own experience which suggested that training during the 1996-1997 period had often been superficial, and had failed to help appraisers to deal with problems with appraisees. The latter was particularly important in the environment of increased accountability where there was an expectation that appraisers would carry out a problem resolution role.

Intervention #1 was the first component of the Change phase which I designed to overcome the concerns related to dissatisfaction with training. The aim of the Change phase interventions was to develop and implement training which could assist appraisers to confront and help appraisees resolve problems via an educative process. The development of potent outcomes, that is, not only educative processes, but also confronted and/or resolved problems, was the intended result for this intervention. The following research questions guided this Change phase:

### *Research Question (2)*

*Are there ways of providing interventions which overcome the concerns, that is, which are educative in terms of establishing trust, openness (particularly about dealing with problems), shared control, and reduced defensiveness, and which lead to effective outcomes in the sense of resolving problems?*

### *Subquestion:*

- a. *What value and behaviour shifting intervention approaches (especially those employing productive reasoning skills) can be developed which lead to educative processes and to effective problem-solving outcomes, whilst conforming to time and cost restrictions in schools?*

### *Research Question (3)*

*How successful have the short, and longer-term, training interventions been in terms of leading to educative processes and enhancing the effective problem-solving outcomes of appraisal?*

*Subquestions:*

- a. What are appraiser and appraisee perspectives on whether these interventions have led to an educative appraisal process or to effective outcomes in terms of problem resolution?*
- b. Is there a difference between appraiser and appraisee perceptions?*

This chapter first of all reviews the literature which informed the development of the training approach for Intervention #1 (and this also formed the basis for training content for Intervention #2). In particular, Argyris (1985, 1990) work on productive reasoning was employed to help develop training in educative appraisal processes in which problems are confronted and resolved. The approach to this training is outlined in the second part of the chapter. This covers the general principles of the productive reasoning training, the key facilitation skills required for training, the training programme itself, and benefits and issues in the training.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A brief outline of the background to what appraisal is in general, and more specifically what constitutes effective appraisal, has been provided in Chapter One of this thesis. To summarise, I stated that appraisal overall is a complex activity, and its effectiveness is widely seen as difficult to achieve. The elements which constitute effectiveness are variously described, and in Chapter One I have determined that those of particular interest to this research are the establishment of educative processes which achieve the potent outcomes of problems being confronted and resolved, and which, in turn, lead to improved teaching and learning. I have also noted that although there is extensive linkage made in the literature between effective appraisal and the type of educative interpersonal interactions which lead to high trust, and open relationships, in fact little

empirical research has been collected to guide us on how to implement such relationships in the appraisal context. Even less is available on how to facilitate the type of training, or professional development, which might be employed to develop these effective educative interactions. Dick & Dalmau (1999), for example, point out that much of the writing consists of theoretical description of models, or verbatim accounts of practice, but little description is available on the actual processes of training or development involved.

In this literature review, I begin at the point of reiterating the elements of an educative process for appraisal, and then discuss the overlaps between these elements and those of productive reasoning. Next the background to productive reasoning (and its counterpart defensive reasoning), the approach implemented in this Intervention #1, is described. This is followed with an outline of how this productive reasoning approach can be implemented to assist appraisers to develop the educative interactions which are advocated as so necessary in appraisal.

### **Elements of an Educative Process Reiterated**

Earlier, in Chapter One, I have described educative interpersonal relationships in appraisal as those based on trust, openness, (particularly about dealing with problems), shared control and reduced defensiveness between the appraiser and appraisee. These open relationships, in turn, should lead to problems being confronted and resolved. I have explained, with reference support, that these good interpersonal relationships involve a range of activities including valuing individuals, using negotiated and joint approaches, two-way dialogue, enabling the appraisee to discuss genuine concerns as well as successes, providing feedback and judgement that is data-based and specific, confronting problems rather than avoiding them, and creating an environment where weaknesses and gaps in performance can be openly admitted and their causes explored. These elements of good interpersonal relationships have considerable overlap with features of productive reasoning (Argyris, 1985, 1990, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1996).

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## **Productive Reasoning and its Counterpart, Defensive Reasoning**

### Productive Reasoning

Argyris (1990) believes that learning and competence are required to achieve organisational excellence. He states that such competence involves problem-solving so that problems remain solved. Argyris' beliefs are fundamental to understanding the concept of productive reasoning, or as it is also described, Model 2. Essentially this type of reasoning is based on the set of guiding values, and key strategies summarised in Table 4.1 .

**Table 4.1: Productive Reasoning or Model 2**

Guiding values	Key strategies
Increase Valid Information For All <i>(Advocacy)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* When working or talking with others:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- share control by exposing rather than withholding key information; state position</li> <li>- share responsibility for goal achievement</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Disclose views, premises, and the evidence (hard data) or logic that lead to those views</li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Invite challenge, evaluation, and public testing of those views</p>
Enhance Freedom of Informed Choice <i>(Inquiry)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Treat views and reactions of self and others as hypotheses (rather than predetermined outcomes) to be tested</li> <li>* Check to see how views have been understood and what views others hold; encouraging and non-defensively receiving others' views and disagreements without prejudgement; checking perceptions in ways which reveal implicit and explicit assumptions</li> </ul>
Gain Internal Commitment to Choice and to Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Seek bilateral solutions and joint responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring achievement of goals</li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Manage difficult emotional issues as a joint responsibility</p>

Adapted from Cardno (1994:159), Robinson, Absolum, Cardno, & Steele (1990:3)

Not mentioned in this summary Table 4.1 (p. 84) are other features of productive reasoning which also overlap with descriptions of the elements of good interpersonal relationships in appraisal. These are the feature of appraisers helping staff to feel appreciated, and that of adopting listening and reporting skills based on confidentiality (Bennett, 1992; Fidler, 1995; Irons, 1993).

Productive reasoning involves a balancing act between the two predominant features of advocacy and inquiry. Advocacy includes stating our position, and disclosing our views, premises and hard data (evidence), supporting that position in such a way that it is both hypothetical (not predetermined in terms of outcomes), and invites evaluation, challenge, and public testing. Inquiry includes encouraging and non-defensively receiving others' views and disagreements without prejudgement, the testing of our position, and checking our own and others' perceptions in ways which reveal implicit and explicit assumptions. The overuse or underuse of either of these features can result in controlling or avoidance strategies. Advocacy and inquiry should create a genuine two-way dialogue, or informed debate, between the appraiser and appraisee which leads to a mutual understanding and agreement about issues, even if the agreement is to disagree.

...participants should seek to understand the basis of relevant disagreements and, if possible, to resolve them through debating the empirical and normative basis of the differing claims and their practical consequences. (Robinson, 1992: 349)

Once this empirically informed debate that Robinson refers to has occurred then solutions to the problem can be mutually agreed upon, improvements planned for, implemented and monitored in ways which enable individuals to be responsible for their own decisions.

Robinson *et al.* summarise productive reasoning as:

... a disclosure of our views together with the evidence of logic that led us to those views ... to enhance the freedom of others to express differing views and to make uncoerced choices about courses of action, including about how to resolve impasses. (Robinson *et al.*, 1990:2)

Bilaterality, or sometimes multilaterality if more than two people are involved, underpins every facet of the productive reasoning approach. This informed mutual checking of meaning, understanding, perspective, and agreement, is central to the success of the

approach. The critical elements of productive reasoning (Model 2), according to Dick & Dalmau (1999:47), include being “more consensual, more open to change” and as an approach it “provides more opportunity for choice”.

Most people espouse Model 2, but few employ it in problem situations such as appraisal (Cardno, 1994) where contention and threat are heightened. In such situations, as Bifano (1989) suggests, a defensive, or Model 1, orientation predominates:

Grounded in over a decade of research that was conducted in all types of settings, including professional and educational institutions, businesses and government agencies, Argyris and Schön concluded that Model 1 behaviour is the predominant leadership orientation. (Bifano, 1989:60)

#### Defensive Reasoning

Argyris (1990:xiv) believes that the most fundamental assumption of the underground managerial world is that truth, of the type described in Model 2, is a good idea when it is not embarrassing or threatening. He also believes (1990:3) that in most organisations, and most interactions, there are aboveground and underground dynamics. The aboveground dynamics are used to deal with routine, unproblematic issues. The underground dynamics are activated whenever the business becomes hot or threatening. With the latter, the business usually becomes undiscussable, and the undiscussability also becomes undiscussable. When challenged with problems in appraisal there is considerable evidence (Cardno, 1994; McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988; Popham, 1988) to suggest that it is the underground dynamics response which dominates. The behaviours creating these responses are generally described as defensive.

Individuals often become defensive when exposed to difficult situations (such as confronting problems in appraisal). Argyris (1990) defines defensiveness as the tendency to protect ourselves and others from potential threat and embarrassment. There are many manifestations of defensiveness, and the following Table 4.2 summarises those

determined in the work of Argyris & Schön (1974), and later interpreted by both Robinson *et al.* (1990), and Cardno (1994).

**Table 4.2: Model 1**

GUIDING VALUES	KEY STRATEGIES
WIN DON'T LOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* When working or talking with others:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- keep control of the process</li> <li>- keep control of the content</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
AVOID UNPLEASANTNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Make unilateral decisions about what to disclose, when, and how - so that the purposes as you see them are best served.</li> <li>* Make unilateral decisions about whether, how, and when to disclose information that you believe may be upsetting to self and others.</li> <li>* Avoid unpleasant interactions if possible</li> <li>* Be as pleasant as possible in communicating potentially unpleasant messages, stress the positives: ease-in, soft-sell.</li> <li>* If there is no other way, 'give it to them straight'.</li> </ul>

Cardno (1994:158)

(Adapted from Robinson *et al.*, 1990:5)

The strategies of “win don’t lose”, or unilateral control as this value is sometimes described, can be further interpreted and expanded with additional elements. These include deciding on the outcome before the conversation, using persuasion, name dropping to support an argument, ignoring or downplaying information provided by a colleague, making statements and attributions without illustration or explanation, using questioning in order to disguise a viewpoint, making judgements or assumptions without testing them, and concentrating on the argument and ignoring the feelings of colleagues. Expansion of the avoidance of unpleasantness can also include using bypassing and covering up strategies such as giving false reassurances to cloud the message, giving mixed messages or confusing messages in an effort to be nice, trying to keep things comfortable, deciding to hold back in order to protect colleagues from embarrassment or threat, avoiding disclosing one’s own feelings, and avoiding disclosing information that might upset colleagues.

Defensiveness, Argyris (1990) says, is an anti-learning process which leads to misunderstandings, distortions, and self-fulfilling processes. As I have noted in the course handout which was developed for the training in Intervention #1 (Appendix 6), defensiveness is most often conditioned, routine, automatic behaviour that is below our level of consciousness, where it remains untested and unexamined. It has roots in our early childhood experiences, where we are instilled with what Argyris (1985) describes as the virtues of caring, helping and supporting, and respecting others. These are all honourable traits but they can also result in us avoiding threatening or embarrassing others. We are also instilled with upholding honesty, advocating to win (Argyris (1985: 263) describes this “strength”), and sticking to our principles, values and beliefs (integrity). Again, in moderation, both strength and integrity can be positive, but when taken to extreme, they lead to controlling strategies. Argyris’ research, observing the way that thousands of people behave, has revealed that this conditioned defensiveness is the norm in our society. Additionally, theories-in-use (theories of action which people actually use) which support the defensive behaviours are reported (Argyris, 1996b) to be unvarying across country, age, economic status, gender, race and educational status.

The essential features of defensive reasoning, or Model 1, have been summarised in the following way:

... people seek to win rather than lose and to do so with a minimum of unpleasantness. People strive to win by keeping control of both the process and the content of key conversations. They make unilateral judgements about how to interpret information, and about the goals to pursue and how to achieve them. In addition, they seek to involve others in way that protects their own judgements from challenge. (Robinson *et al.*, 1990:2)

Dick & Dalmau (1999:47) further summarise the Model as an approach which is “adversarial, competitive, and narrowly rational”. Model 1 should not necessarily be viewed in a derogatory way. In low contention situations, or when it is easy to be collaborative, Model 1 can be effective. “The latter is more effective for routine, non-threatening issues” (Argyris, 1985:259).

In non-routine situations however, when individuals are likely to resist control, or when change is threatening, Model 1 is not likely to be effective. Such a situation is common in appraisal and here, the non-defensive, productive approach, is required in order to help individuals to become effective problem confronters and solvers. This requires significant, profound, change involving exposure, examination, and alteration of the appraiser’s governing values. As I have suggested elsewhere, this is a lengthy and difficult task:

...the approach on its own is extremely complex and usually involves months, maybe years, of training. The reason for this is that the approach requires rethinking and altering our underlying value systems, and this involves changing many automatic, conditioned responses. Such values and responses cannot be changed in two hours! Robinson *et al.* (1990:55) describe the training time as taking as long as it requires for a veteran tennis player to relearn how to correctly

grip a racket and to eliminate backhand slices. For many of us this takes an extremely long time and some people never learn at all! (Piggot-Irvine, 1995:140)

How this difficult learning process has been approached in Intervention #1 is expanded upon in the following discussion of the development and implementation of training for productive reasoning as an approach for establishing an educative process in appraisal.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING FOR PRODUCTIVE REASONING**

### **General Principles**

In this Change phase, the training in the use of productive reasoning in appraisal was directed at a personal level. Like Argyris, I believe that such individual change is the leverage point for producing organisational change. In the training, individuals were helped to examine their own causal reasoning, and take responsibility for both detecting and correcting defensiveness. This individualised approach has a focus on personalised actionable knowledge (Argyris, 1993) - the skills required to produce a new individual state plus the contextual conditions required to maintain it. The training developed for this intervention therefore made no attempt to incorporate the wider organisational cultural, ethnographic, type interventions which Schein (1992) considers to be important, or to change the system dynamics of the organisation in the experimental way advocated by Senge (1990). I am not suggesting that training could not incorporate these wider aspects, but in this research this was not the focus.

The training was intended to help appraisers surface their own theories about problem-solving in appraisal, and to move beyond this reflection on their “knowledge platform” to surfacing and reflecting at an “action platform” level (Cardno, 1999b:45). Their actual practice was “...open to challenging evaluation involving collaborative critique and discovery” (Cardno, 1997:3).

In this training, an essential step in surfacing and reflecting upon the action platform, was a recognition of the gap between components of the trainees’ theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Cardno (1994:92) describes theories of action as our “theory or

professional practice that determines our belief about what constitutes effectiveness in a given situation". Edmondson (1996:583), drawing upon the work of Argyris (1982), summarises the two facets of theories of action, that is, espoused theories and theories-in-use. She describes espoused theories as "...if-then propositions we think lie behind our actions". These are our beliefs, or what we describe as our intentions of effectiveness. Theory-in-use, Edmondson reports as "...if-then propositions an individual actually uses when he or she acts". Theories-in-use govern what we actually do, and they are revealed by either directly, or indirectly, observing practice. Dick & Dalmau (1999) interpret these theories in a slightly different way, based on self-awareness. They state that espoused theories are those that we know about: theories-in-use are more likely to be unknown to ourselves.

Argyris (1990:95) suggests that there are four stages in the training approach for learning productive reasoning. First of all he suggests that the trainee needs to map out a problem and to describe how s/he is currently dealing with it. Second, they need to diagnose the extent to which they have created and maintained the problem. Third, they need to take Model 2 from an espoused theory (from a belief state) to a theory-in-use, that is to implement Model 2. Finally, they need to repeat the learning experience to solve new problems as they arise. These stages are somewhat reduced in the following outline:

The required processes must first generate the dissonance. Second, they must help the individual to resolve the inconsistency which is the catalyst. (Dick & Dalmau, 1999:5)

The training was intended to produce the double-loop learning outcomes proposed by Argyris (1996b:79), that is, to help appraisers confront and resolve problems with appraisees. In this double-loop learning, both this problem resolution and the training process itself were designed to facilitate appraisers (the trainees) detecting and correcting mismatches or errors in ways which would change their underlying governing values, and consequently change their actions, that is their strategies used for solving problems with appraisees. As such, the training was intended to conform to Argyris' (1996b)

description of scholarly consulting, where not only basic knowledge is produced, but problems are also solved. Fundamentally this training was designed to create new learning, in the way that Swann (1999), for example, summarises it. She states that:

... every instance of learning starts with a problem, whereby an individual (a) finds (often unself-consciously) that an expectation which she brought to experience is either refuted by or shown to be inadequate in the light of experience, and (b) has the desire to resolve the mismatch. (1999:263)

Appendix 6 contains the core handout material issued on the training conducted for this intervention. In addition, there were sets of instructions for activities, and a summary of the literature review on appraisal effectiveness which have not been included in the Appendices.

### **The Training Programme**

This Intervention #1 involved the facilitation of a short-term, one to two day (this varied depending on the school's time availability) training in productive reasoning for appraisers. I would have liked this to be much longer, but with only four days of allocated national funding for the entire appraisal training per school, I felt that any longer time for training on tackling problems would have been rejected by the schools. My intuition was affirmed when, following the invitation to 42 schools to participate in either one or two days of this training, 22 schools opted for one day problem resolution training, and three chose the two day training.

As mentioned earlier, the ideas for training from Argyris (1985, 1990), Cardno (1994), and Robinson (1993a) helped guide the development of the programme for schools. Argyris' (1990) four stages provided categories for reporting on the programme developed for this intervention. An expansion of Argyris' four stages is provided in both an overview diagram and detailed explanation.

**Figure 4.1: Training Stages**

### **STAGE ONE**

#### **Mapping the Problem and How it is Dealt With**

- Examining espoused theories via explication of appraiser beliefs about dealing with problems
- Mapping and exposing theories-in-use via causal maps, and case writing

### **STAGE TWO**

#### **Diagnosing the Extent of Problem Maintenance**

- Individual diagnosis of the gap between espoused theories and theories-in-use
- General group discussion of findings based on comparison of findings with defensive reasoning values and strategies
- Examination of extent to which appraiser was implicated in problems

### **STAGE THREE**

#### **Taking Model 2 from an Espoused Theory to Theory-in-use**

##### **Day 1:**

- Links made between effective appraisal, espoused theories, and theory of productive reasoning
- Links made between demonstrated theories of action and defensive reasoning
- Importance of double-loop learning emphasised
- Critical dialogue skills outlined and demonstrated
- Discussion of concerns about dialogue process
- Practice of critical dialogue with example scenarios
- Briefing for Day Two (including redesigning of own case)

##### **Day 2:**

- Key concepts of selected reading summarised and presented
- Extension of theory introduced
- Consolidation of learning through redevelopment of critical dialogue checklist
- Practice with own redesigned cases

### **STAGE FOUR**

#### **Reinforcing the Practice in New Learning Situations**

- Encouragement to continue practice

### Stage One: Mapping Out the Problem and How it is Currently Dealt With

Like Argyris (1990), I believe that before any change in governing values can occur appraisers need to expose their own defensiveness, by examining their espoused theories and theories-in-use. In this training, the examination of espoused theories began by asking appraisers to explicate their beliefs about dealing with problems in appraisal. Exposing theories-in-use was more difficult, because the appraisers, like trainees from any context, have fears associated with revealing what they do.

The development of a causal map was used to expose theories-in-use. This causal map took the form of an initial description of the problem situation, with appraisers detailing the conditions that existed when the situation arose. This was followed with an account of the actions that each appraiser thought that they employed to deal with the situation, what they thought the consequences of the use of these actions might have been, and what they thought might be influencing the situation being perpetuated. This mapping stage showed “how each variable feeds back to reinforce the others” (Edmondson, 1996:583). Although this map was designed to expose the two facets of appraisers’ theories of action, it almost always revealed information which was substantially espoused theory only, and showed little theory-in-use. Theory-in-use was more accurately revealed in a case writing exercise, or as it is sometimes described, two column analysis.

In this case writing the appraisers recalled and wrote a conversation that they had when trying to discuss a problem with an appraisee, or in this situation, sometimes another colleague generally because appraisal was new in schools. The conversation was written in terms of what was said (right hand side), and that which was not said but was thought, or felt, by the appraiser (left hand side).

Many other approaches can be employed to expose theory-in-use, including the use of video or audiotaping. Both of these were rejected in this intervention, because my prior experience had revealed that such approaches were too invasive and threatening when individuals neither knew me (and therefore did not trust me) nor the way in which the

material would be used. In the enhanced threat situation associated with appraisal in schools, I predicted that such an invasive approach would not only be difficult to organise with attendees on the short courses (because it would involve trainees taping before the sessions), but would also set up a negative barrier to training. This concern proved to be well founded, as reported in the discussion section for this intervention.

Stage Two: Diagnosing the extent to which appraisers created and maintained the problem

The diagnosis of the gap between espoused theories and theories-in-use was the next component of training. Argyris (1990:95) describes this step as identifying and diagnosing the extent to which individuals create and maintain their theories-in-use.

Diagnosis of the written case occurred against a checklist (see Appendix 7) which I had developed from an analysis of the work of Argyris (1985, 1990, 1992), Argyris & Schön (1974, 1996), Cardno (1994), and Robinson (1986, 1992, 1993a). Appraisers carried out this diagnosis individually. On these short courses early attempts on my part to get trainees to either analyse in groups, or to publicly reveal their diagnosis results, had sometimes resulted in hostility which blocked learning. These same people were usually positive about doing this in a later component of the training, when they knew both myself and the group better, but this was not the case at the beginning of the training session.

The diagnosis exercise was followed by a generalised discussion about how common the features that appraisers revealed were. Appraisers themselves then investigated the linkage and overlaps between the diagnostic list and that of the values and strategies described in defensive reasoning and productive reasoning. They also looked at the way that they were implicated in problems, including the ways in which they may have been permitting the problems to exist or persist, through bypassing or covering them up. The activity described up to this point involved approximately four hours training.

To summarise, the gap recognition used in this stage of the training revealed the appraiser espoused and theory-in-use dissonance or congruence. It was the determination of the dissonance, or inconsistency, which was designed to motivate or catalyse change for trainees. Once this latter gap was revealed then the theoretical underpinning to defensive and productive reasoning was explicated. Appraisers were then almost always ready to move to implementation of a productive theory-in-use, or to put it more bluntly to practice what they were preaching.

### Stage Three: Taking Model 2 From an Espoused Theory to a Theory-In-Use

The third stage in Argyris' guide involved the need to take Model 2 from an espoused theory to a theory-in-use, and in doing so altering the governing values (Argyris, 1990:93) associated with appraisers' theories-in-use. Before this alteration could occur, however, I found that it was important to strengthen the theoretical background provided in Stage Two. This began with a discussion of about one hour's duration on a literature review of the features of effective appraisal, particularly the interpersonal skills which lead to problem confronting and resolution. This discussion concluded with appraisers developing a list of the key elements for establishing an educative relationship with appraisees. This list (combined with that they had earlier already developed as espoused theories) was used as a comparison with the key values and strategies of productive reasoning. In all cases, there were strong overlaps between the list developed by the trainees and the values and strategies of productive reasoning. I believe that this exercise provided a more convincing rationale for appraisers to see the relevance of the productive reasoning approach than if I had simply told them that this approach was empirically determined to be more effective. Following this outline of the productive reasoning, the defensive reasoning theory was described and a diagnosis of the initial causal map written by appraisers occurred. Here, appraisers reported on the extent to which their map revealed that either their actions or reasoning were guided by defensive or productive reasoning.

Having established a rationale for adopting productive reasoning, I then discussed the importance of committing to double-loop learning in order to employ this approach. At

this point I considered (based on experience) that the appraisers were ready to move Model 2 from an espoused theory to a theory-in-use. I also felt that because the appraisers were novices in this approach, they needed an initial training guide to help them to learn the Model 2 values and strategies. Robinson's (1993a) critical dialogue skills were used as this guide. Critical dialogue is described by Robinson (1993b:15) as a conversation that is simultaneously critical and collaborative.

Prior to informing the trainees of the sequence of the critical dialogue skills, they were initially role practised by myself using an appraisal feedback scenario. I found that if the appraisers observed this initial role practice with a brief to determine and record what the steps were, then their engagement was greater. The debriefing of the role practice, and explanation of the critical dialogue steps followed the demonstration. This was always accompanied by an opportunity for trainees to field questions and raise concerns.

Where one day was available for training with a school, then at least an hour was provided for practice of the critical dialogue skills. Triad (threes) groups were established for this, with one critical dialoguer, one recipient (affectionately named the "victim" by one trainee), and the third person in the group observing against the dialogue checklist. As part of the briefing for this role practice (I deliberately do not use the term "role play" because the word play has flippant connotations for me) the observers were given direction about how to provide clear, Model 2 type, feedback. Throughout these practice sessions my role was a roving monitor. I frequently needed to intercept the individual appraiser practice to give immediate feedback on process skills. I questioned assumptions underlying the actions that I observed, and less frequently demonstrated alternatives by taking over the role briefly before requesting the critical dialoguer replay the specific section of their script. Sometimes the critical dialoguer would raise concerns about the impact of the forthright approaches I was demonstrating. This put me right under the microscope, and I was always aware that members of the triad were interested to see how I responded to challenge, specifically whether I became defensive. This challenge therefore led to further learning and practice for both the trainee appraisers and myself.

If two day training was available, then before leaving on the first day trainees were given the Argyris (1985) paper to read and summarise overnight, and they were also asked to rewrite, or redesign, their case writing example in a critical dialogue format.

Day two of the training began with groups developing a presentation of the key concepts outlined in the Argyris paper that they had read. This presentation subsequently always generated extensive discussion and I used this opportunity to incorporate some new theory related to balancing advocacy and inquiry, revealing thinking and logic in the dialogue, and stressing the importance of committing to changing deeply held values and behaviours (not just words) in moving to this new theory-in-use. I included a consolidation step at this point in the process. Here the groups were involved in expanding and redeveloping the critical dialogue checklist to incorporate some of the more detailed information that they had read or discussed.

Following the redevelopment of the checklist, trainees spent the rest of the day practising with their own redesigned cases. The role practice format was identical to that described earlier for the one day practice.

#### Stage Four: Repeating the Learning Experience to Solve New Problems as They Arise

Ideally, and in keeping with Argyris (1990) suggested fourth stage for training, appraisers should have repeated their learning experience with critical dialogue in new problem situations. In the short time, and restricted funding, made available for training in schools this follow-up was not feasible at the training sessions themselves. I encouraged, often exhorted, appraisers to continue practising by suggesting that they develop a critical friend relationship with another colleague who had also learnt the skills. This relationship is not unlike that of peer coaching which Showers & Joyce (1996) have shown to be an essential follow-up to training, if increased implementation and long-term retention of learning is a goal. I outlined that this relationship should be based on productive reasoning values and strategies, and that the friend should be sought for practise and feedback before implementing any critical dialogue with appraisees.

## **Key facilitation Skills Required**

Facilitating training for productive reasoning is probably more difficult for the facilitator than that of learning the skills of productive reasoning itself. As Edmondson (1996) suggests, the approach takes extraordinary skill, and she notes that Argyris himself admitted to a developmental period of several to many years. To enter into the facilitation role without such skill, I believe, would be disastrous.

As I have noted earlier, in the role as facilitator in this training I was under the microscope at all times, with participants eager to see whether I did, or of more interest, did not, demonstrate the skills that I was challenging them to develop. In teaching the approach, I progressively (because I had learnt from sometimes bitter consequences) found the most beneficial learning outcomes to occur when I was a “credible advocate” (Robinson, 1992:352). This involved first that I needed to have an absolute commitment to the approach, but not in such an extreme way as to be seen as overly persuading or manipulative. On the other hand I needed to be explicit about my own normative position, so that participants were aware of the position I held concerning the material. Next, I needed to be genuinely able to demonstrate that I ‘walked the talk’ with all elements of productive reasoning, in all aspects of my life, a factor which is critical when living in the community that I am often facilitating in. I also needed a willingness to acknowledge when I did not know the answers, and an ability to help participants to critically reflect upon their own practice, rather than me providing the answers for them. Clarity in terms of my own theoretical understanding, and the ability to package this into a well sequenced learning approach, was another requirement. I had to be challenging of trainee assumptions and actions, but in a way which on the one hand was not avoidance, but on the other supportive and respectful of the fragile learner. An immediate astuteness in recognising either defensive or productive values and strategies, that is, to be able to reflect in action (Schön, 1991), and to action this reflection, was an essential skill. Finally, I needed to demonstrate my own skills as a double-loop learner - a point raised also by Cardno (1999b).

None of these skills or attributes required in teaching this approach was easy to implement. It is a highly demanding approach, which more often than not leaves me not only exhausted, but also extremely self-critical, and self-doubting. Like everyone, I am fallible, and have learnt to be very honest, sometimes painfully, with participants about the difficulties I have had, and still have, in learning to close the gap between my own espoused theory and theory-in-use. I have also learnt that I need to be honest about the limitations of the role that I play in facilitation. I am careful to state that I am not employing a psychotherapeutic approach to personal change, but instead point out that this is an approach which is more cognitive.

### **Benefits of the Training Approach**

This approach to training in appraisal has many positive benefits. Just one of these includes that it provides an approach for appraisers and appraisees to tackle the difficult problems, rather than to avoid them. Although referring to a dilemma management approach, Cardno's summary (1999b:50) of other benefits of using a productive rather than defensive approach is equally applicable in this context. She states that the benefits include:

- The examination and alteration of theories of action through a conscious choice to engage in double-loop learning;
- The evaluation of one's theory-in-use and the theory-in-use of others by employing the skills of critical dialogue;
- The incremental removal of barriers to individual and organisational learning related to problems of practice;
- The development of an essential leadership competency: critical reflection at the level of reflection-in action.

### **Issues in the Approach**

There are also negative issues associated with the training in productive reasoning. The theory underpinning the approach is cognitively difficult, and with a one to two day training course there is every potential for an ensuing superficial understanding which

could either mislead appraisers, or be misconstrued. This was a risk that I was aware of when developing the programme, and there was a danger that some appraisers could have a dangerously small amount of knowledge on complex issues. However, I was also aware that for many of the appraisers the courses could create a raised awareness of the need not only to confront problems, but also to do this in non-defensive ways. If the number of requests (approximately three times that from the previous year to the training) I have received for continued training is an indicator of this raised awareness, then this has occurred. This alone outweighs some of the negative potential of the shorter training approach.

Along with the cognitive difficulty associated with this approach is the practical difficulty of implementation, a point emphasised also by Dick & Dalmau (1999), and Edmondson who stated:

...employing Model 11 in interpersonal interactions requires profound attentiveness, and skill for human beings socialised in a Model 1 world. (Edmondson, 1996:585)

The combined behaviour and value shifting required in the approach requires a high level of self honesty, which Dick & Dalmau (1999:4) suggest is “not readily available without substantial life experience and psychological maturity”. The emotional difficulty associated with this honesty is so intense for some trainees, that either they resign to avoid employing the skills and to continue with their status quo interactions, or they reinterpret the Model 2 to employ the behaviour changes without changing underlying values. An error in my early facilitation of the training in other contexts was to exacerbate this latter emphasis on behavioural change, by focusing too strongly on the critical dialogue skills. This resulted in some participants seeing the approach as predominantly a set of process skills, and this, in turn, led them to minimise the importance of examining their own causal maps, confronting their espoused and theory-in-use gap, and the double-loop learning associated with value changing in movement to

Model 2. In the appraisal training I made every effort to reduce too great an emphasis on the dialogue skills.

Argyris reports (1990:95) that many people are very embarrassed, and perhaps threatened, about practising a new theory-in-use. This was only experienced by me when I conducted a one day course, but not on the two day. On the one day course, a minority of the group in almost every school (about 10% of participants) deliberately distanced themselves from actively participating in the practice, or tried to sabotage the process. They attempted to do the former by often quickly offering to act as the observer (a defensive, avoidance, strategy), knowing that time would probably run out before it came to their turn as a critical dialoguer. They sabotaged the process in many ways, including ridiculing the approach, and deliberately making a feeble attempt at the critical dialogue skills (again, defensive responses). I always confronted these situations when in my monitoring role, by reporting factually to the individual what I was observing and then inquiring into the reasons for them doing this and/or their response to my observation. I also always explained that in confronting them with this observation I wanted to further demonstrate the use of the critical dialogue skills, and particularly to publicly test my own skill as a double-loop learner. In about half of the situations confronted this had successful outcomes in terms of the individual recognising that they would fail to learn the skills if they did not try them out. In the rest of the situations, my confronting seemed to have little immediate impact on the individuals, and they reverted to their previous defensiveness. Interestingly, one of these individuals attended another longer course with me later in the year, to relearn these skills. When I discussed with him my surprise at his return, he stated that he had subsequently had a disaster with an appraisee, and realised what he needed to learn. There is a perhaps self-evident implication here that appraisers, like any learners, often need a strong personal motivation, and readiness, to learn this approach.

Another negative issue was linked to participants' predominant concerns which were raised during the training. Staff in some schools were highly suspicious and negative about appraisal itself and saw the productive reasoning training as a manipulative

process. They stated that this was because, first, the appraiser would have knowledge about the approach but not the appraisee, and, second, the appraiser was in an hierarchically superior position. This was raised by almost every group in the discussion session following my demonstration of the critical dialogue skills. Robinson's (1992) response to the knowledge bias concern is to discuss openly differences in competence, and to the second, hierarchical concern, to create a change in culture with bilateral rules throughout the entire structure of the school. Robinson's responses provided me with guidance for replies to participants' questions, but I had no way of knowing whether it made any impact on the appraisers, or the school management.

The amount of time that this approach would take was also a concern often raised by appraisers in the training. Some suggested that the appraiser making unilateral decisions would take a lot less time. On each occasion that this issue was raised, other participants in the group themselves gave examples of where unilateral decision-making ultimately did not work, primarily because the appraisee lacked ownership.

Another predominant issue raised by appraisers was their fear that appraisees would not, or could not, generate solutions to their own problems. Underlying this fear there often was a deeper issue linked to appraisers feeling they needed to provide immediate answers. Once appraisers became aware that the answers did not need to be provided on the spot, and that to effect bilaterality the appraisees needed to take time to think about their own solutions, then their concern dissipated.

The last of the predominant concerns raised by appraisers was the fear of themselves and their appraisees failing to reach agreement on a problem. When this surfaced in the training, I tackled it by reiterating the discussion about not needing immediate solutions, and also by conducting a further role practice on how to move the critical dialogue to what Robinson (1992:358) calls a "meta-level conversation". Here the secondary issue of dealing with disagreement becomes the subject of a further critical dialogue between the appraiser and appraisee.

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The next chapter reports on the methodology employed to evaluate this intervention, and the results obtained from this evaluation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTERVENTION #1: METHODOLOGY, RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

#### **CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

This chapter first presents the methodology employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The impact of the training was evaluated in terms of whether appraisers used the productive reasoning skills which they had begun to develop in Intervention #1. Productive reasoning training in this intervention is linked to the development of an educative process in appraisal, which leads to the better resolution of problems. The perceptions of both appraisers and appraisees are reported on, and compared in this evaluation. The evaluation instrument, a pre- and post-training questionnaire, is discussed, as are the respondents, research site, ethical considerations, and the statistical analysis approach utilised to determine the degree of correlation between appraiser and appraisee responses.

A description of the results of the evaluation of the impact of the short-term training is also provided in this chapter.

#### **METHODOLOGY FOR EVALUATING THE PROGRAMME**

The evaluation sought to establish whether the productive reasoning training had been successful in terms of leading to educative processes (establishing trust, bilateralism in openness in dealing with problems, and bilateralism in gaining commitment for improvement) which had effective problem-solving outcomes, that is, to answer research question 3, including subquestions a and b. The initial evaluation sought to use pre- and post-training questionnaires (Appendices 7&8) to compare appraiser and appraisee perspectives in order to determine whether there had been a shift in skill development as

a consequence of training. Second, there was an examination of the extent of implementation of appraiser productive reasoning and problem resolution skills as a result of the training intervention.

The evaluation of shift in skills substantially failed. Despite every attempt to secure agreement from appraisers to participate in the pre-training questionnaire, the percentage response rate was exceptionally low (see the later sample description). Consequently, although the pre-questionnaire is discussed briefly, it is the post-training questionnaire which became the major focus of evaluation and therefore is given more attention.

### **Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaires**

All questionnaire development followed those principles of conducting a good questionnaire which have been discussed in the earlier chapter on the Reconnaissance methodology. Both the pre- and post-questionnaires were developed to provide quantitative (based on seven point continuums) and qualitative (open-ended comments) information.

In the post-intervention appraiser questionnaire the earlier questions (1 to 9) were designed to determine the perception of mutual trust between the appraiser and appraisee (an outcome of productive reasoning), and the manner and extent to which appraisers were honest and open with their appraisee. Whether valid data, or evidence, was used in the appraisal conversations (an essential component of productive reasoning) was also examined. Two later questions (10 and 11) sought to establish whether the conversation led to any planning, or implementation, for improvement (the final steps in critical dialogue). Questions 12 and 13 were designed to reveal whether the training, or anything else, had influenced the way in which appraisers were dealing with problems with appraisees. Question 14 was of a concluding type, seeking to determine whether appraisers felt that appraisal had resulted in the actual resolution of any problems identified (the intended outcome of productive reasoning). Question 15 sought to establish more generally how appraisers felt that trust, openness and problem-solving could be developed in appraisal.

In the post-intervention appraiser questionnaire all questions mirrored those of the appraiser questionnaire, but this time providing the appraiser perspective. The appraiser questionnaire was designed to be used as a comparison with the appraiser perspective in order to establish whether the appraiser was accurately portraying the way that they were dealing with problems using productive reasoning.

### Piloting

Five individuals (both appraisers and appraisees) who were similar to, but not inclusive of, the appraiser and appraiser respondent group, trialed the questionnaires for this intervention. Only minor typing errors were highlighted as concerns by this pilot group. Based on this feedback, the research questionnaires were amended to correct the errors.

### Response Rate

The participant appraisers, all middle and senior managers in schools, were trainees attending appraisal training courses facilitated by myself. No form of selection occurred: there was no sampling. All participants on the courses, who were appraisers (total 183), were invited to participate. With all appraisers I emphasised that pseudonyms, or appraiser/appraisee pair codes, could be used to ensure anonymity. I informed them that my supervisor had offered to receive and code questionnaires before I sighted them. I provided stamped addressed envelopes so that questionnaires could be posted to further ensure anonymity. Following this invitation, the questionnaires were positioned in the front of each training room along with envelopes.

In the pre-training questionnaire situation, ten appraisers and seven of their appraisees completed the questionnaires. In total therefore, there were only seven matched appraiser and appraiser sets. Of these seven matched pairs, five appraisers responded to the post-training questionnaire, and in turn, three of their appraisees responded. The total three pre- and post-questionnaire sets was too low in number to provide valid data for comparison in order to determine a shift in appraisal skill linked to training.

The number of appraisers offering to participate in the pre-training part of the data collection was extremely low, and warrants comment. When I returned to the schools to conduct subsequent parts of training (often some months later) I asked appraisers about what might have prevented them from completing the pre-training questionnaire. In all cases they stated that they were worried about whether management, or other appraisers and appraisees, would see the results. This was surprising because I thought (obviously misguided) that I had strongly emphasised how I would ensure anonymity.

The appraiser reasoning associated with reluctance to complete the questionnaires may also have been exacerbated by other influences. These include factors associated with myself as the facilitator, those associated with responses to appraisal in general, and factors linked to concerns about revealing highly sensitive information linked to defensiveness.

In terms of my own role as facilitator, it is possible that appraisers may have distrusted me personally (and therefore what I said I would do with their data in terms of revealing it to others) at the initial part of the training, despite the fact that feedback at the end of the first day of the course was extremely positive. It is also possible that these appraisers may have wondered whether I was going to be “experimenting” with them in some way by having a pre- and post-training questionnaire. Another potential factor for the low response rate could have been linked to my dual role as facilitator and researcher. I had already raised my awareness of this conflict of interest with my supervisors. I had initially considered the use of an independent questionnaire distributor, but since the courses were run throughout an extensive geographic area, the cost associated with another person travelling to complete this task was prohibitive. My attempts to employ the pseudonym, independent coder, and mail response strategies were designed to help overcome this conflict of interest associated with overlapping roles.

As mentioned in Chapter One, negativity in the form of threat, fears of increased accountability, hidden agenda, and concern about outcomes were common early responses to the introduction of appraisal guidelines in schools. The training occurred

soon after this introduction, and in most schools the major task for me at the beginning of the first training session was to address these concerns. It is very likely that despite my attempts to alleviate concerns, appraisers still continued to feel sufficiently worried in the initial component of the training (when the pre-questionnaires were issued) to the extent that they were reluctant to complete the questionnaire. As the training progressed the appraisers certainly became more overtly positive about appraisal. This might explain why they were more willing to participate in the post-training questionnaire, but less so with the pre-questionnaire.

The third set of factors which may have been linked to the low response rate could have been associated with what I have described elsewhere in this thesis as “defensiveness about being defensive”. It was a considerable request to ask appraisers and appraisees to reveal information about their defensive behaviours. My experience in other training has confirmed that it takes about half of the first day of training for participants to trust me sufficiently, and to feel safe enough, to enable them to discuss their defensiveness. In the appraisal training, I believe that this eventually happened on the later three days of training with almost all of the appraisers, but in the initial segment of the training, because the general response to appraisal itself was so negative, it may have been too soon to expect appraisers to be open.

Accessing appraisers to complete the post-training questionnaire also provided difficulties. I rang all principals of the 25 schools who had completed the training to request their assistance to arrange a meeting time for all appraisers and one appraisee nominated by the appraiser. I explained why I wanted to meet with this group and followed this discussion up with a written request outlining the same points, including my requirement that this request be circulated to all appraisers and their appraisees.

All but one principal responded positively to this request; four others expressed logistical concerns. The one principal who objected refused to ask staff to complete the questionnaire on the grounds that the MoE would need to provide more funding for this to occur. The four other principals felt that they could not get the staff together before

the end of the year to carry this out. Three principals promised to get back to me to set a date when I could meet with appraisers after discussing it with staff, but despite prompting this never occurred. The latter two responses were in keeping with many of my previous interactions with schools - these are frantic places, with managers and staff working in highly stressed, and overloaded conditions. Even though most principals were positive about my meeting with the appraisers, in all but two of the schools, appraisers arrived ill-informed about the reason for being there and had not been given my written request. Some brought appraisees who they had not yet appraised, some brought no appraisees at all, some had not even done the training, some had done no appraisals since the training - all of the latter were asked not to complete the questionnaire. In one school I had a delay of 15 minutes before a "messenger" could take me to the room where appraisers and appraisees were waiting for me. They were extremely unhappy about having to wait for me, and I am aware that this would have possibly tainted their willingness to respond. In another school I turned up to find that the principal had given a different date to the staff and we never successfully arranged another date.

Before issuing the questionnaires I covered the same issues associated with consent as I had for the pre-questionnaire, and responded to any concerns individuals may have had. Despite the earlier described difficulties associated with getting the appraisers and appraisees together, of the original 219 appraiser trainees who completed the training, 53 filled out the post-training questionnaire, and 53 of their appraisees did likewise. However, eight of these questionnaires for both appraisers and appraisees could not be matched, due to the provision of inaccurate or insufficient names or pseudonyms.

**Table 5.1: Response Rate**

<i>Total Appraisers</i>	<i>Total Response (Appraiser)</i>	<i>Total Response (Appraisee)</i>
Pre-Training Questionnaire: 219	10	7
Pre-Training Matches:	3	3
Post-Training Questionnaire: 219	53	53
Post-Training Matches	45	45

At approximately 20% this response rate is low. It is likely that more positive, committed appraisers turned up to fill in the questionnaire, and this in turn suggests a positive bias in results: a potential “non representativeness” of the wider appraiser and appraisee group. In my opinion this does not invalidate the findings, but it limits any ability to generalise the results.

### **Research Site**

For this intervention, the participant appraisers were trainees on courses in the areas of Northland, West Auckland, and Nelson/Marlborough. Their appraisees obviously were located in the same areas.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The questionnaires used in this, and every other phase of the research, met approval of criteria developed by the Auckland University Human Subjects Ethics Committee prior to transfer of the thesis to Massey University.

Consideration of ethical issues was critical to this research for both the short-term intervention described in this chapter, and the long-term intervention described later. These issues are discussed for both interventions. The ethical issues were multi-dimensional, and mirrored the ethics and values which underpinned the interventionist strategies associated with productive reasoning itself. Complete objectivity was impossible in Intervention #1 because I was the trainer and researcher. As noted earlier, in Intervention #1 I attempted to employ techniques to ensure anonymity to overcome the problems associated the conflict of interest.

The principle of truthfulness guided this entire thesis, as it does with productive reasoning, the approach adopted in the interventions in this research for developing educative processes in appraisal. Being explicit, or advocating my position, about my own role in the research, inviting response and feedback (inquiry) to this continuously (for example data in Interventions #2 was given to participants to comment on), and checking perceptions and being open to changing these, were all facets of the research. This is in keeping with Bailey's (2000) thinking:

Educational research, in this light, depends upon a conception of objectivity that is defined in terms of honest inquiry, openness to criticism and an unapologetic pursuit of the truth. (Bailey, 2000: 13)

This pursuit of truth, in Swann's terms (2000: 2), "goes hand in hand with the pursuit of improvement". Improvement for both the participant appraisers, their appraisees, and myself, was an intended outcome of this research. In pursuing this truth, the detection of error was a cornerstone of the training which guided both interventions. As described in the previous chapter, this detection of error through espousal and practice gap determination was one of the initial, consciousness-raising steps for both the appraisers engaged in the training, and for reflection on my own practice. Truth in this research, therefore, became a standard at which to aim: we were focusing on striving for truth, rather than trying to seek certainty. Such a perception of truth is localised and multifaceted, and acknowledges perceptions revealed by the likes of St Pierre (2000: 23)

who states that truth is not universal but “multiple, historical, contextual, contingent, political and bound up in power relations”.

As with the “State of Play” checklist used in the Reconnaissance phase, formalised consent was gained for involvement in Intervention #1 (Appendix 10). Verbal and written information (Appendix 11) was given to background the research. Again, as in the Reconnaissance investigation, the same suggestions from Bouma (1996) and Burns (1998) were followed for ensuring that the formalised consent process was ethically sound. The consent became particularly important with the use of the questionnaires in the second and third phases of the research, because there was much more at stake for participants with the comparison between appraiser and appraisee perspectives. The offer for the use of pseudonyms or codes for appraiser and appraisee sets was designed to minimise harm to the participants by reducing the potential for intrusion and identification.

#### Questionnaire Analysis

The quantitative, continuum, responses in the questionnaires were simply tallied for each appraiser and appraisee. These tally tables are presented with each set of results in this chapter.

Where applicable, that is where sufficient numbers of matched pairs existed, Spearman’s formula was used to determine the strength of association, or relationship, between appraiser and appraisee perceptions recorded in this quantitative section of the questionnaires (see Appendix 18 for the raw results). As the name Spearman’s formula for rank correlation suggests this test can be used with ranked data (as is the case with the questionnaire responses) rather than that which has actual, or equal unit, values. It provides a coefficient of rank correlation ( $r_{\text{rank}}$ ). Values for the coefficient range from -1 to +1, with the sign (- to +) of the coefficient indicating the direction of the relationship, and the numerical value indicating the strength of this relationship (larger values indicating a stronger relationship) at  $p < 0.05$ .

The initial plan was that this test would be used for all questions on the questionnaire which had ranked data. However, as Table 5.1 shows, because in some cases one of the paired set often did not respond, in several questions the number of cases (N) was too low to accurately apply the test (Q.5, Q.10, and Q14). Results from the Spearman's test are therefore only reported where correlations were statistically significant (Q.1, Q3, and Q4). I also employed another simple analysis of the raw matched pair data. Here, the extent of match to + or -1 was recorded for each paired set, for each question, in order to determine the extent of agreement between appraiser and appraisee continuum responses. The percentage of sets which fell within the + or - 1 range for each question was also calculated. These results are reported for each question.

It is arguable that the relatively low number of responses in this intervention renders this extent of statistical analysis somewhat borderline. Certainly, the results have not been considered to be generalisable.

Qualitative data obtained in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire was analysed using a thematic coding process. Here, the material was first analysed for recurring themes and then similar responses were aggregated under these themes. The reported results indicate similar responses in brackets after each theme is recorded.

The following section of this chapter reports on the results collected in the post-training Intervention #1 questionnaires.

## **RESULTS**

A major outcome of productive reasoning is a relationship characterised by mutual trust. The first section of the results provides an overview report on appraiser and appraisee perspectives on the extent of such trust in their appraisal relationship.

In the second section of the results more specific information is provided concerning the way in which appraisers implemented the first of the key guiding values and strategies which were emphasized in this productive reasoning training. This was the value of

sharing control (bilateralism) by increasing valid information in appraisal discussions. In the training, appraisers were encouraged to achieve this bilateralism through openness in exposing key information or perceptions (both positive and negative) and disclosing the evidence and the logic (including their thoughts about causes) that led to these perceptions. In particular, openness was linked to the ability of the appraiser and appraisee to discuss problems. The results are examined to determine whether this value of increasing valid information was practiced by appraisers, in order to demonstrate if the productive reasoning strategies were being implemented.

The next section of the results reports on another of the productive reasoning guiding values which was emphasized in the training. This was that of the appraiser helping the appraisee to gain internal commitment to improvement. The extent of planning for improvement, and the way in which this occurred as a joint, or bilateral, responsibility between appraiser and appraisee, is specifically discussed. Again, achievement of this by appraisers is another indicator of the success of the training in leading to an educative process.

Whether the training in productive reasoning had impacted on the way that appraisers were dealing with problems is also reported. In particular, the factors that might have led to changes in the appraiser attitude and behaviour are examined. The extent to which appraisal resulted in any resolution of problems is the penultimate focus of the report on results. The final section more generally reports on appraiser and appraisee perceptions of how trust, openness, and problem-solving can be enhanced in appraisal. The results are discussed under each of the themes identified above.

### **The Extent of Mutual Trust That Existed in the Appraisal**

If a major outcome of an educative process in appraisal is a relationship characterised by mutual trust, then the results from this generalised section of the questionnaire (Q.11) either suggest strong evidence of success of the training, or the pre-existence of high trust relationships. In the first two continuum categories 34 of the 44 appraisers responded positively concerning mutual trust between themselves and their appraisee. No

appraisers responded negatively, although the single (for both appraisers and appraisees) “no opinion” response is ambiguous. An even greater number of the appraisees (40 out of 45) considered that there was extensive trust in the appraisal relationship with their appraiser. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed that 79% (34 out of 43) of appraisers and their appraisees were in close agreement about the extent of trust that existed.

**Table 5.2: The Extent of Mutual Trust Which Existed in Appraisal**

	Extensively							Not at all
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion
<i>Appraiser</i>	22	12	7	2	0	0	0	1
<i>Appraisee</i>	30	10	4	0	0	0	0	1

Comments from both appraisers and appraisees supported this positive perception indicated in the continuum results. The overwhelming number (28) of appraiser comments were highly positive about the mutual trust relationship, as the following example comments show:

*Both were open and honest with each other and quite comfortable in the situation, as mutual trust had built up over a number of years. She is very professional in her work and personal ethics and as such engenders trust.*

Two appraisers pointed out that this was not immediate:

*Once the person saw the reasoning behind the task and the benefits.*

*I felt as though she was much less threatened than she has been. The first time we met I had to go and find her and remind her, and guide her just into starting. She was really resistant.*

Two other appraisers highlighted barriers to developing this trust relationship:

*My role as a principal appraising a beginning teacher does not always engender mutual trust.*

*Hard one: I believe the idea wasn't sold enough to staff...was to HoD's (Head of Departments)...How much does the HoD have to "spoon feed" appraisees? My appraisee seemed nonchalant, nonplussed, laissez faire attitude.*

These results for the appraisers were exceptionally positive, with only the latter two comments suggesting on-going negative relationships.

Appraisees were equally positive, with a full 35 comments supporting a good, mutual trust, relationship. Again, the following comment was representative of the tenor of many others:

*I am confident that my appraiser will use whatever I tell her to help me improve my performance in the classroom - she will not use it against me.*

Several (6) comments indicated that a long-term trust relationship is important for the success of the trust relationship in appraisal, and, in particular, one appraisee noted the importance of the on-going resolution of problems:

*I have a good relationship with my appraiser. Problems are always dealt with on the spot, so I felt no hidden/built-up agenda attached to our process.*

These last two points linked to a good relationship outside the appraisal process had been particularly emphasized in the training conducted. One appraiser made note of the fact that it takes time for this relationship to build, and that appraisal had somewhat enhanced this process.

Only two appraisees stated that there was no trust in the relationship, and their comments not only suggested why, but also indicated that not all of the appraisers undergoing the training had taken note of the importance of bilateral control.

*Still a difficult process with lots of judgemental overtones. As an appraisee I have to always work hard to distance myself from a control paranoia.*

*This appraisal seemed to be just a formality that had to be completed.*

The generalised set of perceptions on trust provide an interesting background to more detailed findings. As will be shown in the following more specific results, it would appear that these very positive perceptions of mutual trust exist despite the fact that some appraisers failed to be entirely open in the way that they dealt with problems.

### **Appraisal Discussions Relating to Positive Perceptions**

One of the assumptions in this research is that an educative, shared control, relationship in appraisal occurs when the productive reasoning value of increasing valid information is adopted. Here the skill of exposure of key positive and negative information, or perceptions, is critical. So is the disclosure of the evidence or logic that led to these perceptions. The employment of these skills is an indicator of an educative process in appraisal. The following results report first of all on the extent of this employment for positive perceptions.

#### **Holding Positive Perceptions**

The first part of this evaluation of the productive reasoning value of increasing valid information was designed to determine whether appraisers held positive views of their appraisees. The second part was to explore, in terms of productive reasoning strategies, whether these views were exposed. Exposure, in the appraisal context, meant that the views were actually discussed.

The results for the first aspect (Q.1), revealed that many appraisers believed there were positive aspects of the appraisee's performance (37 out of 44 in the two most positive categories). There were no negative responses. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed that 88% (39 out of 44) of appraisers and their appraisees were in close agreement about the extent of positive aspects of performance that existed. This was confirmed by the Spearman's test. The correlation revealed was moderate (+.297), positive and statistically significant.

**Table 5.3: The Extent to Which Appraisers Held Positive Views of Appraisees**

	Many positive aspects					No positive aspects		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>No Opinion</i>
<i>Appraiser</i>	18	19	4	2	1	0	0	0
<i>Appraisee</i>	19	18	5	1	1	0	0	1

This highly positive response from appraisers, and congruency with appraisees, was evident also in appraiser and appraisee qualitative comments. For appraisers, two major areas of positive performance were discerned. The first of these was linked to issues in teaching and learning; the second to aspects of the appraisal process. Bracketed numbers after each aspect indicate the frequency of comments, with no bracket indicating a single comment. In teaching and learning, many appraisers noted that they had good classroom management (14), that their appraisees were well prepared and well organised (11), were caring and helpful to students (8), dedicated to the job (3), had a good content knowledge (3), were innovative, were developing new programmes, made a difference to their students, and were open to change.

In the aspects of the appraisal process itself, appraisers noted that the appraisees were prepared to identify and tackle weak areas in positive ways (13), were positive, willing participants (6), were open to feedback (2), and open to change. One appraiser

commented on the honesty which existed about this positive performance, in the following way:

*There was a feeling of mutual trust, and I would say total honesty.*

Appraisee comment about the positive aspects that they felt their appraiser would perceive was very similar to that of the appraisers, and again could be categorised under the two aspects of teaching and learning, and the appraisal process. They made considerable comment on the general issue of appraisers feeling positive about their teaching work (18), specifically noting classroom management (13), their subject competence (5), and their good relationship with students (2). They also stated that they believed their appraiser would feel that through the appraisal process they had improved, and that they had met their appraisal objectives.

Not all comments from appraisees were quite so positive. One person noted that it was hard to know what the appraiser thought because the process was so quick. Another stated that an unresolved problem with the appraiser prior to the appraisal process influenced their thinking about how positively their appraiser would be thinking. Finally, one appraisee suggested that the appraiser's frequent comparisons with another appraisee, meant that they felt this appraiser would not judge them on their own efforts and achievements.

#### Positive Discussions - Exposing Perceptions

Holding positive, or any other perceptions, of appraisees, in a productive reasoning approach, is not enough. Exposing, or discussing these perceptions is crucial. Just over half (24 out of 45) of the appraisers stated that they extensively (continuum categories 1&2) discussed positive issues: slightly fewer (22 out of 45) appraisees reported that this had occurred. These continuum responses for this issue (Q.2) were not as positive as the previously reported perceptions of the existence of mutual trust. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed

that 66% (26 out of 39) of appraisers and their appraisees were in close agreement about the extent of discussion of positive issues.

**Table 5.4: Extent to Which Appraiser Discussed Positive Perceptions**

	Extensively					No discussion		<i>No Opinion</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
<i>Appraiser</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Appraisee</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>

Qualitative comments from appraisers were more positive than the continuum results indicated, with 34 respondents noting that positive discussion had occurred, and two of these further stating that this had been in written as well as verbal form. Only one appraiser indicated that there was little time to discuss issues.

Most appraisee comments also indicated that discussion of positive aspects of their performance had occurred, and they were somewhat more specific about the quality of this. For example, seven of the 20 appraisees reported that positive discussion had occurred (three in written form as well), and stated that this was very positive. A further six said that it included discussion about improvement, seven that it had been very specific and based on evidence, and one that it had clarified issues between the appraiser and themselves. The appraisees also identified some negative features of the feedback which were not apparent in the appraiser comments. One person noted that the discussion had not yet occurred at all, another that the discussion had taken the form of just a signing off, yet another that it had involved no indication of quality, and finally one stated it was just in passing only.

### **Appraisal Discussions Relating to Negative Perceptions**

Positive perceptions are usually the easiest to discuss. Negative perceptions/concerns, if held, are much harder to discuss. In the productive reasoning training, openness about

difficulties or concerns was emphasized as being a key to the development of trust-based appraisal, and considerable time was devoted to assisting appraisers to achieve this. The implications of avoidance of discussing negative perceptions in terms of jeopardising trust were covered in detail as part of the outline of defensive reasoning, and the implementation of critical dialogue skills focused strongly on the process involved in raising concerns and dealing with these. Whether appraisers had actually discussed their concerns was therefore a crucial indicator of the success of the training in terms of it leading to educative process outcomes. If the training had been effective, I would have predicted that there would have been a consistent pattern between the results for appraisers reporting that they held concerns and the extent to which they discussed these.

The first section of the following set of results reports on the extent to which appraisers held concerns about their appraisee's performance, and whether they exposed, or discussed these concerns, and provided evidence to support this. Whether appraisers had ideas/thoughts about the causes of concerns, and the extent to which they actually discussed these ideas is examined next. Finally, in this section, these specific results relating to concerns are compared with those generally made by appraisers and appraisees about the openness which existed in discussing concerns.

#### Holding Negative Perceptions

The continuum results (for Q.3) suggest strongly that very few of the appraisers (one in the extensive two categories) held concerns, or negative perceptions, about their appraisee's performance, and appraisees themselves believed that this was the case also. If the two most positive, no concerns, columns (continuum sections 6&7) are combined the results are close again between appraisers (34 out of 45) and appraisees overall (33 out of 45). The closeness of the relationship between individual sets of appraisers and appraisees (measured via the Spearman's correlation coefficient test) is also revealed as moderate (+.329), and statistically significant. However, the distribution of these results is skewed, and this may have invalidated the test. For this reason the more simple analysis was compared with the Spearman's results. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed that

71% (28 out of 39) of appraisers and their appraisees were in close agreement about the extent to which the appraiser held concerns about the appraisee's performance. This supports the Spearman's test results.

**Table 5.5: Extent to Which Appraiser Held Concerns About Appraisee's Performance**

	Extensive					No concerns		<i>No Opinion</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
<i>Appraiser</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Appraisee</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>5</i>

The qualitative comments, however, painted a different picture. Statements from 22 appraisers indicated that they did hold concerns. These concerns mainly focused on classroom management and teaching approach issues, including appraisees using more varied lessons (2), giving clearer instructions, employing improved questioning (2), being more positive with students (2), keeping students on task (3), becoming less nagging, improving time and workload management (3), better planning (2), better assessment, improving limited subject knowledge (2), and working to objectives. Also included were the management issues of delegation, meeting facilitation, and "giving drive to programmes". Three other appraisers made what could be construed as obscure reference to concerns, such as that their appraisee was "trying hard, settling in".

Appraisee comments were also discrepant with the continuum responses. Although 13 appraisees stated that they believed their appraiser had no concerns about their performance, and that the appraiser was supportive and positive (3), another 14 indicated that they believed there would be concerns, and a further two were unsure.

### Negative Discussions - Exposing Perceptions

The question relating to this section (Q.4), sought to determine the extent to which appraisers actually discussed their concerns. If the continuum categories 1&2 are combined, more appraisers (5) and appraisees (7) stated that they extensively discussed concerns than those noting in the previous continuum that these concerns were held. The Spearman's test result indicates a moderate (+.454), positive, and statistically significant correlation. There is a better spread in these results, as opposed to the skewed distribution shown in the holding positive and negative perceptions results, and so the Spearman's test is a valid tool for analysis.

**Table 5.6: Extent to Which Appraiser Discussed Negative Concerns**

	Extensively					Not at all		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>No Opinion</i>
<i>Appraiser</i>	1	4	2	7	4	4	10	10
<i>Appraisee</i>	2	5	4	5	1	7	4	18

The qualitative comment results for this question, again like the comments from the previous section on perceptions of concerns, conflicted with those of the continuum. A considerably higher number of appraiser comments (14) indicated in some way that they had fully discussed their concerns with their appraisees, two stated that this was yet to happen, and a further appraiser said that this was still needed. Another two appraisers noted that the concerns were discussed in passing only, and not deeply. Some appraisers (5) suggested that no discussion was needed, but a further 25 made no comment in this section at all, perhaps indicating that because they felt there was no concern, then no discussion would have occurred. Some avoidance is also noted in this section of comments, as demonstrated in the following:

*We understand the students' behaviour, and don't dwell on problems - we stay positive.*

Of interest was the fact that 21 appraisees noted that their appraiser had discussed concerns with them. This is considerably higher than the appraiser report. Two appraisees suggested that the discussion of concerns was more of an extension to their normal discussions. Two further stated that the discussion had yet to occur, and two others that positive feedback only had occurred - “*couched in ‘nice’ terms*”, as one appraiser put it. One person indicated that it was them, as the appraiser, who had raised the concern, not the appraiser.

Disclosing the Evidence That Led to Views/Perceptions

Whether the appraiser provided any evidence to support their perceptions was the next part of the evaluation of the implementation of the productive reasoning strategies linked to the value of increasing valid information (Q.5). The results for the most positive categories (extensive supporting evidence provided), that is the combined 1&2 categories, indicated that nine appraisers felt that they used evidence to support their views. Fewer appraisees (6), thought that this was the case. There were too few responses for this question to carry out either the Spearman’s test or the more simple analysis to determine agreement between appraiser and appraiser responses.

**Table 5.7: Extent to Which Appraiser Disclosed Evidence To Support Perceptions**

	Extensively					No support		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion
<i>Appraiser</i>	2	7	3	3	0	2	5	21
<i>Appraisee</i>	4	2	1	5	2	1	2	28

The continuum results for this section were in keeping with the comments provided. Ten appraisers stated that they used specific examples as evidence in discussing concerns with appraisees. Some stated the nature of this evidence, and it included that derived from classroom observation (3), discussion with students, student evaluations, teacher

comments, peer review, ERO checklists, and planning documentation. Four appraisers noted that they had not seen relevant evidence from their appraisees. Another three appraisers suggested that the evidence had been only impressions or comments.

A smaller number of appraisees (7) commented that their appraisers used specific evidence when discussing concerns. Two others noted that little or no evidence was provided, two that this was yet to be done, and in keeping with the appraiser comments there were three appraisees that suggested the evidence was only impression or comment.

Of note is the difference between the number of appraisers stating in the comments for the previous section results that they discussed concerns with their appraisee (14), and those who did so with evidence (10). If the appraisee responses are to be considered as a more accurate portrayal of what actually occurred then only half of these appraisers (7) used evidence in the discussion.

Having an Awareness About the Logic that Led to Views/Perceptions

Logic in this instance is defined as the ideas/thoughts that the appraiser held about the causes of the concerns that they had of their appraisee’s performance. Similarly the appraisee was asked if they had any thoughts about the causes of their concerns. Where concerns were held, the appraiser and appraisee group had a similar response rate indicating that they had thoughts about the causes.

**Table 5.8: Ideas on the Causes of Concerns About the Appraisee’s Performance**

	Yes	No	Not Appl.
Appraiser	18	9	18
Appraisee	17	12	16

All 18 appraiser comments for this question revealed varied, but clear ideas on the causes of the concerns about their appraisee’s performance. These included difficult students, inadequate variation in lessons, sickness, lack of confidence (2), personality clashes, too

high expectations of the teacher, unfamiliarity with new curriculum, lack of knowledge and experience, feeling pressured to complete lessons in allocated times, difficulty in trusting staff, facing a totally different teaching environment to the previous school, lack of rigour in organization, poor judgement, the appraisee's inability to acknowledge that they felt undervalued, unwillingness to change, appraisee insecurity because of lack of permanent appointment, poor health and poor self esteem because of stress of teaching.

Although 17 appraisees responded positively ("Yes") to having thoughts about the causes of the concerns, 21 in total stated causes in the comments section, again highlighting a degree of inconsistency in reporting by respondents. These causes were almost identical to the list noted by appraisers. In addition appraisees added lack of thorough planning, and nervousness in front of the appraiser. Two appraisees stated that they had raised the concerns themselves, not the appraiser.

#### Extent that the Appraiser and Appraisee Discussed Causes of Concerns/Problems

Discussing concerns is one thing, but revealing the thoughts and ideas about the causes of concerns or problems is another, and deeper, level of openness.

There was a gap between the continuum results for this question (Q.7) and that of the previous section on appraisers having ideas or thoughts about the causes of their concerns. It would seem that few appraisers who had thoughts about the causes (18 in the previous section) actually extensively discussed these causes with their appraisees (4 in this continuum section). For appraisees this gap is also large, with 17 appraisees overall suggesting that they had thoughts about their concerns, and seven indicating that their appraiser discussed the causes of their concerns. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed that only 46% (7 out of 15) of appraisers and their appraisees responding were in close agreement about the extent to which the appraiser discussed concerns. Ironically, more appraisers than appraisees thought that no discussion had occurred.

**Table 5.9: Extent that the Appraiser and Appraisee Discussed Causes of Concerns/Problems**

	Extensively					No discussion		<i>No Opinion</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
<i>Appraiser</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Appraisee</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>25</i>

Comments from appraisers indicate similar frequency of responses to that shown in the continuum. Four appraisers stated that they had definitely discussed the causes of their concerns, with one saying that this had been done in an effective and caring way. Five other appraisers made statements suggesting that the discussion had somewhat occurred, but avoidance is evident, in the following examples:

*We are both well aware of the problem with some of the third forms. It was not necessary to dwell on it.*

*Did not over emphasize - just as possible suggestions - I was not criticising.*

*It is the kind of thing that can only be resolved with time by pointing it out, but by not making too much of a fuss. We'll come back to it.*

*Guarded support. I didn't want to intrude or appear to be nosy.*

Comments from appraisees were a little more positive than appraisers about discussion occurring. Several (10) appraisees stated that the causes had been discussed fully. One respondent noted:

*It was great to share feelings and feel comfortable expressing these.*

Two said that this had occurred briefly only, and another that it was informal.

The results for this section highlight inconsistency between the appraiser and appraisee responses. These results raise the possibility of appraiser avoidance in acknowledging that they discussed causes of the concerns that existed, perhaps suggesting that they were protecting their appraisee. The inconsistency of results for appraisers and appraisees was further magnified in perceptions of openness in discussing concerns generally.

Extent of Appraiser Openness in Discussing Concerns

The results for the extent of appraiser openness generally in discussing concerns (Q.8) are considerably more positive than more detailed responses reported in the previous section.

The continuum results indicated that 20 appraisers believed that they were extensively open (categories 1&2) in their discussion of concerns. Even more appraisees (28) felt that their appraiser had been open. The analysis of extent of + or -1 agreement between matched pair continuum responses for this question revealed that 83% (20 out of 24) of appraisers and their appraisees were in close agreement about the extent of appraiser openness in discussing concerns.

**Table 5.10: Extent of Appraiser Openness in Discussing Concerns**

	Extensively				No openness				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion	
<i>Appraiser</i>	10	10	5	0	1	0	1	18	
<i>Appraisee</i>	18	10	5	1	1	1	0	9	

The qualitative comments are more positive than those of the continuum, with 26 appraisers stating that they were very open with their appraisee in discussing concerns. The following two comments demonstrate this:

*Totally open in that we have a very good relationship of open trust where we can openly discuss any concerns.*

*Friendly, frank and comfortable.*

Five appraisers noted that they did not have any concerns, but if they had then these would have been discussed. Ten other appraisers simply said that there were no concerns. Two appraisers stated that they found this openness difficult, for different reasons. One said that because the appraisee was older they felt awkward in discussing concerns, and the other felt that they needed time to plan how to go about this professionally.

In these qualitative comments, appraisees were even more positive than their appraisers in stating that they felt that their appraiser was open in discussing concerns. Many (28) responded in a similar way to the following example comments:

*I was able to talk fully and frankly on all issues and felt I was being listened to.*

*I trust my appraiser to be constructive and am not afraid to tell her about areas where I feel I can improve.*

However, it appears that not all appraisers practised the listening and bilateralism skills that the training had emphasized, as this comment from an appraisee reveals:

*Listened to all he had to say!*

The following comment from one appraisee indicates that the way appraisal is approached, and the time it is accorded influences openness:

*The appraisal seemed to be part of administrative work, an extra burden/job. It did not accomplish much in the way of improving teaching. It was too brief for much discussion and openness.*

Two further appraisees noted that they felt their appraiser held back from being open with them. In total, therefore, only four appraisees out of the total of 45 indicated that they felt that their appraiser lacked openness in discussing concerns.

#### Comparison of Results for Dealing with Concerns

When the continuum results from each component of this section on dealing with concerns/problems were compared it became immediately apparent that there was an inconsistency between the generalised perceptions about openness and the detailed actions in discussing concerns.

**Table 5.11: Comparison of Results for Dealing with Concerns**

	<i>Appraiser (Nos.)</i>	<i>Appraisee (Nos.)</i>
<i>Held ext. * negative perceptions</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Held ext. discussion about concerns</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Provided ext. evidence in discussion</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Held thoughts about causes</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Ext. discussed causes of concerns</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Ext. open in discussing concerns</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>28</i>

Ext\* Extensive rating (1-2) on the continuum

The continuum results indicated that only one appraiser stated that s/he held extensive concerns about their appraisee's performance, and few (5) reported that they held even moderate (in 3&4 category) concerns. The qualitative comments, for whatever reason,

however, contradicted these continuum results with a full 22 appraisers suggesting that they did hold concerns. These comments were further supported by the result indicating that 18 appraisers held thoughts about the causes of their concerns. If we take these latter two results as a more accurate indicator of the existence of concerns than those of the continuum, then we can summarise that a considerable number of appraisers did hold concerns, and had thought about the causes of these. Of interest next is whether they discussed these concerns and their thoughts about the causes.

Very few (5) of these appraisers holding concerns indicated that they held extensive discussion about these concerns themselves, or their thoughts about the causes (4). Of interest also was the fact that a larger number (9) of appraisers stated that they provided extensive evidence in these discussions, than those indicating that they had extensive discussion itself.

It would seem that both appraisers and appraisees had forgotten that these latter strategies were required to establish openness. Many appraisers believed that they were extensively open in their discussion of concerns (20 in categories 1&2), despite the fact that several had failed to actually hold a discussion, reveal their thinking, or the evidence that supported it.

### **Helping the Appraisee to Gain Internal Commitment to Improvement**

In the productive reasoning training, the issue of bilateral, or joint, agreement about planning solutions for improvement was an area of considerable emphasis. Regardless of whether problems/concerns existed or not, all appraisees are required to achieve specific objectives under the appraisal guidelines. Planning for these objectives, as I have outlined elsewhere (Piggot-Irvine, 1999), is a critical part of the process which should be done at a deep, or substantial, level.

The need for the appraiser to support the appraisee in developing her/his own ideas for planning, and assisting the appraiser to withhold from giving answers or solutions, was a particular focus in the training. Additionally, the importance of gaining appraisee

commitment to following through with the structured plan for improvement, and the need for the appraiser to monitor this was also emphasized. All of the latter were explicitly outlined in the critical dialogue process, and were developed through role practise in training.

Extent of Planning for any Improvement Relating to any Concerns Discussed

The continuum results indicated that the gap between appraiser (4 in categories 1&2) and appraisee (24) perceptions of extensive planning for improvement was considerable (Q.9). It would appear that appraisers may not have been aware of the extent to which appraisees planned for improvement, and this seems to indicate that they were neither bilaterally involved in the planning, or the plan monitoring.

**Table 5.12: Extent of Planning for any Improvement Relating to any Concerns Discussed**

	Extensively				No planning			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion
<i>Appraiser</i>	1	3	5	6	0	1	4	25
<i>Appraisee</i>	2	12	6	4	2	0	3	13

In keeping with the continuum results, five appraisers commented that the planning had been good, with a further three stating that the planning had occurred, but either the plan had not been completed due to limitations such as a lack of development, no relevant training course availability, or they had extended the deadline:

*We did plan, she lost courage at some points. She said she will keep working on this.*

Three appraisers said that they were thinking about planning, and four that there had been no planning.

Eight appraisees commented that the planning had been good - considerably less than that indicated in the continuum results. A further 13 appraisees intimated that discussion, rather than formal planning had occurred, and five more stated that it would be done in the future. Three appraisees noted that no planning had occurred. Two other appraisees said that the appraiser had given their own solutions to the problem (something which I had encouraged appraisers not to do in workshops).

#### Extent of Plan Implementation

The previous continuum results suggested that few plans were made, and even fewer plans were extensively implemented when they were made. Again, the higher appraiser scores indicated that where their plan implementation was carried out, some appraisers were not aware of this.

**Table 5.13: Extent of Plan Implementation**

	Extensively						Not at all	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion
<i>Appraiser</i>	1	4	2	2	1	0	3	32
<i>Appraisee</i>	1	6	5	7	0	2	2	22

The comment results suggested that appraisers thought that few plans were made, and even fewer plans were extensively implemented when they were made. Four appraisers commented that the plans were fully implemented, with one stating that this had been effective - *Major effect - worked well*. Four appraisers said that they were working on the implementation of plans, and nine that it would be done in the following year. One appraiser commented that they were not aware of implementation, and another that implementation had not occurred.

Four appraisees said that the plans were fully implemented, eight that they were working on it, and six that this would be done the following year. Three appraisees commented that the implementation had not occurred at all, with this comment suggesting a little more apathy than most:

*I have not made a great effort to implement these plans of providing more variety to my lessons.*

### **Impact of the Training Itself on the Resolution of Problems**

The extent to which the training itself had impacted on the way that appraisers were dealing with problems was an important aspect of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Although this question was not addressed directly in the questionnaire, appraisers and appraisees were asked about the extent to which the appraiser had changed the way they were dealing with negative issues in appraisal (Q.12) and what they thought had contributed to any changes in attitudes and behaviours (Q.13). The responses to these two questions were examined to specifically ascertain whether the training had impacted on any changes.

#### **Extent that Appraiser had Changed the way they were Dealing with Negative Issues**

Overall, the continuum results revealed that the greatest majority of appraisers were positive about the extent to which they had changed the way that they were dealing with negative issues in appraisal (Q.12). Appraisees responded in a much more mixed way to this question.

**Table 5.14: Extent that Training had Changed the Way Appraisers were Dealing with Negative Issues**

	Extensively							Not at all	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion	
<i>Appraiser</i>	5	12	12	5	1	2	3	5	
<i>Appraisee</i>	5	1	6	3	4	3	4	19	

The qualitative comments provided specific information about the way in which this impact had occurred. Many (35 out of 39) comments from appraisers were positive about the way in which the training had changed the way they dealt with negative issues. Some (11) of these comments just referred to the fact that they dealt with the issues better after the training. Six noted that they gained more confidence about dealing with negative issues, as this representative comment, which may, or may not be linked to training, illustrates:

*Continued to build confidence at addressing difficult issues in the appraisal interview in a positive way and gaining an open acknowledgement of this.*

Four appraisers stated that the training had helped them to become more specific, focused, and to realise the importance of using evidence.

*The process has been more formalised and directed and therefore more open. Staff need to bring along evidence, such as student evaluations.*

This impact of the training on emphasising being more open was reiterated by four other appraisers. One appraiser stated that they were now more sensitive to others' feelings. Two others noted that they now listened better, and a further two stated that the training had helped them to make the process less threatening:

*Considerably - any risk of antagonism wiped out.*

Three appraisers noted particularly that the training had helped them to discuss, rather than avoid, negative issues, as this comment demonstrates:

*Both parties are aware that positive outcomes can be achieved if faults can be addressed in a sensitive, amicable way.*

One appraiser commented that they were now aware of the importance of seeking solutions, and another stated that they were using the critical dialogue approach outside the appraisal process as well. Two appraisers noted that they had always used this type of approach and so little change was needed. A further three stated that they would use the skills discussed in the training at a future time.

Of all of the comments provided by appraisers only five were negative. Of these, four of the appraisers stated that they did not use the approach suggested in training with the specific appraisee they were paired to respond with for the questionnaire, because there were no problems, but they did note that they would use it with others.

*It's still an uncomfortable thing to do, especially with an average teacher or one who is out of their depth. It's an extra burden on an already over-abused group, the HoDs.*

Appraisee comments for this question were reflective of the continuum results, and demonstrated that appraisees were less positive about any changes in their appraiser. Several (16) positive comments were made about the impact of the training on the appraisers dealing with negative issues. Most (10) of these stated in some way that the impact of aspects of the critical dialogue skills was evident, as this comment shows:

*I am more open and able to discuss issues fully without concerns that this will be counted against me, or that issues will be kept confidential. I also feel that concerns I raise are being heard and solutions being found.*

One appraisee noted that their appraiser was an excellent role model for them as an appraiser, two others said that their relationship with their appraiser had become more open, and one that the planning was more thorough. Two appraisees stated that their appraiser was dealing with problems well, but they did not know if that was due to the training. Yet another said that their appraiser's confidence was growing:

*She is gaining confidence in being honest. I believe our appraisal course has created some deep thinking and made some changes more comfortable, This, I'm sure will inevitably lead to more comfort in dealing with negative issues.*

Some comments from appraisees pinpoint caution about the openness in dealing with problems. One noted that they were still worried about the use of the information and results from appraisal when negative issues were dealt with, and two others suggested that it was the system that was not trustworthy. One of these stated:

*I have a long way to go in "trust". My appraiser is very trustworthy, however I have a distrust of the system.*

Contrary to the intent of the training, one appraisee stated that the training may have made their appraiser more hesitant about dealing with negative issues:

*I feel the training may have made him slightly more afraid to tell appraisees exactly what they could improve on.*

### Specific Factors (Including Training) Contributing to Any Changes in Appraiser Attitudes or Behaviours

This question (Q.13) had no continuum component. Appraiser comments provided varied reasons for changes in their attitudes or behaviours. Ten appraisers stated simply in some way or another that the training courses had just helped them.

*The “developing trust” session and continually thinking about how to conduct better interviews.*

Two appraisers stated more specifically that the courses had raised their awareness of the importance of being positive, an interesting perspective because the training in trust development more strongly emphasized dealing with negative issues. One appraiser felt that the training had helped her/him to improve their listening and responding skills; two that it had made them aware of the need for a constructive, supportive, and sensitive process, and another that it had made them aware of the appraisee’s perspective. Other factors in the training which had specifically attributed to change in the appraisers included gaining confidence (2), and an awareness of boundary issues:

*A better grip on the plot enables me to speak from a safer/more confident base, I am also aware of competency issues and know when to steer clear and pass it on to someone more experienced.*

An awareness of the need for ownership of problems by the appraisee, the issue itself of confronting problems, and having confidence to do this (3), gaining a knowledge of the appraisal system and procedures (7) and its long-term impact, were also outcomes for change from the training noted by appraisers. Also mentioned was employing an approach which was less threatening for appraisees (2) and which had no hidden agenda, the importance of seeing all perspectives, an awareness of the importance of professional development in appraisal (2), and being specific (2). The use of role practice in the training was seen by one appraiser to have changed them, and finally, relating to factors influencing change, one appraiser said that they now had “*the confidence to admit the*

*screaming gut*". This latter point refers to a term which I employed to describe the need to have an awareness of when your instincts suggest that there is a bigger issue at stake. In my own practice, when I get a "screaming gut" type reaction this always indicates to me that there are deeper issues which need to be addressed in order to resolve a problem. I encouraged the trainees to do the same.

Only five appraisers referred to factors outside the training which had contributed to changes in their attitude or behaviour. Two alluded to the fact that it was the appraisee who had most contributed to the changes in their attitudes. One stated that it was the professionalism of the appraisee which had contributed to their change in attitude:

*The quality and professionalism of my appraisees - which to date exceeded mine.*

The other appraiser reporting on this impact of the appraisee, stated that they had been influenced by the appraisee's positive response to feedback. Other influences in terms of change which were unrelated to the training included comments from two appraisers that simply practice and being a second year appraiser had assisted. Another stated that knowing the appraisee helped.

Only two comments were negative concerning factors influencing change. One appraiser suggested that they were not sure if change had occurred as a result of the training, and the following comment, although positive about the training, indicates cynicism about the overall outcomes of appraisal:

*The training helped, surely. Appraisals still a bit wishy washy...one wonders if it is going to be really useful or just more corporate window dressing. Navel gazing?!*

Although considerably fewer appraisees responded to this question (28 did not comment) about what had contributed to their appraiser changes, again the most frequently cited factor was the training. More specifically the training was stated to have given the

appraiser a raised awareness about the need for trust (4) and about the process of appraisal itself (2). It had also given them confidence (2), and exposure to new ideas.

Other factors, which were not specifically linked to the training, but which were seen by appraisees to contribute to changes in the appraiser included the appraiser having more empathy (2), openness (2), more contact with the appraisee, a preparedness to listen (2), and experience (2). The influence of working collaboratively was also mentioned:

*Establishing positive, proactive strategies together and as a team and working to achieve this.*

Two appraisees stated that they did not know what had contributed to change in their appraiser, and one stated that their appraiser had not changed at all:

*Attitudes and behaviours not changed from 1998 when appraiser was the same person.*

#### Extent that the Appraisal has Actually Resulted in the Resolution of Any of the Issues or Problems Identified

There was an almost equal, and thin, spread of continuum results for appraisers reporting on the extent that appraisal resulted in the resolution of problems (Q.14). This set of results therefore provided little clear information about this issue, and the numbers were too low to be statistically analysed.

**Table 5.15: Extent that the Appraisal has Actually Resulted in the Resolution of any of the Issues or Problems Identified**

	Extensively				Not at all			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Opinion
<i>Appraiser</i>	1	4	5	2	1	0	8	24
<i>Appraisee</i>	2	2	3	3	1	2	2	30

The qualitative comments, however, painted a considerably more positive picture. In fact, only one appraiser stated that the issue identified had not been resolved. Some responses were highly positive about resolution (4), as the following example where an appraisee had a problem with other staff in the department shows:

*Without the appraisal this staff member would still be resentful, often appearing quite surly and detached from her department. It feels as though she's more comfortable about offering to contribute. Her offers of help are being welcomed by colleagues.*

Other comments from appraisers indicated that the appraisee was looking at issues more closely, that the appraisal process had brought the issue to the appraisee's attention: raised their consciousness (2), that it provided a focus for tasks to be done, and that it had resulted in appraisees being more confident in their ability to make changes (2), or the appraiser's confidence to approach these issues (2).

*I am no longer avoiding the serious concerns I have about a staff member in the department. Unfortunately I do not appraise her but I have frequent meetings with her. I now approach these with confidence. Thank you.*

Other appraisers noted that it was too early to tell whether the problems had been resolved (4), and one stated that it had not yet happened. Several appraisers said that there were no problems to solve (4), and the 24 “no comments” in this section may be a further indication of this same perception.

Many appraisee qualitative comments suggested that problem resolution was also positive. Some suggested that this was very positive (5). Others stated (all single comments) that they had a raised awareness of the problems, they had changed their attitude as a result, that the process had allowed the appraiser and appraisee to work together on strategies that helped, that the process had provided a forum for the problems to be dealt with, and that it had helped to focus on the issues.

*Provided I keep remembering and focusing on the issue - it helped me to focus.*

One appraisee said that dealing with the negative issues would come in time. Another stated that there were still issues that needed to be worked on. Six other appraisees suggested that there were no problems to be resolved. Again, the fact that 30 appraisees did not comment in this section may suggest support for the fact that there were no problems.

### **Perceptions on How Trust, Openness, and Problem-Solving Could be Enhanced in Appraisal**

Many suggestions were made for the way in which trust, openness and problem-solving could be developed in appraisal (Q.15). Looking at the appraiser comments first, the highest frequency of similar responses related to making, or taking, time to allow this to happen (7), as this comment indicates:

*Time - use class time - counterproductive, use staff time - resentment - already under stress, that is a problem - any solutions?*

The next most frequently recorded suggestions were continuing with training (3) including whole staff training and using specific observation training, the importance of being honest in all situations rather than just in appraisal (5), having more casual contact with the appraisee so that the appraiser knew them better, simply having more experience in the role (2), and the system of appraisal itself having integrity and value (2).

A large number of suggestions were made by single appraisers. These included process issues such as avoiding adopting a superficial approach, seeing it as a long-term process, having support from the top for appraisal, making sure there was follow-up/follow-through, having a collaborative problem-solving process, establishing a no-risk and non-threatening environment, having a consistent appraiser from year to year, ensuring confidentiality in the process, the process emphasising the positives, creating a forum for sharing ideas with other appraisers, having knowledge of the process, and confidence in what you are doing.

Interpersonal issues that were raised included ensuring the compatibility of appraisers and appraisees, adopting a mentor type relationship with the appraisee, valuing, caring and respecting each other, and providing support and backing for the appraisee.

*It's a leadership thing - to lead from the front, to back one's staff with the pupils, board, principal, and parents. To fight for finances on matters staff may have raised. To be the "big ear" to them, the staff shoulder.*

Other comments linked to focusing more on the students in the process, to emphasising more the development component of appraisal, and a suggestion that external to the appraisal process sharing duties each year would enhance trust. The latter comment was somewhat in keeping with earlier noted suggestions about having good trust engendering relationships outside appraisal.

Only two comments were tentative about developing trust. One of these appraisers stated:

*Jury is still out - still developing getting alongside - rather than being in the director chair.*

The other said:

*I am a traditional appraiser who prefers to have a prescribed job description to "check off" the boxes. The appraiser/appraisee friendly approach requires me to carry and solve/resolve problems with the appraisee - more positive and more work.*

Appraisees had many similar suggestions to the appraisers, with the highest frequency comment also being that trust needed to be established outside and before appraisal (7). Knowing the appraiser can have a negative side also, as this comment reveals:

*I think it is difficult to go beyond past experiences when both parties come to an appraisal though it is remarkable how even close associates can feel awkwardness when appraisal begins.*

One off, general, suggestions which were raised by appraisees which had not been noted by appraisers included having a choice of your appraiser, establishing a culture of trust and openness in the whole school (from the top down), the appraiser having more teaching experience than the appraisee, willingness to change on the part of the appraisee, ensuring that you have a great HoD (Head of Department), dealing with issues as they arise rather than waiting for appraisal, having ownership of the process, by having review of the process, establishing clear criteria and documentation, and having clear objectives.

Interpersonal issues which were not noted by appraisers, but were by appraisees included the appraiser having empathy rather than aloofness, and also having tact, a genuine willingness on the part of the appraiser to hear rather than just listen, and having clear

roles in the interactions. The following two comments from appraisees summarised the sentiments of several others:

*I think that the process helps a part time teacher like myself to feel understood and supported. I felt that there was trust in the relationship and that there was a sense in which my appraiser supported and believed in what I was trying to achieve. There were no concerns as such so can't really comment on the problem solving. At first being appraised seemed like just another administrative chore to be endured but I have found it a positive experience. My appraiser was a listener rather than a talker and didn't try to be too directive so in that sense I felt that my opinion and views were heard. Now I feel that appraisal is a valuable process and I feel I have grown in my professional confidence. Appraisal has helped me verbalise, formalise and achieve goals I might not have.*

*I think your model of how can we solve this in the sharing of the problem is very empowering to the appraisee. NB. Our initial appraisals way back in the late 1980s were pretty horrendous – we were untrained – knew little about what to expect and felt really put on the spot. I'm sure it was the same for the appraiser – for me – I was made the target of a criticism by the then principal (not my appraiser) about my performance – BUT indirectly. So we have come a long way since then – there has had to be relearning in this process and the healing of damage – so I do think we've come a long way given all that.*

Two appraisees were also tentative about the development of trust. Both alluded to the fact that there needed to be proof of effectiveness, as noted in the following comment:

*Time must prove that this process is to help teachers improve professionally; rather than be used to judge teachers.*

The key features in the development of trust, openness and problem resolution which were raised by the participants are those of process clarity, existing respect, dealing with

problems using a critical dialogue type approach, having time to prepare, and carrying the process out well rather than superficially. Those which might jeopardise this were stated as linking appraisal to summative processes such as attestation, and having the same personnel carrying out competency proceedings.

In summary therefore, the appraisers responding to this survey noted that the most important factor contributing to trust development was time: making time and taking time to carry out this process well. Continuing training (for all staff, not just appraisers) was also mentioned as an important component of trust development. The other predominant component of trust development mentioned by appraisers was that of developing honest interactions in all situations - not just that of appraisal. This latter point was also stated as the most important aspect by appraisees.

## **DISCUSSION**

This final discussion for the Intervention #1 summarises the extent to which the results have enabled me to answer each of the components subquestions a and b for research question 3.

### **Whether the Intervention Led to an Educative Process**

Although the generalised results indicate the existence of a good mutual trust relationship between appraisers and appraisees, it is less obvious that the productive reasoning skills of openly disclosing evidence and the logic associated with perceptions have been employed to achieve this trust. This is particularly obvious where the appraiser had negative perceptions of the appraisee. The disclosure of evidence and logic related to positive perceptions was reported to have occurred more frequently in the results than that of negative perceptions, even when inconsistencies between the quantitative and qualitative results are taken into account. This signals, somewhat predictably, that appraisers were more likely to avoid discussing negative perceptions than those that were positive. Of concern also, was the fact that, as noted earlier, several appraisers actually believed that they were extensively open in their discussion of concerns, despite the fact that several had failed to actually hold a discussion, to reveal their thinking, or the

evidence that supported it. It would seem that, even with the training, some appraisers deluded themselves about the extent to which they employed the educative process skills.

In terms of another of the productive reasoning strategies, that of the employment of bilateralism skills in planning for improvement, a similar disappointing employment of the learning from the training was evident in the results. The results show that appraisees largely did this planning without joint input from their appraiser.

The productive reasoning strategy of monitoring was also lacking in the follow-up of implementation of the plans which appraisees had made. It is not surprising, as a consequence, that few plans were extensively implemented.

In general, and contrary to the way that these results indicated that appraisers actually utilised productive reasoning strategies, the greatest majority of appraisers felt that they had changed in the way that they were dealing with negative issues in appraisal. Many specifically stated that the training had helped them to deal with, rather than avoid, negative issues in appraisal. In particular, they noted that they had gained more confidence, as well as becoming more specific and focused. They also suggested that they now realised the importance of using evidence, and being more open about their perceptions. Appraiser perceptions were largely in keeping with those of their appraiser.

These results relating to the utilisation of productive reasoning strategies indicate that although appraisers had very positive perceptions about the training at an espousal level, the transference of this training to practice was substantially unrealised. There is, therefore, no conclusive evidence that this short-term training in productive reasoning skills has led to any substantial implementation of these skills, or an enhanced educative process.

### **Whether the Intervention Led to Problem Resolution**

All but one of the appraisers who had identified problems with appraisees stated that the problems had been resolved, that they were being resolved, or that it was too early to tell.

This feedback from appraisers was also substantiated by appraisees. Overall, however the actual example evidence provided by both appraisers and appraisees to demonstrate the resolution of problems is weak. Intervention #2 was designed to strengthen this evidence.

### **Is There a Difference Between Appraiser and Appraisee Perceptions?**

When appraiser and appraisee perceptions were considered congruency was apparent in some aspects of the results but not in others. In this discussion, high congruency is said to have occurred when matched pair results were very similar, and when both quantitative continuum and open ended qualitative results supported this congruency. In particular, overall congruency was evident in results in the areas of the existence of mutual trust, and the appraiser holding and discussing positive perceptions about the appraisee.

Less consistency was evident in the continuum results in several other areas. In both the areas of the appraiser holding negative perceptions and discussing these perceptions, although the matched pair results were shown as congruent, the qualitative comments were discrepant with the continuum results. In both the areas of the extent of bilateral planning for improvement, and the plan implementation, the appraisees reported a higher occurrence of this than appraisers, although this was not substantiated in the qualitative comments. With these latter results there was an indication that appraisers were sometimes unaware of the planning that appraisees were involved in, and were often not involved in the monitoring of the implementation of the plans.

Inconsistency between the quantitative continuum and qualitative comment results was a significant issue. This inconsistency was particularly apparent in both appraiser and appraisee results on whether the appraiser held negative perceptions of the appraisee performance, and whether these perceptions were discussed. The comments revealed a much higher incidence of negative perceptions (and of these being discussed) reported by both appraisers and appraisees than the continuum results suggest. One reason for this inconsistency might be that both appraisers and appraisees were hesitant to reveal the extent to which negative issues were dealt with in appraisal.

Another area of inconsistency was that of the extent to which appraisal had resulted in the resolution of problems. Here, the qualitative comments suggested a higher rate of resolution of problems than the continuum results. However, without returning to each appraiser and appraisee to investigate the reasons for this inconsistency it is difficult to pinpoint a definite reason for this discrepancy.

Overall therefore, these results, whether from the grouped continuum data for appraisers or appraisees, or from qualitative comments, or from individual paired correlation results, do not provide a definitive answer to the research question (3b) "Is there a difference between appraiser and appraisee perceptions?" When all of the results (collective continuum, collective qualitative comments, and the paired matches for appraiser-appraisee sets) are considered, there are only a few areas which provide me with sufficient conclusive data to state confidently that appraiser and appraisee perceptions are similar.

## **Conclusion**

Although well constructed questionnaires are invaluable as a data collection tool, as Bandura (1986) indicates, one particular shortcoming in the selective self-report type questionnaires used in this study was the potential for bias. Watson (1993) states that such bias may be evident where participants produce self-protective responses. Such responses can include inaccurate reporting such as positive inflation, or understatement - a problem that is likely to be compounded in situations where participants believed that their responses would be compared with those of others. It was possible that such bias occurred in this study. Both appraisers and appraisees could have understated any problems needing to be addressed in the appraisal context, in order to avoid acknowledging that they even existed. In Intervention #2, to overcome this potential shortcoming, both interviewing and observation were employed to check, or triangulate, information provided by appraisers and appraisees.

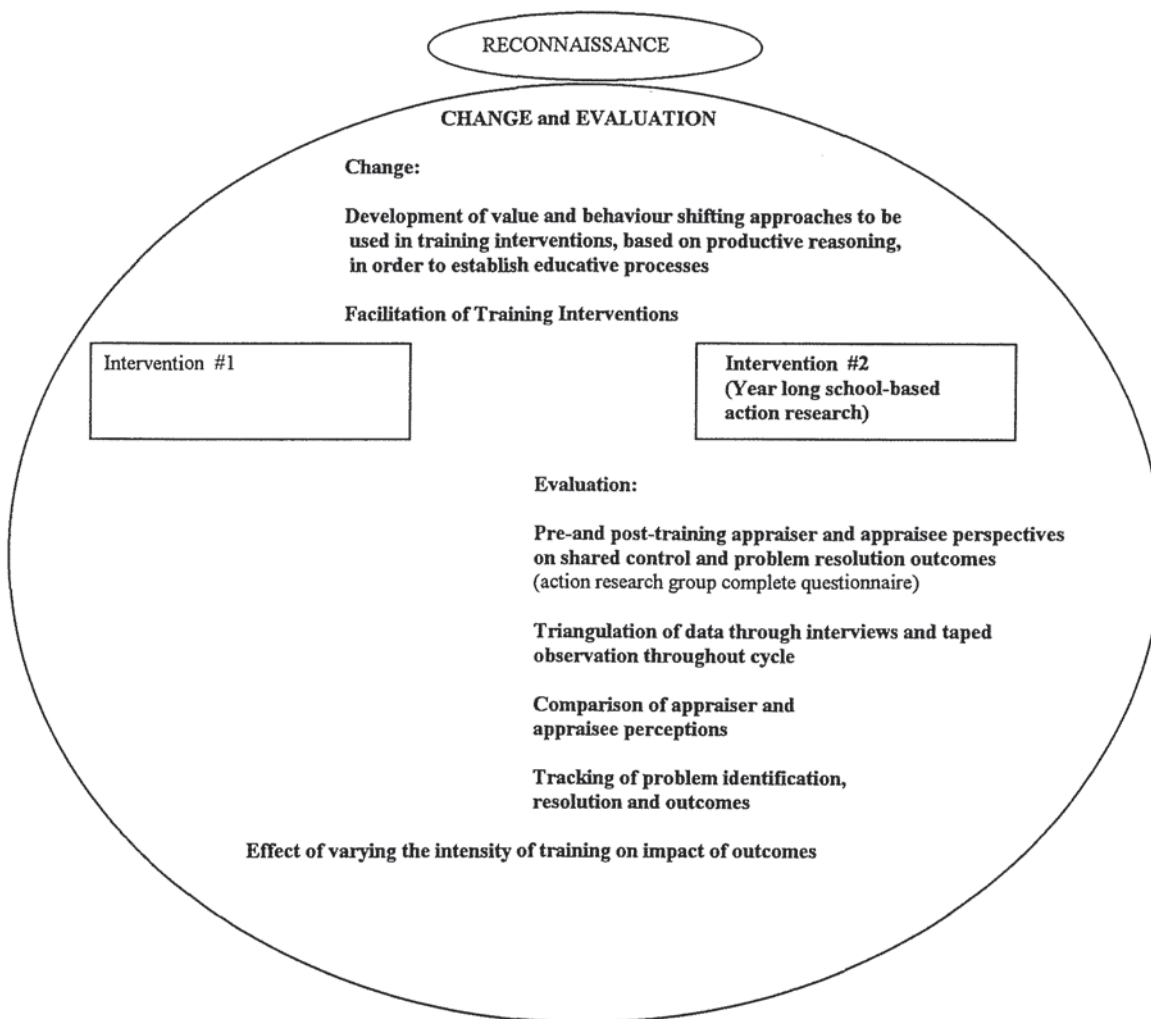
A conclusion that could be drawn from all of these results is that both appraisers and appraisees had a false positive perception of the impact of the productive reasoning training. They believed that it had been effective, despite the fact that evidence points to minimal implementation of the strategies associated with openness when dealing with problems. As a result of these findings I decided to develop a longer-term, deeper approach to training with appraisers in an attempt to enhance the implementation of productive reasoning. This year long, action research approach with one school was implemented in 1999, and is reported on in the next section of this thesis.

# CHAPTER SIX

## INTERVENTION #2: INTENDED ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH OVERVIEW

#### Appraisal: Shared Control - Enhancing the Impact



## CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The overview diagram on the previous page locates this Intervention #2 as the second component of the Change phase activities in the research. This chapter outlines the intended action research approach, the methodology which was planned to be employed for this second, more extensive intervention. This second intervention was based on the assumption that the short-term Intervention #1 would not have as deep, or effective, an impact as a longer term, school-based, development approach for appraisers. The validity of this assumption was evaluated at the completion of Intervention #2 by first of all comparing the overall appraiser and appraisee post-training questionnaire results from Intervention #1 with that of #2. Here, a specific focus in evaluating these results was on whether there had been an enhancement of both the educative process in appraisal, and the way in which appraisers confronted and resolved problems with appraisees. Second, the validity of the assumptions was evaluated by determining whether any resolution of problems with appraisees had impacted on teaching and learning outcomes.

This chapter discusses the aims of the intervention, its duration, and the events linked to the appraisal cycle during the school year. It then outlines the intended action research approach, or model, designed for this intervention, and its philosophical underpinning.

## INTENTIONS OF THE SECOND INTERVENTION

This intervention was designed to answer the following of the initially stated research questions:

*(2) Are there ways of providing interventions which overcome the concerns, that is, which are educative in terms of establishing trust, openness (particularly about dealing with problems), shared control, and reduced defensiveness, and which lead to effective outcomes in the sense of resolving problems?*

*Subquestion:*

*a. What value and behaviour shifting intervention approaches (especially those employing productive reasoning skills) can be developed which lead to educative*

*processes and to effective problem-solving outcomes, whilst conforming to time and cost restrictions in schools?*

*(3) How successful have short-term and more intensive training interventions been in terms of leading to educative processes and enhancing the effective problem-solving outcomes of appraisal?*

*Subquestions:*

- a. What are appraiser and appraisee perspectives on whether these interventions have led to an educative appraisal process or to effective outcomes in terms of problem resolution?*
- b. Is there a difference between appraiser and appraisee perceptions?*
- c. Does other data (for example, my own analysis of appraisal interview data, and student feedback) support the appraiser and appraisee perspectives about educative processes, and effective outcomes?*
- d. Does varying the intensity of training from short courses (one or two day intensives) through to extensive programmes (action research over a period of a year) impact on the outcomes?*

*(4) What are the implications of this research for policy and practice in appraisal?*

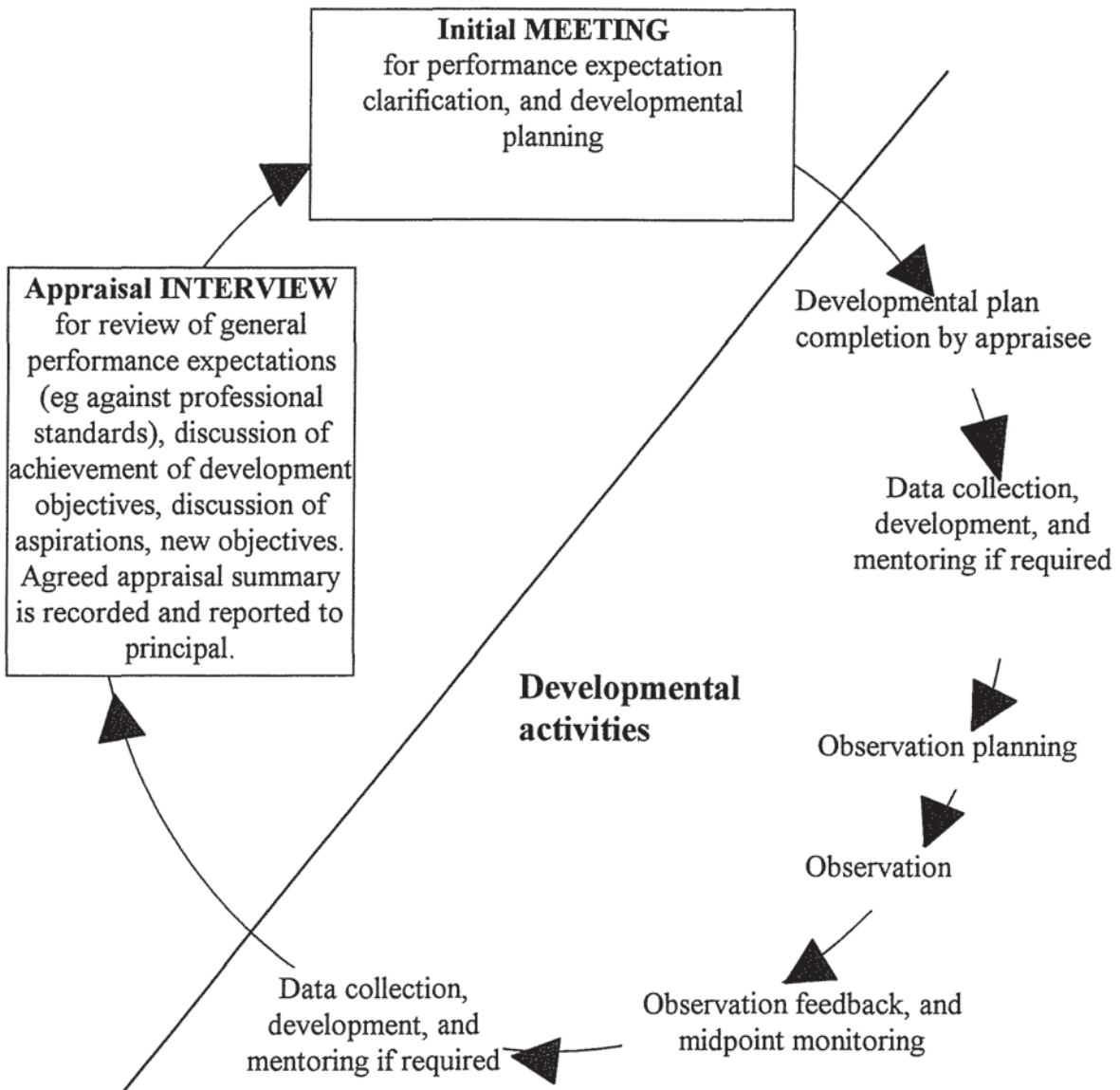
In essence, this intervention was designed to deepen the impact of the development of the same productive reasoning skills as those focused on in Intervention #1. All participant appraisers in this intervention had already completed the earlier training described in Intervention #1.

## **DURATION OF STUDY AND CYCLE EVENTS**

Intervention #2 was conducted over a one year period, beginning in late January 1999 and finishing in early December of the same year. During this time, activity in the action research was linked to appraisers' interactions with appraisees in the school's annual appraisal cycle. The cycle, which was in keeping with the nationally prescribed mandated

guidelines for appraisal, began with an initial meeting at which job descriptions (or other performance expectation documents) were negotiated, updated and clarified. Objectives for improvement were also discussed, and planning for the completion of these development objectives was initiated. Over the following few weeks these plans were then completed by the appraisee and returned to the appraiser for ratification. About three to four months after the initial meeting the appraiser and appraisee met again to plan for the formal classroom observation of specific aspects of the development objectives. They then carried out the observation, and met afterwards to discuss the outcomes. At this same discussion point in the appraisal cycle an informal monitoring of progress generally occurred for appraisees. Approximately three months later the appraiser and appraisee met to discuss the overall completion of the appraisal cycle. This formal, final, interview covered a lengthy discussion on all aspects of completion of the job description in general (or professional standards), and the completion of development objectives. The interview ended with the writing of an agreed report on the outcomes of appraisal for the year. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of these events.

**Figure 6.1: Appraisal Cycle Overview**



Adapted from Cardno and Piggot-Irvine (1997)

This brief description of the events in the appraisal cycle should help the reader to locate the events later outlined in the action research process.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THE INTENDED ACTION RESEARCH**

As already mentioned, the methodology intended for this Intervention #2 was that of action research. This section of the chapter examines the features of this approach (background) and the way it was proposed to be used in this research, and its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings.

### **Background**

Theories of action research for change (Abraham, 1994; Henry & McTaggart, 1996; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; and Zuber-Skerritt, 1990) guided the research process in this Intervention #2. The origin of the term action research is often associated with Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, and John Collier, the US Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933-1945. Their work on social change in the 1940s was later adopted by the United States education sector in the 1950s by Stephen Corey at the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute at Columbia University.

In the 1960s the emergence of the British teacher-as-researcher movement, led by individuals such as John Elliot, Lawrence Stenhouse and Clem Adelman, opened up the field of action research to the school community, particularly in the area of curriculum research. Since then action research has adopted a wide international following.

It is not my intent to provide a more detailed account of the historical development of the field of action research. A considerable body of work has achieved this task during the last decade (for example, Adelman, 1993; Dick, 2000; Elliot, 1991; Kemmis, 1988; McKernan, 1991; McTaggart, 1991; Noffke, 1997; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001).

Action research is variously and conflictingly defined and described (Abraham, 1994), and it is this lack of clarity in definition which has frequently led to a reputation of slight flakiness in the academic research arena. Abraham (1994), in his attempt to summarise the

interpretations of action research, concludes that despite the conflicting interpretations, it is a method:

... in which members of an organisation work collaboratively with a facilitator (the researcher) to address problems that are of concern to the group. (Abraham, 1994:13)

In this intervention the addressing of problems was paramount. The methodology was chosen specifically to further the aims of this research, that is, to help appraisers develop educative processes, and to confront and resolve problems. Elliot (1991:69) provides the following “shortest and most straightforward definition” (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996:20) of action research, which is more in keeping with this intervention. He says it is “... the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it”.

The action research conducted in this research related to a management function, and so the following definition of action research in this context is also relevant:

... involving groups of managers working on real problems in complex and dynamic situations where the social processes of learning about these situations is inextricably linked with the acts of changing those situations. (Perry & Zuber-Skerritt, 1992:18)

Action research is often seen as a loose approach, and Usher & Bryant (1989) support this by suggesting that it is a seductive and deceptively vague term, due to its promissory character. In this intervention the action research approach adopted was intended to be neither vague nor promissory. The Problem Resolving Action Research (PRAR) Model outlined in the following section was designed as a pragmatic approach. The description of this model is followed by an expansion of the elements, their derivation, and the underpinning philosophical assumptions. This PRAR Model was intended to be faithfully

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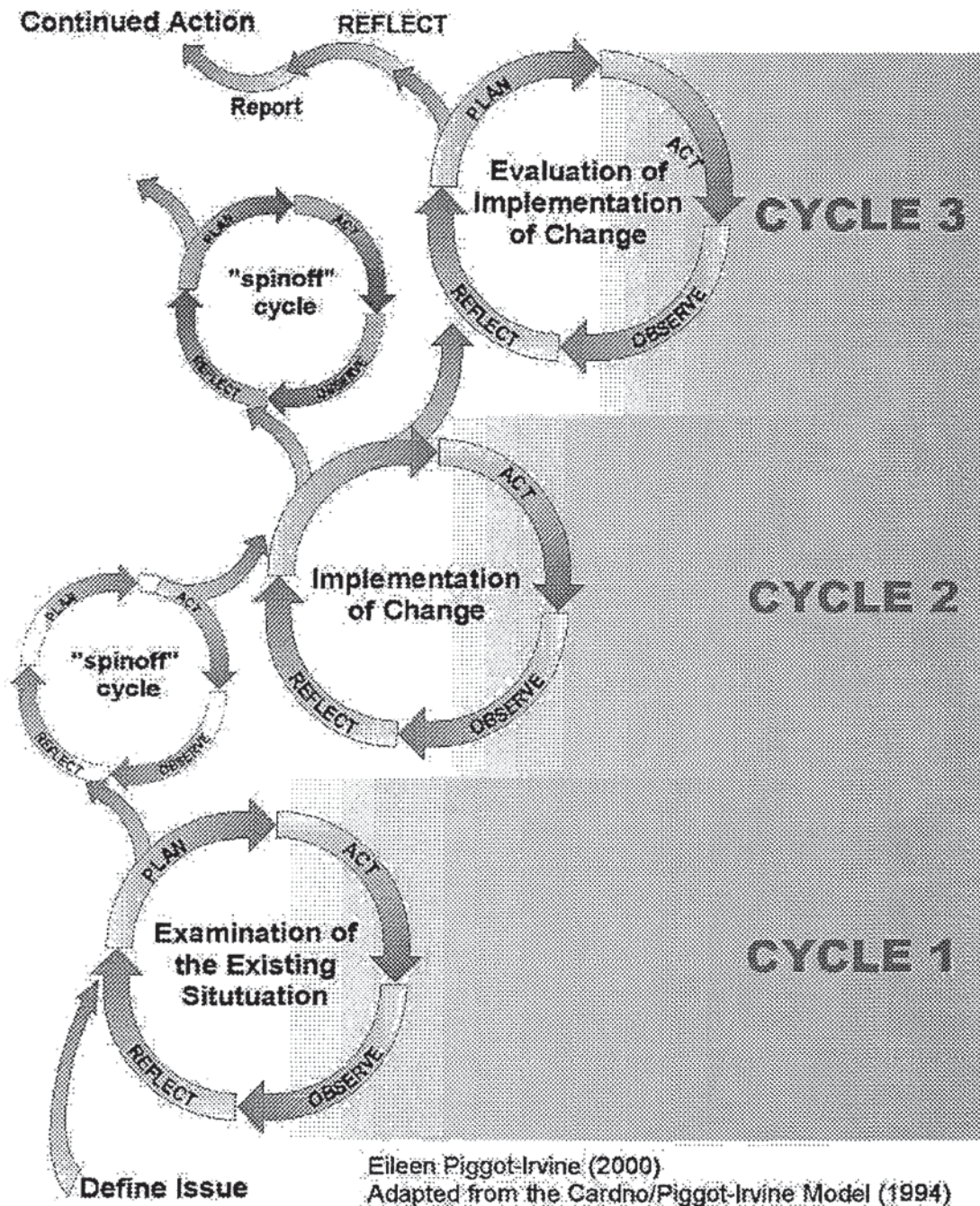
employed in this research. The reality, however, was somewhat different from this intended ideal, as described in the following chapter.

### **The Problem Resolving Action Research (PRAR) Model**

The PRAR Model has features drawn from several approaches to action research, specifically those determined by Lewin, Corey, Kemmis & McTaggart, McNiff, Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, and Argyris. The contribution of each of these authors is acknowledged.

Figure 6.2:

### THE PROBLEM RESOLVING ACTION RESEARCH (PRAR) MODEL



Overall, in this intended process, the collaborative group (myself and the appraisers) would be focused on enhancing appraiser productive reasoning and problem-solving skills. The appraisers collectively would begin by clearly identifying what the problem, or issue, for improvement was, then examining the existing situation with this issue, implementing changes/improvements, and then evaluating how effective these were.

This iterative, or cyclic, PRAR Model, which I developed at the beginning of the action research intervention, identifies action research as an upwardly spiralling, therefore improving and progressive process. This upward representation differs from most other spiral models (for example that of Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990) which are represented as downwardly spiralling in direction.

This PRAR Model also differs from that of Kemmis & McTaggart's in terms of uniformity. Kemmis & McTaggart's model is linear in sequence of activity. As the PRAR Model representation shows with the side cycles, or spin-offs, the alternative cycles of activity are expected to occur while we are carrying out the action research. An example of the latter could be where appraisers might have also wanted to develop their observation skills in appraisal, and this would then become an additional activity. Such responsiveness to emerging issues is in keeping with McNiff's (1988) generative, or more dynamic and responsive approach to action research. McNiff rejected the prescribed, structured, foci of earlier models and gave greater consideration to the influence on the process of the multifaceted contextual reality of the participants. She developed a representation of action research as an approach which was more reflective of the dynamic and unstable nature of the process and the environment in which it was conducted. She argued against even the use of the word "model" because it "... implied a prescriptive element, a rigidity of design and purpose that denied the spontaneity and creativity ..."

(McNiff, 1988:34).

McNiff's spirals, and their spin-offs, allow for dealing with more than one problem at a time, and this was typical of what I have experienced in action research.

... by allowing the spirals to develop spin-offs just as in reality one problem will be symptomatic of many underlying problems ... (McNiff, 1988:43-44)

The first proposed action in the PRAR Model was designed to define an issue, or problem, on which the collaborative group would work. Since the six appraisers in this collaborative group had responded to an invitation from me to further develop from the Intervention #1 training in productive reasoning, my thinking was that the group themselves would have already defined, or at least accepted, the focal issue. This issue was enhancing their employment of this reasoning to resolve problems with their appraisees. This problem/issue definition step is in keeping with that described by Corey (1953), in his linear problem-solving approach to action research, where he suggests that this early stage in action research involves the identification of a problem area, or hypothesis, about which the individual or group wants to take action.

The next action, a cycle in the PRAR Model, is similar to Lewin's (1946) first stage in action research, that is, a diagnostic stage. I have named this an examination of the existing situation. Lewin believes that at this first stage the data should be combined with a set of general laws on social groups and social problems. In my model no such combination was intended at a social problem level. However, I acknowledge that Argyris' work on the values, strategies and behaviours of productive reasoning (which could liberally be interpreted as a set of "general laws") was intended to be used by the collaborative group to guide the analysis of the existing situation.

Within this first cycle, and each of the other change and evaluation cycles of the PRAR Model, are the classic four moments of action research, that is, planning, acting, observing and reflecting which were derived from Lewin's approach. Lewin determined that these moments are not linear in sequence. He emphasised, in particular, the need for flexible and overlapping action and reflection moments. This flexibility was intended in the PRAR Model also. I anticipated (based on my previous experience with approximately ten action

research groups) that the appraisers would often unknowingly move between each of the four moments, perhaps sometimes reversing the direction of the moments, and even completing more than one cycle of the moments.

The planning moment in this first cycle was seen by me to be particularly important, with a predicted collaborative group refinement of the problem/issue occurring, and an action plan developed for the examination of the existing situation with respect to the productive reasoning skills implementation of each of the appraisers in the group. Corey (1953) describes this action as the formulation of a goal and the procedures for reaching it.

The acting moment in this first cycle was intended to involve appraisers in actually carrying out their plan for the examination of the existing productive reasoning skill implementation. Since the appraisers were beginning this action research at the initial stages of their appraisal process for the year, it seemed logical that they would use the designated initial meeting (where job descriptions were clarified, and objectives for the year discussed) in appraisal as the situation for examination. As in each of the activities in the other two cycles in the action research, of great importance here were Corey's (1953) sentiments of the need for careful recording of actions and the accumulation of evidence in order to determine the degree of goal achievement. In these action research activities I hoped to help appraisers to determine how data-based evidence about their interactions with appraisees could be most rigorously collected.

I was aware that the observing and reflecting moments in the first and subsequent cycles of the action research model would require care and rigour. Here, I believed that the rigour would be enhanced if I facilitated the collaborative group to work in an environment where the observing and interpretation of results from the earlier action moment would be based on dialogue which was, in turn, reflective of the type of open challenging of assumptions promoted in the productive reasoning approach. Such a dialogue approach is described later in the section covering philosophical underpinnings of action research. I anticipated that these individual and collaborative observations and

reflections would lead to concrete ideas for improvement in both productive reasoning and general appraisal interpersonal interaction skills.

The second cycle in this iterative PRAR Model, the implementation of a change cycle, is similar to Lewin's (1946) action stage. It is designed to lead to actual improvement or problem resolution: in this action research it is designed to enable appraisers to further enhance their implementation of productive reasoning skills with appraisees in order to resolve problems. In this cycle, the four moments would be carried out in a similar way to that described in the first cycle, beginning with the appraiser group using their previous reflections to help them to plan for the improvement that they had identified as necessary for change. This would be followed by the appraisers carrying out these changes in their next interaction with appraisees (predicted to be the discussion of observations in the appraisal process), and then observing and reflecting upon these interactions. Again, as for the previous cycle, I intended to take similar care to help appraisers to collect valid data upon which observation and reflection could take place. The results from this reflection would then perhaps lead to planning for further improvement, or if this was not required, to the development of a plan for evaluating how effective the changes had been overall.

In the third cycle in the PRAR Model, the evaluation cycle, the intention was for appraisers and myself to carry out the planning for the way in which they would evaluate the changes that they had made. The criteria for evaluation would be determined by the appraisers themselves, and would, I hoped, be based on the productive reasoning values and strategies designed to help appraisers and appraisees to establish shared control (and establish an educative process) and enhance problem-solving. They would then carry out this evaluation, observe and reflect on the results, and use these reflections to then plan for further improvement in their general interpersonal and productive reasoning skills if required. This stage is again similar to Lewin's evaluation stage.

Alongside this appraiser evaluation, I intended that further evaluation of effectiveness overall was to occur through my own reflection on the results from the tracking of appraiser problem identification and resolution with appraisees throughout the action research study. Such examination would determine whether this intervention had led to improvement outcomes in appraisee teaching or student learning. Tracking was to be conducted via accumulated evidence from taped interviews and questionnaires (pre- and post-intervention questionnaires) collected from both appraisers and appraisees throughout the year of the functioning of the action research group. Additionally, where appropriate, students would be contacted to determine whether any of the improvements made by their teachers (the appraisees) had been noticed as having impacted on the teaching and learning.

Before reporting on the results from the action research, a final reflection moment was intended in this model. Here, the appraisers would reflect, both individually and collectively, on how effective their change implementations had been, and on their perceptions of the action research approach in which they had been involved. Reflection would be based on both their own evaluation results and those collected from my own tracking of problem resolution. This would allow for what Corey (1953) describes as the inference from this evidence of generalisations regarding the relation between actions and the desired goal. Inference would be made from all of the data regarding whether generalisations could be made about the actions (the development relating to interpersonal effectiveness, particularly productive reasoning skills, and its subsequent implementation by appraisers) leading to greater effectiveness (enhanced use of productive reasoning and enhanced problem-solving).

Corey (1953) believes that there needs to be continuous retesting of the generalisations in action situations as a further stage in the action research. I also incorporated this stage into the PRAR Model. An anticipated outcome from Intervention #2 was that the participants themselves would continue to carry out the cyclic development process linked

to improving their interpersonal effectiveness, throughout their subsequent years of involvement in appraisal.

The structural and process features described for the PRAR Model are theoretically and philosophically underpinned by a considerable number of elements.

### Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinning

The theoretical and philosophical support underpinning the PRAR Model included that it was: iterative, involving steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting; strengthened by data-based reflection; an experiential learning process; transformative; concerned with narrowing the theory-practice gap; carried out in the practitioner's own institution; problem focused; practitioner focused; collaborative; rejecting of positivistic value free espousals; acknowledging of multiple perspectives; improvement and development oriented (that is, in this case leading to confronting and resolving problems); and publicly accountable. Each of these characteristics is elaborated further, in order to establish the assumptions of the action research approach in this intervention.

### *Iterative*

Peters & Robinson(1984) identified three minimal requirements for action research common to the contemporary literature at that time. One of these was that it consisted of iterative stages of planning, acting, fact-finding and reflection. I have elaborated these as the moments in the PRAR Model, but have superimposed them with the three cycles which guide the research. Regardless of how this iteration is described, it is often noted that the iterative phases are rarely uniform (see the earlier comments on McNiff's "generative" perception), nor one-off events. In keeping with Wadsworth's (1998) suggestion, in this research there were predicted to be countless tiny cycles of reflection on action, learning about action, and then new informed action, which was then to be the subject of further reflection.

### *Data-based Reflection*

Action research seeks to interrupt action by calling upon actors to recover grounds for their action and thereby to recognize that other actions were possible. (Robinson, 1993a:281)

Robinson's statement of "recovering grounds for action" is in fact reflection, and in this research reflection was to be data-based and carried out by appraisers linked to their own productive reasoning skill implementation. It was intended that data would be drawn from the taped appraisal discussions between appraisers and appraisees. The intent was to help appraisers to collect data which would be interpreted, analysed and reflected upon by the collaborative group.

It is effective when ... reflective practice is data-based; multiple perspectives are acknowledged. (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996:20).

The type of reflection on this data was hoped to be both reflection upon action (reflecting retrospectively to action) and reflection in action (reflecting whilst in the action) as described by Schön (1983). To be effective, both of these types of reflection require problem recognition, the development of alternative conceptualisations, and awareness of the potential fallibility of the practitioner's own stance or assumptive frameworks (adapted from Robinson, 1993a). The latter is extremely complex on its own. It involves the type of practitioner examination of the values and assumptions aspired for in this intervention, with appraiser analysis occurring against the productive reasoning criteria. Here, the intent was that the group would examine their values, interests, and consequences of action, and in doing so engage in the type of deep level, or "double-loop" learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974) which has already been elaborated in Chapter Four.

This "double-loop" approach, with its self-critical orientation at the values and beliefs level, was an anticipated essential feature of this intervention. Without such self-critique,

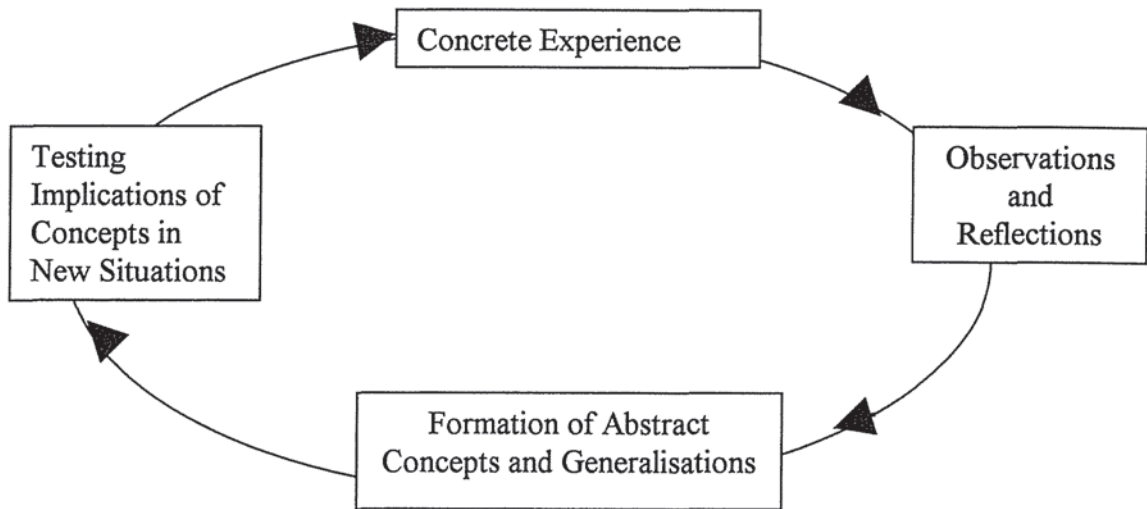
errors and problems can remain unaltered and continue to recur. In this intervention, as in Intervention #1, it was intended that Argyris' work, and other variations of action science (Argyris, 1982, 1985, 1996a; Argyris & Schön, 1974; Cardno, 1994; Robinson *et al.*, 1990), would be followed to identify the gap between an individual's "espoused theories" and their "theories in use" (Argyris 1985) concerning shared control and problem-solving approaches in appraisal. It was hoped that this gap analysis would be used by appraisers to indicate areas for individual reflection and change towards more productive ways of behaving. From this individual level, it was intended, as Argyris advocates, that this approach could effect results at a more general level.

... testable generalizations that can contribute to social theory ... ..generalizations that combine low a priori precision with high accuracy ... (Peters & Robinson, 1984:120).

### *Experiential*

Intervention #2, like all action research, would involve experiential learning cycles (Kolb, 1984), which is unlike traditional learning where individuals receive theoretical information and then apply this theory to a situation or problem. In experiential learning, as Figure 6.3 (p. 167) demonstrates, knowledge is gained from observations, questioning and reflection related to concrete experience or action. In this case the learning would be based on my own training/development with the group on productive reasoning and appraisal skills, and on appraiser and appraisee reflection from the results of data collected. Learning would lead to generalisations or the formulation of abstract concepts, the implications of which would be tested in new situations (when appraisers and appraisees successively tried to improve the enhancement of productive approaches). A new concrete experience would then occur (that is, the importation of the skills into the next appraisal event, followed by another cycle of learning). Understanding, improvement, and transformation of the specific situation in which the group was working, was the ultimate intended outcome of these learning cycles.

**Figure 6.3: Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)**



*Transformative*

Although action research has not yet achieved, nor probably ever will achieve, paradigm status (Kuhn's 1970 description of the set of beliefs, values, techniques and so on, shared by a given community) as an approach what distinguishes it, maybe not as a paradigm but as an accepted form of research, is its emphasis on transformation or change. Elliot (1997:25) confirms this when he states "It focuses on changing practice to make it more consistent with the ideal".

The implementation of the change phase of this action research intervention explicitly aimed to transform practice. The transformation phase differs from other, more traditional and positivistic, research approaches which usually address only either examination of the existing situation, or evaluation type issues.

.... action research sets out to explicitly study something in order to improve it. It most often arises from an unsatisfactory situation that those most affected wish to alter for the better (although it can also arise from the experience of something which works well, which provokes the desire to reproduce or expand it). (Wadsworth, 1998:5)

Change however, should not just happen at one specific point, or cycle, in an action research intervention. It should happen throughout the entire process, and in this research, this was anticipated by me to lead to a frequent unpredictability about the focus and outcomes of the process.

The transformation, or change, generally elicited by action research can occur at the personal, professional or political level (adapted from Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). In this intervention, at the personal level, change was intended in appraiser understanding of the theories, values and principles of productive reasoning. Such personal level change in action research is also a feature noted for participants in the work of Elliot (1991), McNiff (1993), Posch (1993), and Schratz & Walker (1997). Change, or enhancement of confidence, and clarification of assumptions (determined by examining the contradiction between productive reasoning espousals and practice) were also intended goals of this intervention. In keeping with Hossack's (1997:9) suggestion, this intervention was also designed to be personally transformative in motivating individuals in a climate of increasing demands, decreasing resources and low morale (features predominating the NZ secondary school sector in the 1996-1999 period). Most important in this change at a personal level is the commitment of the individual. Robinson confirms this when stating that " ... the potential of critical social science to produce change depends on the commitment of the research subjects to its idea" (Robinson, 1992:345).

At the professional level, it was hoped that this action research could lead to transformation in: knowledge in the profession itself, as reported elsewhere in studies by Calhoun (1993), Carr & Kemmis (1986), Elliot (1991), Kemmis & Grundy (1997), Lomax (1996), and Stenhouse (1975). In this research it was intended that this would occur through knowledge production and challenge related to employing productive reasoning skills in appraisal. Another anticipated outcome was that of management development of the appraisers, because appraisal is a management activity in schools. There is support for the use of action research as a management development approach from Calabrese & Bartz (1990), Cardno & Piggot-Irvine (1996), Perry & Zuber-Skerritt (1994), Robinson

(1986), and Zuber-Skerritt (1996). Finally, at the professional level, it was hoped the approach might perhaps even lead to an enhancement of the profession's status when the local community see that the teachers are engaging in a rigorous approach to developing and improving appraisal. Elliot (1991), and Zeichner & Noffke (2001) suggest that such an outcome is achievable through action research.

Action research can also lead to transformation at the political level, via implementation of the emancipatory form described in the typologies (Appendix 12) of action research from Carr & Kemmis (1986). It is worth expanding upon this notion and noting how it relates to this intervention.

Kemmis & McTaggart (1990) present action research as a new, emergent, research paradigm which has a "praxis for critical theory" (Habermas, 1972) underpinning and emancipatory goal. They believe this emancipatory goal, and therefore the associated emancipatory approach (which is classified as "strong" action research by Peters & Robinson, 1984), to be an essential feature of action research. Carr & Kemmis (1986), and McTaggart (1997), advocate that action research should emancipate the group from the social and political constraints of the organisation and society in which they operate. These authors offer this as being the **only** legitimate approach to action research. This implied rejection of either technical or practical action research, the "weaker" (Peters & Robinson, 1984) forms, is flawed for several reasons, in my opinion.

The first flaw relates to unrealistic expectations. It has been my experience in supervising and working with approximately two hundred action researchers during the 1992-1999 period, that often action researchers progress through an initial exploratory, novice, phase. Here the technical approach often predominates, and dependency on external support and direction is high. Additionally, independence, confidence, and critical self, or group, reflective activity is low. The group often operates at the either the first or second level of collaborative challenge (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997) described later in this section. Once the practitioners become more experienced in the approach, a transition to the

features of practical action research is more apparent, and collaboration exists at the deeper levels of collaborative challenge. This dependency dominated transition is not necessarily a bad thing.

... if outsiders have skills which the insiders wish to learn, then an initially dependent relationship may be an efficient way of learning them. Initial dependency does not preclude later independence. (Robinson, 1993a:286)

If, as in my experience with several action research groups, the critical/emancipatory approach to action research is frequently unrealised, and we reject the very approaches which provide a much needed transition to the emancipatory approach, then, I believe, we potentially risk any chance of implementation of action research at all.

The second flaw of the rejection of all but emancipatory action research lies in the restricted delineation of limits to reflection. Carr & Kemmis determine limits which are only external, socially and politically located to practitioners, and based on changing “ideologically-distorted belief systems” (Robinson, 1993a:283). Carr & Kemmis articulate that only emancipatory action research establishes this feature. They fail to acknowledge, however, that this feature itself is restricted. First, there is little recorded guidance as to **how** this liberating reflection through group discourse might occur (Cardno, 1994). Second, there is little recognition of the intra-individual limits to reflection identified by, for example, Argyris, and described in the earlier data-based reflection section. This intra-individual reflection may be much more critical to the effectiveness of reflection in action research, and can be a feature of any of the approaches in the typology.

The third flaw of the rejection of all but emancipatory research is located in the denigration of the outsider as “expert”. Robinson’s (1993a) skilful unpacking of Elliot’s “faulty conception of control” (p.286) summarises this flaw. She believes that Elliot fails to support his argument against the inclusion of the outsider in action research because he insufficiently disentangles initiation (from the outsider putting forward research questions,

theory and associated hypotheses) and control (unilateral influence). She suggests that unilateral control (summarised in the previous Chapter) can be overcome through the outsider inviting challenge and testing of their ideas. In this way, the role of outsider can be legitimised.

The flaws described above have led me to reject the adoption of the emancipatory typology as the **only** legitimate approach appropriate for this intervention. In the PRAR Model, I aimed to be open to the adoption of all three approaches. In the early stages of the action research intervention, for example, I could see that I would be largely in an outside expert facilitator role. Here, because little practitioner involvement would occur in stating the problem area (I had a PhD topic already and they had chosen to join the action research group), this conformed to the technical action research typology description, but hopefully with the intent described by Carr & Kemmis:

... when facilitators persuade practitioners to test the findings of external research into their own practices, but where the outcome of these tests is to feed new findings into external research literatures. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:202)

In Peters & Robinson's (1984) terms the process would be more a problem-solving methodology, where, these authors suggest, there is no commitment to a particular form of social science, and the collaboration often involves an independent expert guide.

It was hoped that the practical approach to action research also was to occur in this intervention because after the initial problem determination the appraisers and appraisees would be more centrally located in the process of planning for an examination of the current situation, implementing change based on this examination, and evaluating the impact of this. Here, I intended to be in more of a support role. I would help practitioners to focus on their own issues, encouraging self-reflection.

... facilitators form co-operative relationships with practitioners, helping them to articulate their own concerns, plan strategic action for change, monitor the problems and effects of change, and reflect on the value and consequences ... (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:203).

I was concerned that there would be a considerable limitation in this practical approach adopted. It was to be my idea which was the source of power for action, and therefore as Grundy (1982:363) suggests, I would potentially be seen as controlling the power. In any other action research projects that I had facilitated the focus or problem area had always been identified by the group. For the first time I was embarking on a project in which I was identifying the problem area. This could heighten the possibility of the participant group rejection of my pre-determined problem area and design for the research because they might not feel they had control over the initial decision-making. There was also a high possibility of little change occurring after I withdrew my expertise, if there was little participant ownership of the problem area, the actions to overcome it, or the outcomes.

Although there was no intent in Intervention #2 to meet the socio-political transformatory goals of emancipatory action research, it did however intend to conform to the more realistic, yet still personally emancipatory, claims for critical social science suggested by Fay (1987). He says that critical social science should:

... give up any pretensions to capture the 'essence' of liberation. [It should offer] an account of the ways in which it is inherently and essentially contextual, partial, local and hypothetical. (Fay, 1987:213)

This Intervention #2 research, therefore, was designed to be contextual, partial, local (primarily personal, but still political) and hypothetical, and also contain elements of technical, practical and personally emancipatory action research. It embraced the conception of the overlapping and interweaving, simultaneously operating features of each of the typologies, and acknowledged the unrealistic segmentation of action research into

such a categorisation. McKernan (1991) supports this rejection of the breaking down and segmentation of action research and posits a further, fourth, approach to action research which he describes as eclectic and incorporating features of all three categories of Carr & Kemmis' typology. This rejection of the segmentation is also supported by Robinson.

Action research is not necessarily a technical, critical, liberal or emancipatory endeavour. It may be any of these depending on the nature of the particular problem and the resources required to resolve it. (Robinson, 1993a:287)

### *Narrowing the Theory-Practice Gap*

In this intervention the aim was to narrow the gap between theory and practice by the appraisers carrying out the investigation on their own practice. Such an approach is a common feature of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Kincheloe, 1991; McKernan, 1991; Prideaux, 1995; and Stenhouse, 1975).

It offers an alternative to the view that theory is the province of academics and, at best, is marginally useful for those engaged in the reality of practice ... action research involves practitioners theorising about their practice through reflection on action. (Prideaux, 1995:5)

Considerable debate exists over whether theory (and I am excluding implicit theory here) should precede action, or the reverse, or whether they should develop together, where as Zuber-Skerritt (2000: 10) states, "theory is generated not only *about* practice, but *through* practice". In this intervention, initially the theory was to precede action, because all appraisers had already received training in productive reasoning as an educative process, and enhancing problem-solving, in Intervention #1. Such an approach involving theory preceding action is supported by both Lewin, and Argyris, and rests upon assumptions relating to practitioner difficulty in reflecting on practice if they are unaware of alternative perspectives. The argument follows that if practitioners do not know what alternative perspectives exist then they may just be reinventing the wheel. In this intervention, for

example, the participants could spend several years investigating their actions associated with trying to develop educative processes, or helping appraisees to resolve problems, only to arrive at similar conclusions to those already determined by others. This is not to say that reinventing the wheel may not have its merits. Sometimes engaging in reinventing the wheel can be a motivation to come to grips with a problem and to find solutions. It can also lead to new insights to what is already known.

Because appraisers were aware of perspectives on educative processes and problem-solving before implementation, this action research approach differed from those in which the necessity for action preceding theory is seen as paramount. These include the approach supported by those such as Elliot (1991) who contend that teachers should take action first, and then generate theory from this. Such an approach is justified by its proponents in suggesting that teachers are threatened by theories and professional research into teaching, and therefore will be deterred from carrying out research where the theory comes first. It should be noted, however, that it is not possible to be black and white about any of the aforementioned assumptions. In my experience there are teachers who prefer to have the theoretical background first and others who prefer to jump straight into action in the research. Such individual preference is probably more strongly linked to personality and learning style than to any generalised attribution of teachers.

Grundy (1987) argues that a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice should exist in action research. Here, theory and practice are seen to inform each other and are mutually interdependent. It was hoped that in this action research on-going learning would be characterised by this mutual interdependence.

#### *Intra-Organisation Focused*

This action research was to be carried out within the organisation of the participants themselves, a feature which characterises the methodology. The appraisers and appraisees were working towards improving their own practice in their own school. This is in

keeping with Cohen & Manion's (1989:217) perspective: " ... diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context ... ".

### *Problem-Solving*

Practitioner understanding of problems and problem-solving (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Calhoun, 1993; Cardno, 1994; Elliot, 1991; Rapoport, 1970; Robinson, 1993b) was to be given prominence in this action research. Such a stance situates the appraiser as an "active seeker and negotiator of meaning" (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992:35). The understanding of the problems in Intervention #2 was to be arrived at via many of the other features of action research already described in this section, including through the dialogical interchange between the appraisers themselves, and between myself and the appraisers in their analysis of practice. Such interchange involves openly discussing, debating and reflecting upon the research. In this research the interchange was designed to challenge and deepen insights, both at the level of the action research interactions themselves and at the level of appraisal interactions. Both contexts require the same dialogue processes. Hall (1993) suggests that action research is based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is constructed socially through a process of dialogue.

This dialogical interchange would require, early in the process in Intervention #2, an understanding of practitioner value-laden interpretations of their world (Robinson, 1993a:264). Unravelling these interpretations would involve appraisers engaging in complex and lengthy intensive examinations of appraisal interactions, in order to confront the gap between their "espoused theories" and "theories in use" (Argyris, 1985). Pope & Denicolo (1991) reiterate the need for this personal examination when they suggest that a person's core constructs need to be challenged in order to bring about change. Such dialogical interchange, it is often suggested, requires collaboration, because as Miller (1996) contends (in drawing upon the work of Habermas, 1993), participation can prove to be a rewarding and useful experience which aids self-reflection, efficacy and

development. However, I will argue later that action research itself does not need always to be collaborative for dialogical interchange to occur.

### *Practitioner-Focused*

The ideal of action research is that it is entirely practitioner-focused, meaning that the participants, as the appraiser practitioners, would be focusing on their own appraisal practice. In such a setting, Richardson (1994) believes that teachers become producers or mediators of educational knowledge. As Wadsworth (1998:11) states “Nor is it simply an exotic variation of consultation. Instead, it aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped”. Bruce-Ferguson (2001) extends this by suggesting that this involvement can protect against oppressive outcomes:

Because action research is usually used by those involved in their own research practice investigating and improving their own questions, there is less chance of the research approaches and outcomes being incompatible or oppressive of the perspectives of practitioners. (Bruce-Ferguson, 2001: 13)

This was my goal for Intervention #2. I wanted appraisers to take full control of the way in which they used their existing understanding of productive reasoning to help them (with my assistance) to gain further insight into their own practice, and to improve this practice in ways that created an educative appraisal process which had problems solved as an outcome. An acknowledged potential limitation associated with the intended action research was that it would be my problem which guided the initial stages of the research. I knew before I started that this would restrict the approach aim “to create space for a practice to evolve rather than to control the practice or at least the naming and framing of practice” (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2000:26).

### *Collaborative*

Collaboration was another one of Peters & Robinson (1984) three minimal requirements for action research. Many (Altrichter *et al.* 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; D’Arcy,

1994; Tripp, 1990; Wadsworth, 1998) believe collaboration, and its implicit requirement for collective reflection and action, is a defining feature of action research.

The advantages of collaboration are cited as manifold. In particular, collaboration is seen as improving meaningfulness and relevance to those studying the problem. Additionally, where dialogue is a feature of the interactions, collaboration is seen to allow for public testing of private assumptions and reflections, that is, it helps avoid self-limiting reflection (Schön, 1983). This participant involvement can enhance ownership and commitment to change, and leverage the change at a level which is frequently unattainable at an individual level.

Collaboration was planned for in Intervention #2. The intent was for myself as the researcher to be an equally collaborative practitioner in the study, with the learning seen as a “social enterprise and an emergent property of the group” (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997). As noted earlier, my role was to be the outside facilitator, but not leading the process (McTaggart & GarbutcheonSingh, 1986). This is a point emphasised by Prideaux (1995:6) also: “Action research is not something that the outsider should ask others to do”.

In this intervention I not only wanted to collaboratively participate in the events being studied, but to acknowledge explicitly the way in which I was implicated in these events. I also wanted to monitor closely and try to reduce power differentials in the relationship with participants, and to pay constant attention to clarity and openness over who owned the research (a challenge in collaboration raised by Reimer & Bruce, 1994). These features are exactly those that I hoped would also be part of the appraisal process of participants.

My experience in action research has shown, however, that the ideals of collaboration are not always achieved in action research, and considerable debate exists about whether collaboration is essential at all (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Prideaux (1995:7) suggests, for

example, that greater facilitation, or leadership of the group by someone like myself as an outsider, can be an advantage. He cites the advantages as including the provision of a trigger for support at the levels of institution (for example, in this research getting appraisers the time allowance to attend meetings), social (through facilitation of the group interaction) and ideology (through the input and ideas of outsiders to the organisation). Such facilitation can also be a means to overcome the individualistic, or particularistic, concerns in the research by exposing participants to alternative perceptions (Prideaux, 1995:7).

Irrespective of whether facilitation of the group occurs or otherwise, I have observed that collaborative aspects can be problematic. In this intervention, with its aim to effect change at the individual and deeply personal level for both appraisers and appraisees, there was always a potential that it “could produce severe tensions in the maintenance of a collaborative situation” (Waters-Adams, 1994:195). There was a possibility that the participants would be unwilling to engage in a collaborative process which exposed their interactions with appraisees. This tension is potentially most heightened in the process of reflection. Such reflection requires objectivity, based, as Waters-Adams suggests, on the two frequently incompatible features of intensely personal action on the one hand (the examination of the espousal and action gap in values and strategies), and intersubjective discourse (the expectation of group dialogue) on the other. As in this intervention, where personal and collective values would invariably differ, Waters-Adams thinks it is naïve to believe that practitioners will initially be able to put aside differences in the quest for agreed understanding. He also adds that the highlighting of differences itself may increase insecurity, mistrust and tension in already stressed teachers, and this in turn could decrease confidence.

Other problems with collaboration were also potentially concerning in this intervention. A major issue, for example, could surround the issue of *how* such collaboration was to occur effectively in the complex, and overloaded, environment of the school. My experiences over a six year period of consulting with schools in situations other than action research

(including those during Intervention #1) had revealed on-going difficulties in gaining commitment from staff to make time for individual development, let alone collective development where co-ordination with multiple timetables is involved. Added to this was the potential difficulty associated with participants actually meeting the commitments when they did make them. My previous experiences had also shown that even when individuals in schools did make a commitment, and did turn up for a scheduled meeting, then there was a constant requirement for prompting from me to get them to complete follow-up tasks. With this latter situation I had concerns about whether the group environment might make it easier for individuals to abrogate their responsibilities. None of these concerns are new (see for example Reason & Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1988, 1994; Reimer & Bruce, 1994). All of the concerns provided a challenge, and one which was familiar to me as an action researcher in other sectors, but perhaps not on the same scale that I anticipated experiencing in the school sector.

Difficulty in collaboration could, I believed, also exist at various levels of interaction and learning in the group. Just prior to this research a colleague and I (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997) had examined the form which collaboration often takes place, and we determined challenges at five deepening levels of collaborative learning in an action research context. These were the challenges of:

- Level 1: *introduction* (seeking commonality, collaboration of a superficial and task specific type dominates);
- Level 2: *recognition of potential of self and other* (raised awareness of difference in individuals apparent, increased willingness to entertain multilateral perspectives on reality but action is usually limited to defensiveness and self-protection);
- Level 3: *perspective* (increased empathy for the perception of others, a genuine acceptance of the validity of another's way of being);
- Level 4: *transition* (a deliberate search for collective action by suspending individual known perceptions and opening up to unknown group perceptions - this allows for creativity); and

Level 5: *trust and co-generation* (new levels of awareness of both ourselves and others emerge as courage is expressed and inquiry leads to action - this is distinguished by spontaneity, synergy and creativity).

We concluded that this fifth, and deepest, level of collaboration is that which leads to openness, trust, and learning in action research groups. I would extend this and state that it also leads to exactly the same interactions in appraisal. A parallel process between the intent of the action research group and that of the practice of individual appraisers could be anticipated. In Intervention #2, I was concerned that if the group failed to achieve commonality they might not move beyond the first level, and that this, in turn, would be mirrored in their own appraisal interactions.

#### *Rejection of Positivistic, Value-Free Espousals*

In action research there is a rejection of the positivist tradition perspective on the neutral, distanced, and objective stance of the researcher. There is an openly acknowledged positioning of the researcher as a “personal scientist” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2000:5), and a subjective, and value-laden participant in the process, who is part of the collective process of clarifying, interpreting and negotiating meaning.

... the understanding of subjective and intersubjective meaning and action is recognised as central, a close relationship between researcher and subject is encouraged..(Cardno, 1994:96)

This has an ethical implication which is supported by Schratz & Walker (1997:14) when they describe it as a process which cannot be ethically neutral and which “collapses the dysfunctional divide between objectivity and subjectivity”.

In this intervention I wanted to be explicit about the perspective that I held and to encourage challenge of that perspective. I also wanted the group to be aware that I was

not there as the outside expert or researcher, but more as a creator of a vehicle for development.

#### *Acknowledgement of Multiple Perspectives*

In this action research, multiple perspectives were intended to be acknowledged through the employment of multiple data collection methods or, as it is sometimes described, triangulation. Here, triangulation would be encouraged in order to check the validity of the data collected by participants, and in doing so to provide confidence about the conclusions drawn from the data. Cohen & Manion (1994) cite Denzin's six types of triangulation. These are triangulation of time, space, combined levels, theoretical, investigator, and methodology. In this research the methodological triangulation was intended to be employed both in a "between method" and "within method" format (Cohen & Manion, 1994:238). In the "between method" format, appraisers would be encouraged to employ more than one data collection method (for example interviews and observation) in order to enhance validity by looking for convergence between data. In the "within method" format the validity would be checked through the collection of verifying data in the same method (for example appraiser reflections on productive reasoning skills could be compared with transcriptions of taped meetings where these skills were used).

In action research, validation through triangulation has long been cited as important (Elliot, 1991; Altrichter, 1993). Such triangulation establishes credibility amongst participant perceptions through multiple confirmation.

#### *Educative and Developmental*

The underpinning of a philosophy of re-education was a core feature of Lewin's approach to action research. This improvement assumption is explicit in many reports of the goals of action research (Kemmis, 1988; McNiff, 1990; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Shumsky, 1959; Taba & Noel, 1957), as is an aligned educative feature of knowledge generation (Kemmis, 1981), and advancement of knowledge about practice itself (Robinson, 1993).

... teachers ... are taking on the personal challenge of attempting to find ways in which they can improve and develop both themselves and the situations in which they live. (McNiff, 1990:52)

Zuber-Skerritt (1989) accentuates this by stating that action research is professional development. This developmental focus was certainly the intent of this intervention. Its educative process and problem resolution outcomes, once again, would parallel those anticipated for the appraisal context.

### *Public Accountability*

Action research needs to include public accountability. Altrichter *et al.* (2000:29), in fact, remind us of Altrichter's work (1996) which indicates that one of the three defining points of action research is that it includes practitioners "making their experiences public to other people concerned by and interested in the respective practice". As Passfield (1992) suggests, it is an ethical requirement to make the findings of action research public through publication or presentation. It is through this public reporting of the research that "critical response of a sceptical public" (Bawden, 1991:41) can be achieved. In this research the public accountability would occur through the publication of the findings in this thesis, through participants writing a summary article on what they had done, and through participants' on-going dialogue with myself. This public accountability enhances the validity of the action research.

The extent to which the above philosophical assumptions were a reality in the intervention is discussed in the following Results chapter.

### **Enhancing Validity in This Action Research**

As early as the 1950s, Corey was concerned about enhancing the perceptions of validity of action research. His, and other early attempts, largely failed to shift the prevailing

perception that positivistic approaches were the only legitimate research which was generalisable. As Zeichner & Noffke (2001) note, this perception changed with the introduction of more standardised criteria for qualitative research. These criteria were established by authors such as Denzin, and Goetz & LeCompte, in the 1980s, and Eisenhart & Howe (1992). These authors proposed a unitary construct of standards for validity which would be common to all research traditions.

There has been considerable debate about the adoption of the use of conventional criteria for validity in alternative paradigm research such as action research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) advocate for the abandonment of criteria and the adoption of the notion of "trustworthiness". Trustworthiness involves the extent to which the researcher convinces the audience that the results are worth taking account of, and includes focusing on such areas as ensuring that the researcher's interpretation is credible to those from whom they collected the data. This feature of credible interpretation is similar to the concept of reciprocity (Lather, 1986), an interactive approach for negotiating meaning between researcher and participant. Such reciprocity is proposed to address power relationships and to strengthen the role of research as praxis. In Intervention #2, as reported in the "Public Accountability" section, the intent was for this reciprocity to be practised between myself as the researcher and the participant appraisers.

Despite a shift in emphasis in this alternative to conventional criteria that Lincoln & Guba and others (for example, Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Lather, 1991; McTaggart, 1995; and Stevenson, 1996) are advocating, the core feature of the researcher not influencing or manipulating results remains unaltered in this, and all other types of research. This latter point linked to researcher objectivity was obviously important in this intervention, as were two criteria from the work of McTaggart (1995). McTaggart believes that validation can also be accomplished by the establishment of an audit trail of data and interpretations, and by testing the coherence of arguments in a critical community. Taking the audit trail concept first. In this intervention, the audit trail of data would be collected through the monitoring of problem-solving throughout the year long

appraisal cycle. Validity was to be enhanced through the cross-checking of appraiser and appraisee perspectives, and this cross-checking intensified through the triangulation of data. The emphasis in this triangulation was to ensure the critical examination of any claims and assumptions. Revealed truth, or statements of “authority” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999:9) expressed by appraisers and appraisees would not be sufficient evidence of practice alone, other data was required to enhance validity.

McTaggart (1995) also states that there is only validation in action research if there are appropriate dialogue (authentic, two-way) processes in place throughout the research which allow participants to continue to associate with the change project. This is somewhat similar to Lather’s notion of reciprocity, but extends the activity of negotiating meaning to a wider audience. As already mentioned, in this intervention this dialogue was to exist between participants themselves, and with myself. As already noted earlier in this thesis the concept of dialogue is underpinned by honesty, openness, and truth. The testing of coherence of arguments in a critical community was anticipated to be the most difficult to achieve, for reasons stated earlier linked to getting the collaborative group to meet.

In summary, this chapter has outlined the PRAR Model which was the intended approach to be adopted in Intervention #2, and its links to the appraisal cycle which the action research participants were to be engaged in. In Chapter Seven, I describe how the actual approach which was implemented differed from that intended.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### INTERVENTION #2: ACTUAL ACTION RESEARCH

#### CHAPTER INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

As outlined in the previous chapter, it was intended that in the action research approach the collaborative group (myself and the six appraisers) would focus on the enhanced development of appraiser educative process skills using productive reasoning, and particularly the problem-resolving aspect of this. This chapter begins by describing the group participants and the research site. The actual practice is then discussed, with the PRAR Model as a point of comparison, and each cycle of the Model used to describe the action research group activities.

In my reporting on these cycle events I have chosen to describe events as precisely as possible. I have used my own notes on meetings and communications, and tape transcripts for this description. I have used the numbered (1 to 6 for each appraiser and appraisee set) and letter (A -appraiser; Ae - appraisee) coding system to designate individuals. In the final part of this chapter, I provide my own personal reflections on the match between the actual action research and the PRAR Model. The latter could possibly be described as another level of action research which was occurring on my own practise.

#### **Action Research Participant Group**

At the end of Intervention #1 all schools that had attended the training in resolving problems in appraisal were invited to volunteer to be part of the longer term Intervention #2. Two schools offered, from which one was selected. The school which was not selected had demonstrated difficulty in organisational issues in Intervention #1 (for example, they failed to respond to faxes, did not turn up to one session, arrived half an hour late at another). I considered that they were at risk of demonstrating similar problems in Intervention #2 and so they were rejected for this reason.

The group of appraisers and appraisees participating in Intervention #2 and its evaluation, initially comprised six sets of appraisers and appraisees. One of these left the school approximately a month after our first action research group meeting. The five appraisers (A1 to A5) participating in the action research, and this evaluation, all held middle management positions in the school (five Heads of Faculty, and one Head of Administration). A1 and A2 had been in the school for 23 years, A3 and A4 for 10 years, and A5 for five years. All appraisees (Ae1 to Ae5) had been in the school between three and five years.

Originally I had intended that there would be eight appraisal sets in this intervention (eight people from the school had previously completed the Intervention #1 training). This eight included the principal and deputy principal. Despite encouragement from me, and discussion about the importance of appraisal effectiveness needing to be modelled from the top, both of these people later indicated that they did not think that they had time to be part of the group.

### **Research Site**

For this intervention, the appraisers and their appraisees who participated in the research were all from a decile 4 (low to middle socio-economic rating), NZ, single sex school, with 890 students, and approximately 60 staff. The school has the common NZ hierarchical management structure in most secondary schools, with a senior management group, and faculties associated with the essential learning areas.

### **The Action Research Cycle Activities**

The results are described under each of the PRAR Model activities outlined in the previous chapter.

#### **Definition of the Problem Area to be Worked On**

The definition of the problem area was the first proposed action in the PRAR Model. As noted in the previous chapter, because the participants had volunteered to be part of the

action research I thought that they would have a clear idea of the problem area. Each had attended the short-term training with me during the previous year and I had made an invitation at these trainings for a group of appraisers in a school to engage in a deeper level of development with me. I was open about the fact that I had identified the general problem area already as:

*my concern that the implementation of effective appraisal was infrequently realised because appraisers and appraisees often lacked educative process and problem-solving skills.*

I also stated that I believed that more extensive development using an action research approach could better help appraisers to better understand and action educative process and problem-solving skills.

I acknowledge that ideally in action research the participant group should define the problem area, and to preferably restate this as their own concern or problem area. As noted in Chapter Six I was concerned that my pre-determined definition of the problem area had implications associated with my being perceived as holding the power and therefore controlling the group, and for a potential lack of ownership by the group. Because of this, I had a commitment to ensuring that participants had other opportunities to gain ownership through other avenues. These were that first of all, participants were invited to become involved in the intervention, and acceptance could be construed as at least interest, and hopefully ownership of the design - although the latter might have been too great an assumption. Second, in Intervention #2, I intended to make every attempt to involve appraisers and appraisees collaboratively in active participation and decision-making about goals and procedures throughout the action research. Other features of the action research were also designed to enhance ownership. These included the features of the appraisers having an intra-organisation and personal practice focus. The appraisers were, in Wadsworth's (1998:11) terms, to be "active co-researchers".

The first problem in the action research arose with participants' willingness to be involved. Because I had invited participants to become involved, I assumed that the group (the original six appraisers that met with me at our first action research meeting) were willing volunteers. This was only partly correct. At this first meeting (in early March, 1999), following my briefing on the action research approach and participants' involvement during the year, two participants (A2, and A6) revealed that they had been specifically asked by a senior manager in the school to be part of the group. In discussion with A2 and A6, and in fact the whole group, I stated very directly that the entire year would involve some challenging of participant's own practice, and that this required a substantial willingness and commitment on their part. I offered A2 and A6 the chance to withdraw at this point if they had any reluctance at all, but both determined that they wanted to be part of the group. One of these two (A6) left teaching altogether within a month of the first meeting, and A2 showed on-going signs during the year of a limited input to the implementation of appraisal, and to examining her/his employment of the productive reasoning skills.

#### Examination of Existing Situation - The First Action Research Cycle

##### *Planning*

In the first cycle of the action research, the examination of the existing situation, the intent was that the appraisers would plan for the way in which they collected data to determine what they currently did in terms of educative process skills and problem-solving with appraisees. I anticipated that they would collaboratively decide on ways to collect this data, and my hope was that the criteria they developed for the analysis of this data would be that of productive reasoning skills because this was the model in which they had received training. Since the appraisers' first interaction with appraisees was scheduled for about a month after this first action research group meeting, I anticipated that the group would carry out this planned examination of the existing situation linked to this initial appraisal meeting (see Figure 6.1, p. 156). None of this happened.

There were several reasons for the failure of the planning for the examination of the existing situation in the first meeting. One of these reasons was due to the fact that

considerable time was taken up with the issue discussed earlier relating to whether participants were willing to be part of the group. Once this had been resolved, then the group indicated that they first of all needed to remind each other of the things that they were meant to do in their initial appraisal meeting, that is the events of the appraisal meeting outlined by the school, not the process skills we were focused on in this action research. There was general appraiser unawareness of basic content of the appraisal cycle, although the previous year's training had covered this content, and appraisers also had appraisal guidelines for their own school. The latter ambiguity had arisen because the school had developed a stronger focus on accountability requirements (noted as "compliance" in the school's documentation on appraisal) linked to the upcoming introduction of the professional standards. As a consequence of these recent changes, the appraisers felt unsure about what they were expected to do in the first appraisal meeting. Clarification of this within the group took up most of the remaining meeting time. The latter was an example of both the predicted "spin-offs" which McNiff (1988) associates with action research, and also the need for my role to be one of a facilitator in interpreting and clarifying meaning, and helping participants to improve understanding so that they subsequently improved action - a role which was predicted in the PRAR Model.

Once we had sorted out these issues of participant involvement in the action research, and then clarified the content of the initial appraisal meeting, I felt that we were clear to begin discussing the way in which the appraisers could develop criteria for the examination of the existing situation. Time was running out in the meeting, as it did in all meetings because the group had insisted that they would only participate if meetings were during school hours. In the little time left, we began discussing what the criteria for examination might be. During this discussion only one participant mentioned anything about the use of productive reasoning skills, and then along with the others s/he acknowledged that s/he did not remember much about them. This was not unanticipated by me, because most short-term training I have conducted leads to little long-term retention. That after all, was one of the reasons I had for wanting to engage appraisers in deeper and longer-term training.

We had nearly reached the end of the meeting time, and so I then attempted to plan another meeting with the group before their initial appraisal meetings, in order to achieve the task of planning for this examination of the existing situation, and to review the productive reasoning skills. This proved to be impossible. The appraisers had already set up meetings with their appraisees and with the exception of one person they stated that they had no time to hold another meeting with me beforehand. The group then decided that they would not carry out this initial examination of what they were doing until their next interaction with their appraisees (the observation planning meeting). This would give us more time to prepare for the task of setting criteria for evaluation, and for reviewing the productive reasoning and general interviewing skills.

In the final ten minutes of our meeting time I had arranged that one nominated appraisee of each of the appraisers attended in order to be briefed on the action research, and to gain formalised consent for their involvement in this. I also asked the group if they were prepared for their initial appraisal meeting to be taped and observed by me, so that the appraisers and myself could analyse this retrospectively, once criteria were developed. They all agreed to the taping but preferred not to be observed by me, because, as A1 stated:

*We're nervous enough about the appraisal anyway, never mind about being observed.*

“Anxieties and emotions” (Burns, 1998:315) were therefore given every consideration, and so my observation was indirect, through listening to tapes of the interactions between each appraiser and appraisee, and later reviewing the transcriptions from these tapes. This could be interpreted as non-participant observation (Bell, 1996), which is deliberately designed to be as non-threatening and unobtrusive as possible.

I subsequently arranged to come to the school to do the taping at the designated initial meeting times. At these meetings I set up the tape recorder, and then left the room while the meetings occurred. As reported in the next chapter, I also conducted a follow-up

interview with each appraiser and appraisee after their meeting, in order to collect my own on-going evaluation data for this phase of the research. Both the taping of the meetings and the subsequent interviews which I conducted proceeded without problems.

Two weeks prior to the second action research group meeting I reminded participants of our next meeting. I did this through a formal reminder note to all of the participants via the deputy principal. In this note I also asked them to bring their previous productive reasoning and general interviewing training notes with them.

This second action research group meeting began ominously. Only two appraisers (A1, and A3) were on time, A4 was ten minutes late due to the fact that s/he did not know where the venue was, and A2 was twenty minutes late. A5 did not arrive at all. Upon later investigation from me, A5 revealed that s/he had not received my memo, even though the deputy principal insisted that it had been delivered. These difficulties associated with getting the group together were a feature of the entire action research, and although my previous experiences with schools led me to somewhat predict that this might be the case, I was unprepared for the scale with which it occurred in this action research.

At this point in the action research, I could see that an emerging issue was that of managing the organisation of just getting to meet. I decided to hold off discussing this with the group until I had further evidence of this being an issue, and so did not raise it with the group in this second meeting. If it did continue to emerge as an issue however, I decided that I would share my concern at the meeting subsequent to this. As an interim measure though, as described later, I invited one of the group participants themselves to act as the communication conduit between myself and the group, rather than relying on the deputy principal.

This second meeting began with a quick debriefing on the initial meetings that had been conducted with appraisees. Those present said that these had gone well. We then began reviewing the content outline for the observation component of appraisal, and had just

begun to discuss how they could employ the productive reasoning skills when A2 and Ae2 arrived. A2 announced that her/his appraisee had come in to ask some questions. The appraisee (Ae2) stated that s/he did not want to be taped, because of her/his fear of how these tapes might be used by management. Despite the fact that I reassured Ae2 that no-one apart from myself and their appraiser would hear the tapes, and that only pseudonyms would be used in my reporting, Ae2 was resolute. We negotiated our way through this, with A2 and Ae2 agreeing that I could record (manually) the interactions between them. This discussion, whilst necessary and considered important by me, had taken about fifteen minutes of our time, and once again, little time was left (about another fifteen minutes) during this meeting to develop criteria for analysis.

Only two of the four appraisers had brought their training material with them to the meeting, and fortunately I had somewhat anticipated this and prepared summary material of productive reasoning, the general interviewing skills. The rest of the meeting was spent reviewing these and hastily beginning the process of criteria development. The group decided to use both a Model 1 checklist and the critical dialogue checklist, which had been used in the training, as a beginning point for the development of extended criteria for examining their use of productive reasoning, and interpersonal, skills with their appraisees. I emphasized that I wanted them to particularly focus on their productive reasoning skills, because this was the key area that I would be evaluating. I also requested that they took time before their next meeting with appraisees to interpret and expand these brief criteria based on the work we had done in the training in the previous year. These elaborated criteria, they decided, would be used for their own analysis of both the transcribed initial appraisal meeting and the post-observation discussion. I discussed with the group that I would like to conduct a dialogue with them about their own and my transcription analysis, and they all agreed to this. They asserted that they would organise themselves to tape (with the exception of A2 and Ae2 which would be manually transcribed by me) their post-observation discussions with their appraisees. At the end of this meeting we discussed the importance of ensuring that the taping equipment was checked and trialed before use.

Although we had hardly devised a plan (such as an action plan) for reaching this examination of the existing situation with their use of productive reasoning skills, as Corey (1953) would suggest, we had made progress, and the idea was that fairly rigorous data-based information was to be collected in the taped interactions. At least, this was the idea.

#### *Acting on the Plan*

The reality of the taping of the post-observation discussions proved to be more problematic than the idea. A1 and A3 successfully taped their discussions, and I recorded that of A2. However, A4's tape was so faint that it could not be transcribed, and A5 never conducted the discussion at all. In effect, at this point, only three out of the original six action research participants were involved in data gathering.

#### *Observation and Reflection on the Results*

Within a week of the post-observation discussions I had transcriptions made of each of the initial meeting and post-observation discussion tapes. I then sent these transcriptions to participants for their own analysis. In individual telephone discussions I reminded them that they were to use their developed criteria for this analysis, and I also restated that they would need to read back over all of the defensive and productive reasoning training material to get a full picture of the issues they were looking for. This data-based reflection on the transcript material was a feature of the intended PRAR Model.

In my discussion with appraisers I also reminded them that I would be analysing their transcripts for my own evaluation of the implementation of productive reasoning skills. I asked them if they were still willing for me to also compare my analysis with their own so that we could have a dialogue about the results. All had agreed to the latter in the previous meeting, but when I suggested that the ideal was that the dialogue occurred as a collaborative reflection in the group (even if it was just looking at generalised themes), each of the participants stated that they wanted this dialogue to occur individually. The reasons given for this were all linked to their need for confidentiality and safety, and I was very conscious of respecting this. However, the loss of the opportunity for the type

of group dialogue and reflection that I had intended in the PRAR Model, was another blow to the intentions for this action research. There was a considerable loss of opportunity for collaborative reflection, where, as I have stated in the previous chapter, the challenging of assumptions, and avoidance of self-limiting reflection (Schön, 1983), could have occurred using further implementation of the productive reasoning skills.

The follow-up dialogue therefore occurred between myself and each of the five appraisers individually, using either their transcripts from the initial meeting, the post-observation discussion, or both. I began each dialogue by inviting the appraiser to share their analysis of their own use of productive reasoning skills. This was followed by a comparison with my own analysis, and then the appraisers developed a summary of the key skills that needed to be further improved. The specific results from this follow-up dialogue are reported in Chapter Eight, but the following summary from each dialogue provides an indication of progress.

*A1*

A1 began by stating that there had been no opportunity to use critical dialogue in either the initial meeting or the post-observation discussion, because s/he felt that there had been no issues to discuss. S/he noted however that there had been an example of use of advocating a concern just prior to the post-observation discussion, and that this had been supported with valid information. Because this had not happened in the taped meetings, I was unable to verify it through the transcripts but my later discussion with the appraisee confirmed that this had occurred. In particular, relating to this prior discussion, Ae1 stated that they had a good shared (bilateral) understanding of the concern discussed, and the reasons for it.

A1 had analysed the initial meeting interaction in detail and determined that although there was a dominance of appraiser talk (in fact in my analysis it was 45%), there was also strong evidence of good listening skills such as using encouragers, paraphrasing, and prompts (confirmed in my analysis of the transcripts). Although, as stated previously, A1 had stated that there had been no opportunity to use productive reasoning, I had analysed

examples of this occurring. There were examples of advocating concerns, with documented evidence and reasoning provided, and A1 was surprised when I showed this in my analysis. A1's own analysis of the transcripts had included that there were two examples of good inquiry (also verified by me) in the post-observation discussion, and several inquiries in the initial meeting (I counted nine) - yet s/he had not linked this with productive reasoning. S/he had also noted accurately that some were closed questions indicating low inquiry. I agreed with the latter, but when I pointed out that I had found 10 examples of the appraiser, not the appraisee, unilaterally providing solutions, A1 was again surprised. S/he had not looked for this. A1's surprise at my findings, however, was not associated with any defensive response, and it led to extensive dialogue about how to improve bilateral solution generation.

So, overall, A1's analysis and my own were matched in some areas, but not in others. A1 summarised that the key area for further development for the next interaction with Ae1 was a focus on bilateral solution generation.

#### *A2*

A2's analysis of the transcripts, for both the initial meeting and post-observation discussion, included no mention of any productive or defensive reasoning skills. A2 had identified that there was too much appraiser talk, but this was the only element from the predetermined criteria to which reference was made. Most of A2's analysis centred on what was discussed, not how. My own analysis differed substantially, and I indicated examples of the appraiser unilaterally offering solutions, and of lack of sufficient inquiry to identify specific and valid information. With the latter, closed and rhetorical questions predominated over open questions. There were also examples of falsely reassuring (eight examples of advocating about positive issues in the post-observation discussion with minimal evidence), of avoidance and minimising when deeper issues needed to be probed, as well as A2 offering solutions. There were some other positive things that I showed A2 on the transcript also, including two examples of inquiry using open ended questions generally, and one example of confronting an observation of weak blackboard skills (even though this was not supported with evidence or reasoning). I stated that a

considerable number of interactions demonstrated defensive rather than productive reasoning.

Overall, there was a considerable mismatch between my own and A2's evaluation. Again, like A1, A2 was surprised when I pointed out the features of productive reasoning (or lack of) in the transcript, but despite my suggestion that A2 make note of these for future improvement, s/he failed to do this.

When I probed as to why A2 had not recorded the suggestions, s/he responded that s/he would just remember what was needed. I tried to probe more deeply but A2 simply reiterated that there were no other reasons for this lack of recording.

### *A3*

A3 had prepared well for the dialogue. A meticulous analysis of both the initial meeting and post-observation discussion had been carried out prior to our meeting. A3 first of all reported the positive features of the analysis, including that there was considerable demonstration of the use of basic listening skills such as summarising and paraphrasing, as well as some examples of good probing/inquiry (I had analysed 21 examples of use of open ended questions in the initial meeting) and checking. This was in keeping with my own analysis, and I also commented on a considerable empathy that A3 frequently demonstrated. A3 had prepared a substantial list of defensive strategies that were identified in the transcript. These included avoidance and weak inquiry (unsubstantiated by me because there were only two out of 23 questions which were weak). Other defensive strategies that A3 analysed included controlling by providing unilaterally (A3's) determined diagnosis of the problem and the solutions to it (accurate, because I had found four of these in the initial meeting), and also by closing down responses through filling any pauses with comments rather than waiting for the appraisee to respond.

My own analysis of A3's transcript was almost identical to her/his own. S/he had drawn up a detailed list of strategies to evaluate before the taped meetings, based on a thorough

examination of the material I had provided in previous training. Prior to our meeting A3 had already made a list of the areas that needed to be improved upon from her/his own analysis.

#### *A4*

Like A3, before we met A4 had also carried out a thorough analysis of the transcript of the initial meeting. There was an extensive list of poor listening and defensive strategies recognised. The listening skills included an over-use of closed questions leading to frequent one word responses from the appraisee (11 out of 27 questions, plus seven rhetorical questions). In response to the one word responses, A4 recognised that there were many examples of her/his own overcompensation and a consequent disproportionate amount of appraiser talk (58% in my own analysis). A4 also identified the defensive strategies of failing to reveal valid information/facts when a concern was raised (in fact this occurred for both positive and negative issues in my own analysis), and giving a mixed message and minimising the importance of the issue (also noted by me). A4 stated that there was a considerable amount of information that was withheld in the conversation: the real concerns were not addressed at all.

Linked to the use of the closed and rhetorical questions mentioned earlier, I stated that, in my opinion, by failing to productively use inquiry to elicit more extensive responses from the appraisee, s/he had enhanced the dominance of one word answers from Ae4. I also pointed out another controlling strategy which A4 had not picked up - that of unilaterally providing solutions to the appraisee's problems (noted four times by me). I summarised that from my analysis, these defensive strategies, along with A4's own recognition of the employment of strong advocacy (which A4 had labelled as "sermonising") led to a conversation which was unilaterally controlled. A4 had diagnosed that only the last ten minutes of the conversation with the appraisee had been more in keeping with the strategies of productive reasoning. Here, s/he thought there were better examples of inquiry.

A4 was very open to accepting my further diagnosis of examples of defensive reasoning, and, enthusiastically recorded the improvements that would be needed for future interactions with the appraisee.

*A5*

A5's analysis of the transcript of the initial meeting with the appraisee revealed that there was an overwhelming appraiser domination in the conversation (their own calculation at 98%, but in fact it was 65%). The area of overprotecting, a defensive reasoning strategy, was also recognised by A5. These were the only two factors recognised by A5, although I had found two examples of good paraphrasing, and others of inquiry (23 out of 29 questions were open-ended) in the transcript. There were also examples of defensive strategies. Avoidance was demonstrated when A5 stated that s/he would delay discussing how to deal with an administration issue until a later meeting, and where little exploration, or inquiry occurred to find out the appraisee's perspective. There were numerous examples of controlling when A5 interrupted the appraisee, and where solutions were offered rather than being mutually or bilaterally determined (five examples). Although A5 had missed these key strategies in the analysis of the conversation, s/he was very accepting of my analysis, and keenly recorded the areas for improvement.

#### Summary of Appraiser Analysis

In summary, the way that the appraisers engaged in the task of analysing the transcripts for the examination of the existing situation was mixed. A1 seemed to have missed identifying what the key productive reasoning values and strategies were, even though her/his practise demonstrated some of these. Despite this mismatch, A1 was very willing to accept my feedback and to plan for change. A3 and A4 had carried out the analysis task comprehensively, and her/his honest evaluation of their own strategies was evident throughout, as was his/her willingness to accept further analysis from myself. On the other hand, both A2 and A5 provided a very brief analysis, which had little recognisable link to the criteria developed, and they failed to demonstrate that they reflected on these

criteria at all. However, both of these appraisers were open to receiving feedback from my analysis, although only A5 recorded the areas that required improvement.

Overall, this examination of the existing situation cycle of the action research had a complete set of the planning, acting, observing and reflecting iterative stages which Peters and Robinson (1984) report as a minimal requirement for action research. It involved data-based reflection, but this was only marginally taken to a substantial level of self-critical examination of the appraiser's values and beliefs, or the "double loop" learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974) for which I had hoped. It did, however, engage the participants in dialogue about their transcripts which included, particularly with A3 and A4, and partially for A1, self-critical examination of their behaviour, or strategies. This allowed both them and myself to be explicit about that behaviour. This was in keeping with the planned intent for the intervention.

#### Implementing Change - The Second Action Research Cycle

Once the appraisers had recognised the productive reasoning and general interviewing skill areas which required improvement, the next cycle of the action research was designed to explore ways to make improvements, and then to actually carry them out. In this case the carrying out was intended to be the implementation of the enhanced productive reasoning skills in the final appraisal interview.

#### *Planning for the Change and Acting*

I had recorded on my own timeline for the action research process that the beginning of the planning for change would occur about a third of the way into the school year, and before the observations in the appraisal cycle. The earlier mentioned delays set this back, and in fact, the next combined meeting of the action research group did not occur until September, two thirds of the way through the appraisal cycle. This was due to further delays caused by holiday breaks, clashes with exams, special events at school, and continuing difficulties in getting the group together at one time. The limitation that the group had placed on their involvement relating to only having meetings in school time resulted in a major block to progress.

All appraisers and appraisees, apart from A5 and Ae5 attended this third group meeting in September. All stated that they had received my meeting reminder memo this time, and when I approached A5 after the meeting, s/he had a genuine reason for not attending.

Appraisees were invited to the first section of the meeting, in order to keep them informed of the need for their continued consent for taping and transcription of the final interview, and also to let them know that we were progressing to the change phase of the research. As soon as I had stated this Ae2 asked:

*Why are we at the meeting at all, and why this was taking so much time?*

*This was all getting too much.*

I then responded:

*Do you want to explain why you think it has been taking so much time?*

*This is only the second meeting that appraisees had been asked to attend, and only for about ten minutes. I don't think that is an unreasonable amount of time, but I want to hear why you think this is the case.*

Ae2 did not respond to this inquiry but went on to express dissatisfaction with the use of, and process for, student evaluations in the school. This led to some discussion in the group about further clarification being needed on this process issue, because there were conflicting requirements for student evaluations articulated in the school's documentation. We finally determined that the senior manager responsible for appraisal would need to be contacted to clarify this. By the time I returned to my planned discussion on the importance of continuing consent from the appraisees we were thirty minutes into the meeting time.

At the end of the discussion with appraisees, Ae1 asked if it was possible to join the action research group. Ae1 had recently also become an appraiser, and was very

interested in learning about the productive reasoning values and strategies. The rest of the group were fine about that. For the remainder of this planning meeting, the group requested that we review both productive reasoning and also the formal requirements for the final appraisal interview. The latter again indicated that the group was unclear about the content of this final interview, despite the fact that this had been covered in earlier training, and was outlined in their school documentation. We did both of these things, and then I asked them to help determine a plan for the way in which we could extend their productive reasoning understanding. They said they did not know when they could fit this in because they had no spare meeting time before the next holiday break.

At this point I could see that we would be lucky to get any more meetings at all, and so I decided to share with the group the major disappointment and dilemma I was facing. I stated:

*I'm getting concerned about the level of progress in the group. Your request to only hold meetings during school time seems to be blocking any chance of having a decent length of time for engaging in the development needed to understand productive reasoning. Also, I'm beginning to feel I'm driving all of this, and that's not what I intended at all. You know ... I talked in the first meeting, about how action research is supposed to be a group effort, with you really wanting to do this. So far we've only managed to have three meetings, and in the second meeting only two people came on time, and two of you had looked at the previous training material. I'm feeling that if I don't organise you to even get to the meetings nothing would happen.*

*I really need to get some feedback from you about this, because I don't know why we're going so slowly ... whether its my fault and maybe I should be either more assertive or back off, or whether you're happy just carrying on at this pace, or whether you genuinely want to be involved at all ... you know my supervisor suggested maybe I should just start again with another school ... I don't want to*

*do this, because my commitment to this group is considerable. I just want to know what you're all thinking. I think I've said enough about what I'm thinking.*

This little outburst from me was not particularly productive in terms of strategies, a point that I will return to in my reflections on my own skills later in this chapter, but it did provoke a response.

This was their response:

*A1: Its been good ... the rate you've allowed us to move at ...  
You sort of walked us through the process*

*A3: I don't know whether we'd have stuck with it if you'd demanded too much early on.  
We'd have been a bit threatened if we'd seen the transcripts any earlier.*

*A4: I wasn't ready earlier.  
And as for finding another school - hah! - they wouldn't have been any better.  
This is life in schools now. Its chaotic. We just can't do these sorts of meetings without huge dollars for relief.  
Other schools could probably have been worse than ours.*

I asked A2 what s/he felt:

*A2: It's fine.*

I probed further:

*Me: Are you sure? ....You were late to the last meeting, and twice now Ae2 has expressed concern about what is happening....*

*A2: No it's fine.*

The discussion continued with all appraisers in the group, including Ae1 now, stating that they were wanting to carry on. Following this discussion, one of the group members (A3) offered to take over the role of organising the participants to get to meetings, to make sure they did their taping and so on. I then checked again to see if they all still wanted to be involved. They all affirmed this again, but when we then attempted to organise another group meeting in order to carry out extended development, the problems of trying to get the group together arose again. The group stated that most of the final appraisal interviews would be in November during end of year exams for students, and since there was a two week break before then, there was not a lot of time for many more whole group meetings. This proved to be true, because extensive discussion to try to find a suitable time when they could all meet was fruitless. As a way of providing the appraisers with some extended assistance I offered them the opportunity to contact me individually, at any time, for support before the final interview. Only one appraiser (A4) actually did this. A4 wanted to practise giving the hard messages (advocating concerns) to the appraisee before her/his interview. I arranged a meeting for this, but A4 did not turn up. I later received an apology, with A4 stating that s/he had simply forgotten.

Subsequent to this third meeting with the appraisers, I was contacted by the Deputy Principal, who said that s/he had received a request from two appraisers inquiring about the possibility of receiving certificates for their involvement in the action research project over the year. When I explained to the Deputy Principal that we had hardly even begun, s/he said they realised this but the appraisers were now aware that this group would only run for this year due to funding constraints and they wanted recognition for what they had done. I asked her/him if this meant that some of the appraisers thought that the action research group had just about finished, s/he said that this was probably the case because it was getting to the end of the year, and these two were concerned that they needed to get recognition for what they had done.

In summary, the anticipated planning for extended development, and the implementation of this, did not occur other than our review of the values and strategies of action research at the one meeting for this cycle, and even that was rushed because of the other issues which were raised at the meeting. The hoped for extension of the productive reasoning skills, including a more thorough examination of the gap between appraiser “espoused theories” and “theories in use” (using transcript material) did not occur. There was none of the intended planning for ways in which not only the productive reasoning could be developed and employed more deeply. Because of this there was little hope for movement to “double loop” learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Additionally, the deeper levels of challenge in collaboration (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997) intended in the PRAR Model were unrealised due to constraints associated with getting the group to meet and because the group did not want to engage in collaborative reflection.

### *Observation and Reflection*

It was intended that further analysis of the final interview transcripts would provide an opportunity for observation and reflection on whether any improvement in productive reasoning skills had occurred during the year. Once again, I reminded the appraisers, both verbally and in writing, that they had agreed to the final interviews being taped, so that this analysis could occur. I also requested that they contact me to let me know the dates of the interviews. A1, A3, and A4 did this, and their interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. A5 contacted me to tell me that Ae5 had a bereavement and the interview would need to be delayed. I contacted A5 twice (once with a visit) over the period of four months following this, to reiterate that it would still be good to conduct this final interview and to do this taping. Despite a great deal of goodwill on the part of A5 and a promise to do this, it never eventuated. After many attempts to contact A2 I discovered that this appraiser had not even been in the school at the arranged time for the final interviews, and had subsequently taken leave.

As with the first tapes, I arranged for the transcriptions to be sent back to the three appraisers as quickly as possible. Once again, I also arranged a meeting with each person about a week after that, so that s/he had time to analyse their own transcription. A1 and

A3 met with me and the following report summarises their dialogue with me over these analyses.

### A1

The most important area for improvement that A1 had focused on was to allow the appraisee to generate her/his own solutions to any problems raised. As the following response shows A1 had only partially remembered this:

*I didn't go back to look at that, sorry I should have. I know one was I spoke too long and I think I may have interrupted there and also supplied solutions.*

In her/his own analysis, A1 had noted the interruptions, and had calculated the percentage of time s/he had talked in the interview (37%) and acknowledged that this was an improvement on the last transcribed discussion (45%). Because of her/his own lack of review of the exact areas for improvement, it was not surprising that A1 had not picked up that s/he still provided solutions (nine times from my analysis). Nor did s/he determine several of the other areas of increased productive reasoning skill implementation which were evident in the transcript. These included an increase in inquiry using open-ended questions, two instances of bilateral solution generation, and one of mutual planning.

### A3

A3 had reviewed the areas for improvement as focused on increasing the inquiry aspect of the conversation, and giving the appraisee time to respond. The issue of bilaterally diagnosing concerns and generating solutions to these was also a focus. A3 had prepared well for the final interview.

A3 diagnosed that there were:

*“quite a few lead in questions as opposed to leading, giving questions that I know Ae3 is able to respond and give information on ... but I think I was trying to put words into Ae3’s mouth on several occasions.*

A3’s diagnosis was accurate in that s/he had definitely used a large number of open ended questions (20 in total). S/he was a lot more negative, however, about “trying to put words into Ae’s mouth” than I had analysed. Apart from two instances of use of rhetorical questions, I had no evidence of this in the transcript.

A3 also identified a single example of avoidance (which I had noted), and one of unilaterally offering a solution. The latter was not identified by me and further discussion clarified that this had not occurred.

A4 had to leave town to attend to a sick relative on the day that we had arranged the dialogue about the transcript. I subsequently left two messages for A4 to contact me, but had no response until approximately five month later, when I made an appointment with A4 in order to clarify what had happened. At this visit A4 revealed that s/he had feared that I had analysed their transcript from the final interview negatively, and s/he had chosen not to discuss it. We talked about the accuracy of this fear comprehensively, using both my own and A4’s analysis of the transcript as evidence to point out that the fear was largely unfounded. A4 had, in fact, shown improvement in several areas. These included an increase (five times as opposed to three in the initial meeting) in her/his advocacy of concerns with clear reasoning for these concerns provided in each situation. It also included an increase in the use of open-ended inquiry type questions(14 times as opposed to nine in the initial meeting), and reduction in both closed and rhetorical questions (three times as opposed to seven in the initial meeting). Finally s/he had also reduced the number of times s/he offered her/his own solutions to problems (two times as opposed to four in the initial meeting). This discussion with A4 resulted in a statement of commitment to carry on implementing these skills.

### Summary of Appraiser Interactions With Me

In summary, by the end of the action research intervention two (A3 and A4) of the five appraisers had both implemented their intended improvements and reflected upon the changes that they had made - even though A4 was initially a reluctant participant in the dialogue about this with me. A1 had made limited improvement due to a lack of review of the areas to be improved prior to the final interview, but despite this, as is revealed in the following chapter, A1 demonstrated many good productive reasoning skills, and had a very open relationship with Ae1. The two other appraisers (A2 and A5) failed to conduct the final interview at all.

### Evaluation Cycle

The final component of the intended action research cycle, as outlined in the PRAR Model, was to involve the action research group in an evaluation of the changes they had made, and as I have stipulated in the previous chapter, I hoped that participants might have even written a summary article on the results of the action research. In this final evaluation phase I also intended to collect participant perceptions on the way in which the action research itself had occurred, as a way of reviewing the approach itself.

As the previous report on the activities shows, the change implementation in the action research was minimal for three members of the group and considerable for two. Regardless of whether the change implementation had been effective or not however, I could not get the group physically together to discuss any of the issues for evaluation. The only evaluation that occurred was that tagged on to the end of the transcript analysis dialogue, and this occurred with A1, A3, and A4.

At the end of the dialogue between myself and these appraisers, I asked each to comment on the extent to which their involvement in the action research had changed their appraisal interactions with staff. Neither A1 or A4 referred to any specific value from the involvement in action research. A3, on the other hand, stated:

*... going through the material on dialogue etc has been helpful, most useful. I've had problems in the past, but have managed to get through these. The most important thing I've learnt is that when people have a problem to discuss this has to be done without personalities being offended. Without any recriminations. You need to use the triple I (Inform, Illustrate and Inquire) etc, without emotions. I've used critical dialogue with appraisees other than the one that was taped, with very positive outcomes.*

Overall, there is only limited evidence from this verbal summary evaluation that the action research had led to overall change in appraisers' interactions with appraisees. Other evaluation data discussed in Chapter Eight provides support that change did occur, even though it was not articulated strongly at this end point evaluation.

#### Continued Development?

In the intended PRAR Model I indicated that an anticipated outcome from Intervention #2 was that participants themselves would carry out continued implementation of the cyclic development process we had engaged in. After several attempts on my part to engage participants in continuing with the action research, by March 2000 I realised that this was most unlikely to occur. As noted, A2 had left the school on extended leave, A5 had committed twice to contacting me to let me know when the final interview with her/his appraisee would be, but I have never been contacted. The three other appraisers who had shown commitment throughout the process, and who engaged in the second dialogue with me, all stated that they wanted to continue. One of these has since won a scholarship to travel, and so this left two participants showing willingness to continue. In light of these reduced numbers, and since the school had already stipulated that it had no funding available to provide for continued relief for meetings following the 1999 action research activity, it seemed futile to consider continuing.

## My Own Reflections on the Actual Action Research and PRAR Model

### Match

From my perspective, there are many potential, hypothetical, reasons for why the actual and intended action research, did, or more frequently did not match closely. The fact that the appraisers did not sufficiently own the problem area is a beginning point when discussing why little match occurred. As Grundy (1982) suggests, my idea was the source of power for action, and therefore I potentially controlled the power. This lack of ownership is most likely to have contributed to what I perceived as some participant's lack of commitment to putting time into development.

The practitioner-focused intent was only partially secured in this action research and this may also have contributed to the lack of ownership, a point raised also by Reason and Rowan, (1981), and Reason (1988, 1994). Despite attempts to get participants actively involved in development of criteria for evaluating their own productive approach, this only occurred with considerable assistance from me. Additionally, in their own analysis of behaviour, I believe that without my prompting little would have happened. As the year progressed I felt more and more like the group organiser whom the teachers depended on to remind them of the basics such as attendance at meetings and bringing their resource material. It was me who engaged them in self-analysis and reflection (for example through analysis and subsequent discussion of their taped material), in almost all cases. It felt like it was me who was maintaining the action research approach. As recorded in the report on the third meeting, I raised this with the group. Their feedback suggested that they were committed and wanted to continue on, but their subsequent actions did not support this. So, this leaves me with considerable concerns about how I might have created the dependency situation which I perceived to have developed in the group. If I had left it over to them at the beginning, would they have taken greater control? Did the fact that I continued to act as the "organiser" mean that they felt it was my project, not theirs? If the appraisers had been willing to make time out of school to extend their involvement, would this have enhanced commitment? Should I have insisted on the latter, or would this have made my control of the situation even worse? If I had been more explicit with my concerns about my perceptions of low commitment would

this have triggered more involvement? These and many more questions circle through my own thinking about what could have been improved.

Lack of collaboration itself may also have contributed to the mismatch between the intended and actual action research. Just the physical difficulty of negotiating with appraisers and appraisees to find a common meeting time was fraught (an issue raised by Reimer and Bruce, 1994) and this lack of meeting itself may have added to the lack of ownership and commitment of participants. Reluctance to meet before or after school was an issue with some of the group, which left only lunchbreaks or pre-arranged release time. In all cases these times were too short, and shortened further when participants arrived very late, or left early. I have reflected on what could have been done to change this. Perhaps I should have been more assertive in negotiating the time that would need to be made available for the appraisers involvement. It is doubtful in the current climate of limited funding for development that the school would have seen this as an high enough priority to provide the support for the time required.

The fact that meetings rarely occurred may have also been another contributing factor to the reluctance of the group to share and collaboratively reflect. The appraisers did not want to expose their actions, observations, and reflections (through discussion of the transcript analyses) together. Each appraiser rejected group dialogue, and as noted earlier, the reason given in all cases was linked to confidentiality. This somewhat confirmed Water-Adams (1994) statement that the two features of the reflection on intensely personal action and the inter-subjective discourse are frequently incompatible, especially where personal and collective values differ. Regardless of the reasons for, or the appropriateness of the unwillingness of the group participants to engage in collective dialogue, the consequence of this was even fewer group meetings. Fewer meetings, and the lack of collaborative activity, I believe, may have reinforced limited levels of learning. I do not think we moved beyond Level 1, the "introduction" level of collaboration (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997), where collaboration is of a superficial and task specific type.

Lack of ownership, whether due to limited collaboration or whatever, may have resulted in the scarce evidence of change or transformation - a feature usually associated with action research. As mentioned earlier transformation at the personal level was difficult to determine for A2 and A5 due to lack of continued involvement by these two appraisers. Transformation at the professional level for the action researchers was hoped for through knowledge production and challenge related to employing productive reasoning skills. I felt that the only knowledge production that occurred was through me. Challenging occurred in the dialogue between myself and the three appraisers who completed the follow-up discussion. There was no evidence of transformation at the professional level of management development, nor of an enhancement of the profession's status within the local community which Elliot (1991) and Zeichner & Noffke (2001) saw as achievable outcomes in action research.

At the socio-political level, no transformation was evident. No changing of participant's "ideological distorted belief systems" (Robinson, 1993:283) was revealed explicitly, but it could be that some liberating reflection may have happened in the dialogues which three of the appraisers had with me. Kemmis and McTaggart's (1990) emancipatory outcomes for action research were never intended in the PRAR Model, and they certainly were not realised. The "technical" approach described by Carr and Kemmis (1986) was the only one bearing any relationship to what happened with the group, and even that was truncated in terms of completion of the cycles.

On a more positive note, both the previous examination of the existing situation, and the implementation cycle, helped to narrow the theory-practice gap that is often stated (for example, Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Prideaux, 1995) as an intended outcome of action research. In both of these cycles the analysis of the transcripts and the subsequent dialogue about this analysis involved "practitioners theorising about their practice through reflection on action" (Prideaux, 1995:5). Additionally, as intended in the PRAR Model, the theory and practice mutually informed each other when the practice was developed from the theory, and then the theory used again to develop criteria to analyse the practice.

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It is not my intent in this chapter to discuss whether the approach in this intervention #2 helped the appraisers to further develop an educative approach which led to effective outcomes in terms of resolving problems (research question 3). This is the focus of the following chapter, as is the evaluation of my own demonstration of productive reasoning in this intervention.

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **INTERVENTION #2: EVALUATION METHODS, RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

#### **CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

A key feature of the action research intervention, as with Intervention #1, was to also gather data on whether this intervention helped the appraisers to further develop productive reasoning strategies, and whether these, in turn, led to effective or potent outcomes in terms of resolving problems (research question 3). The methods employed to collect this data are outlined in the first part of this chapter, followed by a description of the participant group, and ethical considerations. The second part of this chapter covers the evaluation results, and discussion of these.

#### **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

As mentioned earlier, in the outline of the PRAR Model, the research outcomes are likely to be more valid when there has been triangulation in the process of data collection. In this evaluation, the approach used for “within method” triangulation (Denzin, 1970, in Cohen & Manion, 1994), involved verifying data through appraiser and appraisee perception comparison using the same questionnaire for each group. In the “between method” triangulation, multiple data collection methods were employed. These were questionnaires, interviews, and transcript analyses of appraisal meetings - a type of observation. In both triangulation approaches I was looking for convergence between data.

It is important to note caution when assuming that triangulation will provide a technological solution. Mathison (1988) suggests that triangulation itself can produce data which is inconsistent and contradictory. He considers that we should emphasize a holistic understanding in order to reach plausible explanations about the situation studied.

The goal of holistic understanding is a feature of the reporting of results for this intervention.

Each of the methods of data collection used for this evaluation are examined in the following section.

### **Questionnaires**

The questionnaires used in this Intervention #2 evaluation were identical to those in Intervention #1, and the reader is referred to Chapter Five for an overview of the principles associated with their development and implementation.

In this intervention, the participants' post-Intervention #1 questionnaire results were compared with those from the re-issuing of this questionnaire after Intervention #2. This was conducted to gauge any shift in educative process skill development and problem resolution. Unlike Intervention #1, there were no difficulties encountered with participant willingness to complete the questionnaire, and no one requested that they use a pseudonym.

The shortcomings of questionnaire use, noted in the earlier outline of Intervention #1, apply equally to this intervention. These are the bias and inaccuracy problems with self-report type questionnaires (Bandura, 1986), and the production of self-protective responses where participants believe that their responses will be compared with those of others (Watson, 1993). To overcome these shortcomings, both my own interviewing of appraisers and appraisees and transcript analysis of appraisal meetings were employed to cross-check information.

### **Interviewing**

Interviewing was used to provide supporting data for the research questions 3 a, b and c (see Chapter One). The interviews were designed to probe, expand, clarify, deepen and verify appraisee and appraiser perceptions provided in either the questionnaires, or the transcription material from appraisal meetings. In Anderson's (1990:222) words these

interviews provided a “more complete picture”. They also allowed participants the opportunity to clarify, negotiate meaning, and to raise concerns with me, a point confirmed by Kember and Kelly (1993:15) in stating that interviews “ ... provide even more opportunity for respondents to raise their own issues and concerns ... ”.

In these interview interactions it was most important that I modelled the values and behaviours of productive reasoning which underpinned the training approach (outlined in Chapter Four). My concern was that if I did not model these then my own credibility as a supporter of trust engendering, shared control type interactions, would be destroyed, and my respect within the group damaged. In order to check my own practice, that is whether I was modelling these values and behaviours, I also monitored all of my own interactions with appraisers, through analysis of the transcripts. This analysis is reported on at the end of this chapter.

Interview styles in general range from informal (open-ended and unstructured) to formal (highly structured: questions specifically ordered and replicated identically in each interview), or lie on a continuum of formality (Bell, 1996). In this intervention a semi-structured style was adopted, with a set of questions posed which aimed to expand perceptions provided in the questionnaires. As suggested by Cohen and Manion (1989), open-ended prompts were used frequently in order to elicit deeper responses.

In these interviews I was cognisant of the need to reduce the possibility of the participants inaccurately interpreting my questions (Burgess, 1985), to reduce inhibited responses from those interviewed (Hopkins, 1989), and to check that participants did not provide responses to please me (Tuckman, 1972). In reality, little opportunity occurred for these issues to arise because the participants were exceptionally direct and assertive in seeking clarification.

A pilot interview was conducted to determine if the questions were “capable of drawing out the beliefs and views” (Walker, 1985:57) of those responding. In addition to this, the piloting enabled me to check timing, sequencing of questions, my own sensitivity and

skill in the interviewing process, and to pick up any weakness in my approach. No issues were raised in this piloting.

### **Transcript Analysis - Observation**

Transcription occurred with two sets of data in this evaluation. First, my own interviews with appraisers and appraisees were transcribed. This was done to ensure that I had accurately recorded appraiser and appraisee responses. It also provided me with a way of indirectly observing and analysing my own productive reasoning skills in these interviews, as mentioned earlier.

The second situation in which transcription was used was in the appraisal meetings between appraisers and appraisees. It was intended that I observe each of these meeting points for the full year appraisal cycle, as well as taping these meetings. This direct observation was designed to pick up the more subtle interactions that would not be evident in the taped material. The observation should have allowed for the “accurate watching and noting of phenomena” (Moser and Kalton, 1993:345). As noted in the previous chapter, the appraisers did not feel confident enough to have me physically present at these meetings and so this planned observation did not occur. Apart from the situation with A2 and Ae2, the taping, however, did occur, and the transcriptions of these tapes were used to indirectly observe and analyse appraiser and appraisee interactions.

Analysis of the qualitative data provided in the interviews occurred against the criteria based on the values and strategies associated with productive reasoning plus key general interviewing skills. Appraisers had already drawn up an initial interview checklist which, as discussed in the previous chapter, I had explained would form a general guide to my analysis. I had already also clarified with the appraisers that I would be focusing on the productive reasoning skills. All transcribed material was initially coded using a shorthand alphabetical system (see Appendix 13 for detail of the coding, and Appendix 14 for an example of a coded transcript). The summary of the coded interview material is provided in Appendix 15. Where appropriate this summary material is also incorporated in the reporting of results for each appraiser and appraisee set. Despite this coding

system there were instances where overlaps, and ambiguities occurred. In the final analysis some of my own “intuitive” (Merriam, 1998, 156) analysis needed to be employed to search for meaning. Stake supports this in the following statement:

... researchers are privileged to assert what they find meaningful as a result of their inquiries. Their reports and consultations will include strictly determined findings and loosely determined assertions. (Stake, 1995:12)

### **Participant Group**

The group of appraisers and appraisees participating in the Intervention #2 evaluation were those in the action research group, that is A1 to A5, and Ae1 to Ae5 - as described in Chapter Seven.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As with phases one and two of this research, this action research intervention, and its evaluation, met approval criteria of the Auckland University Human Subjects Ethics Committee.

Anderson (1995:23) believes that “The most fundamental principle for ethical acceptability is that of informed consent”. Formalised consent was gained for involvement of both appraisers and appraisees (Appendix 10). Verbal and written information was given to background the research (Appendix 11). Additional consent for this intervention and its evaluation, was also gained in writing from the principal of the school, and from the transcriber (available on request).

As in Intervention #1, because there was a comparison between appraiser and appraisee perspectives, there was a potential for considerable anxiety and threat to both the appraiser and appraisee. The same precautions to protect the anonymity of each of these parties were employed in this intervention . In addition, the appraisers and appraisees were assured that audiotapes would be transcribed by a specialist typist in this area. All identifying names were removed from the tapes, and numbers inserted for my records and

cross referencing. In this way the typist could not identify individuals. Despite this provision of anonymity for appraisers and appraisees, I was acutely conscious of the fact that the small numbers of individuals involved could lead to an increased chance of identification. Langenbach *et al* (1994) note the problems with this in the following statement:

Even if participants are assigned pseudonyms in the report, anyone familiar with the school or community in which the study took place may be able to identify them. (Langenbach *et al*, 1994:285)

Because of this problem I took particular care to ensure that participants were aware of this potential recognition when I provided them with initial information prior to them consenting to involvement. I emphasized their right to withdraw at any stage. I also took care to ensure that I acted with considerate conduct - an issue emphasized by Bouma (1996), and Rose (1991). This considerate conduct included that I invited each participant to review my interpretation of their results for approval before final submission of this thesis. This became particularly difficult with A2. Two invitations were issued to A2 to review the material, but it was not until my third attempt that I was informed that this appraiser had left the country for the year. Although it is most uncomfortable for me to report on A2's findings without the material being reviewed, I believe that I have carried out ethically correct consent processes with this material, and A2 did agree to participating knowing that the material would be reported on in a thesis. Additionally, I have contacted the principal of the school to seek further advice on including A2's material without her/his review. The principal indicated strong support for inclusion.

## **RESULTS**

### **Has the Intervention Led to an Enhanced Educative Appraisal Process?**

As with Intervention #1, the key indicators of an educative appraisal process which are reported are those of productive reasoning values and strategies. The reporting of results follows a similar pattern to those reported for Intervention #1. The first value evaluated

is the general perception of mutual trust between the appraiser and appraisee. This is an indication of the use of overall productive reasoning strategies. The second value evaluated is openness, characterised by shared control, or bilateralism, through increasing valid information in appraisal interactions. The strategies employed to achieve such openness include the raising of issues both positive and negative (advocacy), and exposing, discussing, key evidence, perceptions, and reasoning (with thinking about causes in the case of negative perceptions). Balancing this advocacy with inquiry and checking are further strategies evaluated. With the latter, the issue of inviting the appraisee to provide her/his perceptions, particularly when discussing negative concerns, was of particular interest. Bilateralism, or shared approaches to mutual planning and solution generation to overcome concerns, and monitoring of the planning, were also evaluated. A specific feature examined in the planning was the evidence of the deep approach which had been emphasized in the training for appraisers.

Finally, although not the central focus of this analysis, some general interviewing skills were also evaluated. These included the evidence of good listening by the appraiser - they had been encouraged to allow the appraisee the majority (about 80%) of the speaking time. The use of paraphrasing and open-ended questions were also recorded as further evidence of not only good inquiry as part of productive reasoning, but also of good interviewing skills.

Data from the post-training questionnaires from appraisers and appraisees, from interviews, and from indirect observation through transcript analysis, were used to determine whether this more extensive intervention had led to an enhancement in the employment of productive reasoning strategies. The post-training questionnaires were the main instruments used to ascertain if this enhancement had occurred. Because each of the appraisers had participated in Intervention #1, they, and each of their appraisees, had completed the post-training questionnaires for this shorter intervention. These same questionnaires were re-issued at the end of Intervention #2, and the data compared with the earlier questionnaires issued (see Appendix 16 for summary of Questionnaire results).

The questionnaire data were compared and contrasted with interview data, and transcript analysis from appraisal meetings for each appraiser and appraisee set.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, my inability to conduct a dialogue with two of the appraisers concerning the final appraisal interview, or to collect evaluation data from them, has resulted in completed sets of questionnaires being collected for only three sets of appraisers and their appraisees. Note that I have replaced any name, or personal pronoun, used in quotes with the code for appraisers and appraisees. This has been done to ensure that confidentiality is retained. The following section of this chapter presents the evaluation results for each appraiser and appraisee set.

### A1 and Ae1

Mutual trust was a definite feature of the appraisal process for A1 and Ae1 both before and after Intervention #2, with a slight positive shift demonstrated in the questionnaires during this time. A1 indicated a movement from a score of 1-2 to 1, and Ae1 a movement of 3 to 2, that is, a one point continuum movement for each. A consistently noted trend was that of Ae1 being less positive overall (one point difference less than A1 was apparent in several of the continuum results) about the use of productive reasoning. Regardless of this small negative perception difference, Ae1 noted in the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire:

*We are able to talk openly, frankly and honestly in a relaxed and non-threatening manner with the occasional laugh.*

Both A1 and the appraisee were in A1's words:

*Genuinely committed to openness because of the value of the process.*

For the openness feature of discussing positive aspects of Ae1's performance for example, both A1 and Ae1 noted in the questionnaires that there was a small movement at the end of Intervention #2. A1 indicated a movement from a score of 2 to 1, and Ae1 a

movement of 3 to 2, that is, a one point continuum movement for each. However, both before and after the intervention Ae1 believed that positive perceptions were discussed slightly less extensively (one point difference on the continuum) than the appraiser.

A1's more affirmative perspective was also apparent in the questionnaire data collected on the extent to which s/he held negative perceptions about Ae1's performance, both before and after Intervention #2. It is Ae1 who reported that prior to this intervention s/he had some discussion (graded a moderate score of 3 on continuum) about personal and departmental concerns, and s/he noted that s/he had extensively discussed the causes of these concerns. It was also Ae1 who believed that s/he had raised the concerns, and provided the data to support these.

*Ae1: A general discussion on problems. Not raised by A1 - I provided the data.*

Although there was no way of verifying whether it was Ae1 who had raised these concerns prior to Intervention #2, it was evident that A1 had done this in Intervention #2. Examination of the transcript from the final appraisal interview revealed that A1 demonstrated advocating a concern.

*A1: Okay if we come back to the fact that we're trying to write a development objective for this problem and an action plan, the objective is to still continue teaching with this large group with reluctant learners at one end?*

*Ae1: I've got no choice have I, that's what I'm paid for.*

*A1: So your objective is to get as many as through these topic tests as possible without letting these reluctant learners you know ...*

*Ae1: Oh as far as I'm concerned it's the ones that want to learn come first and if the other ones won't buckle under then they just stay in their student centre or something ...*

However, A1 was not so good in this, or other examples from the initial meeting, at providing valid information to support the concern, and the reasoning. This was done better in the final appraisal meeting, as this example shows:

*A1: Now I note that in your objective for your action plan for the implementation of the Certificate that you were intending to provide textbooks for this course and that you were hoping that they would be available in term three and as yet I haven't seen any. Do you know where they're at with the textbook, whether it's going to be available next year?*

*Ae1: I've had a note from the publisher and in the way of an apology for not getting it out on time, but they should be available so s/he says by next year.*

*A1: We need to go to budget in advance, if we know the cost, that will be a big help because we've only got budget of \$4000 and there could be three classes.*

However, despite this verifiable evidence of raising concerns, A1 still recorded in the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire that s/he did not have concerns. S/he also stated that the concerns were not discussed, nor were their causes. Later in the questionnaire (and supported by interview data), A1 stated that any concerns that existed prior to Intervention #2 had been resolved. However, it is questionable whether this is due to the action research intervention alone. A1 attributed the honesty in the relationship with Ae1 to the directness of this appraisee, as shown in the following quote:

*A1: No, probably whether it's a problem or a strength, Ae1 speaks their mind and keeps everyone honest. So I would see that as a strength, but Ae1 can offend some people with abruptness.*

In light of these results it is unsurprising that A1 gave identical responses after both Interventions #1 and #2 on whether s/he changed the way that s/he was dealing with

negative issues in appraisal with this appraisee (both recorded a moderate score 3 on the 7 point scale). The following comment, suggests that Intervention #2 did have an impact however:

*A1: Although I haven't had to raise any negative aspects of the colleague's ability to function as an effective teacher - I feel better equipped to do so when the occasion arises.*

But dealing with negative issues is not easy, as the following comment provided by Ae1 after Intervention #2 indicates:

*To some extent only as truth hurts and we need to work together, we need to share resources, we socialise. By confronting the issue we may offend etc. etc.*

In terms of employing bilateral, or shared, approaches to help the appraisee to plan for any improvement, A1 had recorded in the questionnaires that no planning, or plan implementation occurred either before or after Intervention #2. Ae1 differed, and noted that plans were made and implemented after Intervention #1. I have sighted this plan, which was comprehensively written, although like other plans for the group, showed no evaluation activity (a strong focus emphasized in training). The lack of A1 awareness about the planning suggests that there was no bilateral involvement in planning, or plan monitoring.

Lack of bilateralism was also apparent in the generation of solutions for any concerns. Despite the contention from both A1 and Ae1 in the post-Intervention #2 questionnaires that there were no concerns, there was evidence in the transcripts from the meetings that concerns were raised which required solutions. The transcript of the post-observation discussion also revealed that it was A1 who provided those solutions, as shown in this example:

*A1: Could you consider perhaps as an intermediate....*

*Well they can spend more time going through....*

This unilateral solution generation was repeated in the final interview for the appraisal cycle, perhaps not surprisingly because, as mentioned in Chapter Seven, A1 stated that prior to this final interview s/he had failed to reflect on areas that needed to be improved on in terms of bilateral solution generation.

Overall, the data collected for A1 and Ae1 indicates that a high degree of trust existed both prior to, and outside, the appraisal process. There was openness about positive issues, and evidence that the intervention made a moderate impact on dealing with negative issues, despite the fact that A1 had failed to prepare for her/his employment of the productive reasoning skills. There was little evidence, however, that A1 had adopted the values and strategies linked to bilateral solution generation, planning for change, or the monitoring of this. It would appear that a combined effect of the Intervention #1 training, experience, existing trust, and the directness of Ae1 had a greater impact than the action research intervention. This is unsurprising since A1, by her/his own admission, had failed to reflect on the productive reasoning skills as preparation for the appraisal meetings.

#### A2 and Ae2

As mentioned in the previous chapter, A2 was one of the two appraisers who had been asked specifically by management to be part of the action research group. As I have also already stated, my own inquiry into A2's willingness to be involved in this action research intervention revealed that s/he was committed. However, the results from almost every part of this intervention suggest otherwise.

Whether the appraisal process involving A2 and Ae2 was characterised by any mutual trust is unclear. A2 recorded in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that the process of appraisal was marginally characterised by mutual trust (5 on continuum) at the initial stages of this intervention. The provision of limited data from other sources for A2 and Ae2 means that there is no way of knowing whether this mutual trust improved. A2's

own analysis of the transcripts for both the initial meeting and post-observation discussion showed that s/he had no awareness of productive or defensive reasoning skills at all. Not only did s/he fail to carry out an analysis against the checklist of skills that we had drawn up, but s/he was also seemingly unaware that these were to be demonstrated.

The non-completion of the final appraisal interview transcript analysis (A2 simply did not turn up, and could not be followed-up due to the fact that s/he left the school at the beginning of the next year) resulted in a loss of opportunity to fill out the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire. This lack of data means that limited conclusions can be drawn about whether the action research intervention in fact enhanced any of the productive reasoning skills that A2 had learnt in Intervention #1.

In terms of openness in dealing with positive perceptions of the appraisee's performance, A2 noted in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that s/he did discuss these perceptions (3 on the continuum) - but not extensively. This was confirmed in the transcript analysis which showed multiple affirmations which were unsupported with evidence or reasoning.

A2 also stated that s/he had concerns about the appraisee's performance (5 on continuum), but stated that s/he only "mentioned" these in discussion (5 again on continuum). A2 said that the data used to support her/his views about concerns was based on their own observations, and although s/he clearly identified the causes for the concerns, s/he said that these were only discussed a little (5 again on continuum). A2's response to whether s/he was open about discussing her/his concerns was another 5 on the continuum, but the following comment perhaps reveals more:

*Teachers can survive in the system without extending students.*

My own interpretation of this latter comment, in combination with the previous continuum results, indicates that A2 did not strongly consider that problems necessarily needed to be dealt with. This type of avoidance (a defensive reasoning strategy) was apparent also in the transcript of the very first interview I conducted with A2 and Ae2 in

order to triangulate the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire results. Despite the fact that A2 recorded in this questionnaire that there were concerns with Ae2's performance, A2 stated in this interview with me:

*I have no problems with Ae2, I just hope that Ae2 does their best and I'm sure they'll come through with flying colours.*

A2's own post-Intervention #1 questionnaire report of minimum discussion of positive or negative aspects of performance, or the supporting data and reasons for this, was evident also in indirect observation (transcription) of the initial appraisal meeting. The transcript (my own recording of this because they would not accept taping) of the post-observation discussion between A2 and Ae2 revealed several examples of opportunities for A2 to deepen discussion about problems, but this opportunity was not taken up, or was bypassed. This has been pointed out in the previous chapter, but the following section of the transcript exemplifies this:

*Ae2: It's a difficult class...lots of underachievers...they're difficult.*

*A2: Every teacher has a class they could put at the bottom of the pile.*

It is possible to conclude from both the questionnaire and initial appraisal meeting data that A2's espousals of minimum openness in discussing concerns were congruent with her/his practice. There is no evidence to suggest that this changed throughout the intervention.

In terms of bilaterally engaging in any planning, implementation or monitoring to assist the teacher to improve any concerns, A2 noted in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that nothing had happened. It was interesting to note here that A2 scored the sections of the continuum relevant to these areas as 5s - perhaps not an indication that no planning had occurred, but more an indication that all s/he had done with the continuum results was to score 5 for almost everything! Bilateral planning was, however, evident in the

initial appraisal meeting conducted during Intervention #2. Ae2 had come to this meeting with some ideas about her/his personal objectives for appraisal, and these were discussed but not at a level which revealed any depth of planning for achievement of the goals. For example, when discussing a possible objective concerned with updating curriculum knowledge, the following extract from the transcript shows a substantial lack of investigation by A2 of any possible alternatives other than attending a course (emphasised by me in the training as a surface approach to development):

*Ae2: Second one, to investigate current issues in ... education, things are always changing, people have always got new ideas. Having said that, what works for you doesn't necessarily work for me, it's nice to see other things, and take a little bit away from everybody.*

*A2: And you're going on a course?*

*Ae2: Yeah actually two courses.*

*A2: Good.*

Following this initial appraisal meeting Ae2 wrote a performance agreement action plan, which did show some degree of a deeper approach to achieving the objectives set than just attending courses. However, because there was no final appraisal meeting conducted with Ae2 it is not possible to determine whether any bilateral monitoring of this plan occurred throughout the year, or whether A2 assisted Ae2 in its implementation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, lack of bilateralism was apparent in the post-observation discussion when A2 unilaterally offered solutions, as shown in this suggestion from A2:

*...as far as I'm concerned we'll just keep the same school goal for this.*

It was also apparent in the overall poor use of inquiry, or questioning, to find out what Ae2's perceptions were. For example:

*Ae2: They have a nasty streak. They have to meet you halfway.*

*A2: Good, I'm impressed with your effort.*

In responding to the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire, A2 was completely negative about whether the training in Intervention #1 had changed the way that s/he was dealing with negative issues (7 on the continuum). A2 stated also that "nothing" had changed her/his attitudes or behaviours. Not unsurprisingly, A2 also recorded at this early stage that the appraisal conducted with this appraisee had not resulted in any resolution of problems.

There is no way of knowing whether these perceptions about the impact of the training changed as a result of A2's involvement in Intervention #2. Certainly, the post-observation meeting transcript revealed little change, and although A2 was receptive to the indication of this when we carried out further analysis in our discussions, s/he made no note of any areas for improvements.

In summary, it is unlikely, but this is not verifiable, that Intervention #2 made any difference to A2's employment of productive reasoning skills. Early in the intervention, evidence existed for advocating positive perceptions, but this occurred without supporting data or reasoning. Negative perceptions were dealt with in a similar way, and avoidance and poor inquiry characterise the way that these were dealt with. These actions were congruent, however, with A2's espousals. There was no evidence of bilateral solution generation, but plenty of unilateral generation on the part of A2. Nor was there any evidence of bilateral planning for improvement or the monitoring of this.

### A3 and Ae3

In terms of the extent to which the appraisal process was characterised by mutual trust, both A3 and Ae3 were very positive about this in the questionnaires issued before and after Intervention #2 (all 2's and 1's - the extensive end of the continuum). This suggests that excellent trust already existed between this appraiser and appraisee, and the following comment from Ae3 confirms this:

*I quite firmly believe that nothing from our appraisal session was insincere. I feel quite comfortable sharing genuine concerns.*

A3 stated that there was an enhancement in openness throughout Intervention #2. This perception is shared by Ae3. A3 reported that her/his ability to be open, that is to discuss positive perceptions about Ae3's performance, improved during Intervention #2, as recorded in the post-Intervention questionnaires (A3: score of 2, then 1 on the continuum).

A similar, and more important, enhanced demonstration of productive reasoning is evident in openness when dealing with negative concerns. Both A3 and Ae3 recorded in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that there were no concerns (A3, scored 7; Ae3, NA), and similarly reported that no discussion of these had occurred (A3 and Ae3 both scored NA). This was confirmed by A3 in the interview with me prior to the action research intervention:

*No, no Ae3's an extremely capable teacher, we are lucky to have Ae3's services.*

When asked, in this interview, how A3 might go about discussing any problem, if it did arise with Ae3, the response in the interview was:

*Because Ae3's an approachable person, I would arrange for the two of us to sit together and we would discuss the matter. I'm pretty sure we would, and do, sort*

*out problems that arise in that matter. Don't seem to harbour a grudge or fester on a problem. Ae3 will come directly to me.*

The interview with Ae3 confirmed the pre-Intervention #2 questionnaire responses and Ae3 also responded that if there were problems s/he would deal with them.

*I would feel really comfortable to just go and talk to A3 ... We've never had any big issues, but we've worked together for a long time so we're quite conferring.*

In effect these were the espousals of A3 and Ae3, and the transcript analysis of the initial appraisal meeting, and post-observation discussion, demonstrated that, in practice, the latter quoted conferring that A3 and Ae3 engaged in was possibly resulting in defensive strategies rather than those which were productive in terms of openness.

There were some examples of good inquiry from A3:

*Why has it been hectic?*

*In what sort of issues?*

There were also examples of avoidance of confronting problems openly:

*A3: We might pick that up later in the interview.*

Additionally there were examples of weak inquiry, where A3 failed to investigate the deeper issue of Ae3's confidence:

*Ae3: I've got this thing about noise ... I've got to have the confidence to set up activity and know the noise is on task sort of stuff ... yeah that is something I've got to work at.*

*A3: There's productive noise and there's unproductive noise and I'm sure you'd be able to tell the difference."*

The provision of unilaterally determined diagnosis of problems and their solutions was also apparent in the initial meeting and post-observation discussion with Ae3:

*A3: Some staff may be really happy to sit with you and the student, because I see that's a really positive thing to do.*

A3 was aware, even before seeing these transcripts, that problems needed to be addressed more openly. This was evidenced, before Intervention #2, when A3 noted on the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that the previous Intervention #1 training had changed the way that s/he was dealing with issues (2 on the continuum), as shown in the following comment:

*A3: I am aware of the need to deal with the issues - I need to carry it through.*

The shift did not substantially occur, however, until A3 saw the transcripts from the initial and post-observation meetings. This resulted in a commitment on A3's part to making improvements. The results of this enhanced openness were apparent in both the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire results and the final appraisal meeting transcripts. In the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire, as the following quote shows for example, A3 specifically stated what the major concern was, and that s/he believed this was discussed openly:

*A3: Ae3 comes from the "old school" in that noise or students not in their seats is seen as risky or not as useful as stationery academic learning. Ae3 and I were open throughout the whole process of discussing this.*

Ae3's post-Intervention #2 questionnaire response indicated however that although s/he believed this openness about problems was extensive (continuum result of 1), s/he provided a mixed message about this in the comment:

*Ae3: A3 is always happy to listen to concerns and is most supportive, but we didn't discuss it any great detail. It was not made to be a major issue.*

The final appraisal meeting transcript confirmed however that a shift in openness had occurred during Intervention #2. A3 had prepared well for the final appraisal meeting, focusing on the areas of increasing openness through confronting rather than avoiding concerns. In fact only the one following example of avoidance was evident:

*A3: Did you try anything with the Form 4 students?*

*Ae3: Not really, no, I must confess.*

*A3: Okay, but the Year 9 was a real success?*

In my last discussion with A3 s/he confirmed that s/he believed that this openness about problems had occurred in the final interview. This was also illustrated in A3's post-Intervention #2 questionnaire comment:

*I discussed Ae3's willingness to tackle perceived weaknesses head on. I discussed the positive steps Ae3 took in addressing these areas.*

A3 also demonstrated more extensive use of inquiry and bilateral diagnosis of problems. All of these areas were diagnosed as weak in the earlier transcripts. Again, A3 focused on improving this in the final appraisal meeting, and improvement was clear in the transcript from this meeting.

The employment of bilateral approaches to gaining commitment from the appraisee to overcome concerns also showed a positive shift between the two interventions. This was demonstrated in the questionnaire results. Both A3 and Ae3 had recorded in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that no problems existed, and therefore it is not surprising that neither reported that there was planning for improvement, implementation, or monitoring of this plan. After Intervention #2, however, both A3 and Ae3 recorded that the planning had occurred (3 on the continuum for A3: 2 for Ae3), and they were a little more positive about the extent of this plan implementation (2 on the continuum for A3: 3 for Ae3).

*A3: Ae3 implemented this plan very well. Four ability groups were sorted out and each had a number of tasks according to its ability/interests/learning styles.*

*Ae3: I did check the results and divide the group into streams on different activities.*

This demonstrates that A3 and Ae3 must have been jointly involved in the plan development, implementation and monitoring. I have sighted this planning document, and can confirm that it was not only targeted at specific areas for improvement, it also partially conformed to my example of a deep rather than surface level planning approach (see Appendix 16). The missing sections in the plan related to lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions. I pointed this out to both A3 and Ae3, but the plan was not altered. I believe that this contributed to the fact that only limited evaluation data was presented in the final appraisal interview to support that the improvements were made.

In terms of what had contributed to any changes in attitudes or behaviours overall, A3 noted in the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire:

*My "Mr Nice Guy" role used to get in the way of real progress on issues. I have realised that I can, in fact, still be "Mr Nice Guy" and deal effectively with sensitive issues.*

After Intervention #2, A3 noted a greater impact of the training (a shift from 2 to 1 on the continuum) on the way s/he was dealing with issues. The following comment from A3 supports this:

*I am a lot more up front with problems. I am able to get the appraisee to state the problem clearly and to suggest solutions.*

Overall, the relationship of high mutual trust existed before and throughout Intervention #2, as did openness about positive perceptions. There is evidence of enhancement of dealing with negative perceptions throughout the intervention. Early indications (shown in the transcripts) of defensive avoidance of negative issues, poor inquiry relating to these, and unilateral problem diagnosis and solution generation, resulted in A3 committing to improvement. This improvement in all aspects of productive reasoning implementation was markedly demonstrated in the final appraisal interview between A3 and Ae3, and confirmed in their post-intervention questionnaire comments.

#### A4 and Ae4

Mutual trust, like all other features of the A4 and Ae4 responses, was characterised by conflicting reports. At the beginning of the action research intervention A4 reported in a more cautious, and negative (honest?) way than Ae4. In the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire for example, A4 scored 4, an uncommitted response, for the issue of mutual trust, and stated:

*I would never be sure of this with any staff member just yet. The future will perhaps be better.*

Ae4, on the other hand, scored a 1, indicating that extensive trust existed in their relationship. This was verified in feedback to me also in an interview conducted after completion of the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire. Ae4 stated that:

*I have a good relationship with A4.*

Although Ae4's perception remained unaltered (still continuum response 1 in the post-intervention questionnaire), a considerable shift occurred in A4's perception of mutual trust during Intervention #2. S/he recorded on the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire that almost extensive trust (score 2 on the continuum) existed.

In terms of openness about positive issues, the same measured or cautious, and more negative responses from A4 are reported in comparison with Ae4, both before and after the action research intervention. A4 stated in both the post-Intervention #1 and #2 questionnaires that s/he believed there were many positive aspects to Ae4's performance (score of 2 on both questionnaires), but her/his discussion of these positive aspects was a little less extensive (score of 3 for post-Intervention #1 questionnaire: 4 for post-Intervention #2 questionnaire). Ae4 however, reported that A4 would have held extensively positive perceptions (score of 1 in both questionnaires), and that s/he had discussed these extensively also.

Openness in dealing with negative issues demonstrated an even greater gap between the perceptions of A4 and Ae4, and this remained unchanged. A4 reported that s/he had concerns about Ae4's performance right at the beginning of the action research cycle. S/he scored a moderate response for this issue of having concerns in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire (score 4), and noted that the concerns related to keeping on top of the workload and giving drive to programmes. A4 noted that s/he had minimally discussed these concerns (score 6, near the hardly at all end of the continuum) - a result which is questionable in light of the fact that s/he then recorded that s/he extensively supported her/his views with evidence (score 2) - and stated:

*A4: We had the evidence in front of us.*

A4 also noted in this early post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that s/he had thoughts about the causes of her/his concerns (due to the “overwhelming” nature of teaching) and stated that these were moderately discussed (score 3), as this quote exemplifies:

*A4: Guarded... I didn't want to intrude or appear to be noseey.*

A4 further noted that s/he was not extensively open in discussing these concerns (score 5), and stated:

*A4: I am not a very open person. I try to phrase carefully.*

In contrast, at the beginning of the action research intervention Ae4 thought that A4 had no concerns about her/his performance (score of 7), and recorded “Not Applicable” for the extent to which there was discussion of concerns, and data supporting this, despite the fact that s/he also noted:

*Did discuss personal issues and how that may have affected work related stress levels.*

*Willingness to discuss concerns re support for curriculum.*

These early Intervention #2 conflicting reports about openness from A4 and Ae4 (and within each of their own reports) were also reiterated in my follow-up interview conducted with these two people after completion of the post-Intervention #1 questionnaires. In this interview Ae4 stated that there were no problems that had arisen for discussion, but if there were s/he said these would be discussed openly. A4 stated that there were concerns, but also suggested, in varied ways that these were difficult to deal with. The following extracts from this interview reveal this well:

*A4: The appraisal seems to be in two stages, first of all getting confidence to deal with real issues, and then using the process to target the educational needs. I*

*believe we are passing through stage one in that there is a lot of groping around going on and inexperience on my part and while nothing's said, maybe natural suspicion on the part of the appraisees. It is very difficult to get down to nitty gritty items, so I think appraisal in 98 in many ways was superficial and just establishing the understanding of the process.*

*....I'm a little concerned about the overall success of the students...*

*Me: How would you productively tackle that with Ae4?*

*A4: I think I could be up front, and I think as time goes on that would become easier, but maybe as time goes on the problem would become greater. Sometimes its easier to tell someone you don't know very well what's wrong...*

A4's dilemma in dealing with the problems in appraisal was expressed clearly in this extract. At the beginning of this action research intervention this confusion and difficulty over confronting the problems was evident in both the questionnaire responses and my interview. A crucial question is therefore "Did the action research intervention help A4 to deal with this dilemma about openness with problems?"

The post-Intervention #2 questionnaire results would indicate that the action research was of no help at all in assisting A4 to be open with problems. A4 still noted that s/he had concerns (3 on the continuum), and also reiterated her/his dilemma:

*We walk a delicate tightrope and I was more concerned that to "stuff it up" this time might make the whole process irreparable. I was probably concentrating on the protocol rather than the content.*

A4 also noted that s/he did not raise her/his concerns at all during this second intervention (score 7 on the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire). Then, like the earlier post-Intervention #1 results, A4 contradicted this by stating later in the questionnaire that s/he was open in discussing concerns (score 1 on continuum). Not only are these results

contradicted by A4 her/himself, but this similar contradiction is apparent in Ae4's post-Intervention #2 report (no concerns noted: then stating that A4 was extensively open in discussing concerns). The contradiction, once again, was amplified when the transcript of actual appraisal interactions was examined.

As mentioned in the previous chapter A4 fully engaged in analysing her/his own transcripts from the initial appraisal meeting and the post-observation discussion with the appraisee. A4 recognised her/himself that the real concerns were not addressed. These included the avoidance strategy of failing to reveal valid information/facts when a concern was raised, and then giving a mixed message and minimising the importance of the issue. A4 stated that there was a considerable amount of information that was withheld in these earlier transcribed conversations, and that the real concerns were not addressed at all. After analysing the transcripts A4 stated:

*"I would have liked to say there were problems, but I knew that there would be difficulty getting admittance. I couldn't see that things would change. So, I nibbled away at day to day issues: the systems. The bigger issue wasn't addressed. I was too scared to go for the jugular.*

At the end of our dialogue about these transcripts, the openness that A4 showed to addressing this avoidance of problems was admirable, and led to further conversations and coaching with me. In A4 and Ae4's final taped interview for appraisal there was clear evidence that a considerable improvement in confronting the problems occurred. A4 still did not provide sufficient evidence to support the statement of the problem, but as the following extract shows, s/he had made a good start:

*A4: Okay, I want to throw you a curve ball. I don't reckon you are delivering ...in the way that you want to.*

*Ae4: That's right.*

*A4: Would you like to?*

*Ae4: ....pause ....Go on, did I throw it back?*

*A4: No, not at all. There seems to be, my evidence on that is, that you've got three cultures in the staff. In one case there is a background and a passion, and in another situation you've got someone who sees it as sometimes a passion, but sometimes a job, and the third one is too early to measure, but its filling a gap and so the person has no ownership and I'm wondering, I'm also suggesting, that the closeness of the relationships in this group are making it difficult for you to make a change.*

Throughout this final interview transcript there were also many excellent examples of A4 employing greater use of inquiry through the use of probing and open-ended questions. Unlike the initial appraisal meeting responses which were most often one word answers from Ae4, these open-ended questions, in turn, resulted in much more extensive answers and engagement from Ae4, as the following extract shows:

*A4: So, what for 2000, what would you do for 2000 along the same line?*

*Ae4: That was what I've got here.*

*A4: Which is?*

*Ae4: More letters, but I think it is being more consistent, particularly with the junior class. I start off the year very well, I just need to carry it through.*

In terms of bilateralism, or shared approaches to mutual planning, solution generation, and monitoring of this planning, again there was a considerable shift in A4's practice during Intervention #2. The same conflicting accounts about this however are also evident throughout the action research intervention. The post-intervention #1

questionnaire responses reveal, for example, that A4 thought that some planning for improvement had occurred relating to concerns in the previous year (score 4) and stated that this planning had focused on communicating with parents. A4 also stated that this planning had worked well and had a major effect. Ae4 completely contradicted this, and stated that no planning had occurred at all (score 7), nor was a plan implemented. At the end of the action research intervention an almost identical, and contradictory reporting on this planning was noted by both A4 and Ae4. Both recorded almost the same responses (A4 score of 4 again for the extent of planning: Ae4 this time not applicable) to that after Intervention #1. Who is to be believed? The transcript from the initial meeting provided an answer to this.

If Ae4 developed a performance agreement action plan prior to this initial meeting there was no evidence of that in the transcript. Additionally, unlike all of the other appraisees, Ae4 did not give me a copy of an agreement. In the initial appraisal meeting there was considerable evidence of an extensive discussion taking place to determine what Ae4's objectives might be, with A4 making the major contribution to this, for example:

*A4: Okay well a suitable objective would be re-instil confidence with department staff, would that be?*

*Ae4: Yeah that's one of the ones I've got written down.*

And later:

*A4: Would it be useful if we just checked that the instructions are so so, just a 10 minute observation?*

*Ae4: Yeah, could do that.*

In this initial meeting, as with A4's earlier noted use of poor inquiry, the employment of unilateral decision-making in planning, solution generation and intended monitoring, led to a plethora of one line, non-committal, or disinterested, responses from Ae4:

*A4: Now which part are we going to hit? Is it signposting with good news/bad news letters, or both?*

*Ae4: Both.*

A4 recognised these unilateral, non-productive, strategies when s/he carried out her/his own analysis of the transcripts from this early appraisal interaction. A4 also implemented change. The improvement demonstrated in the final appraisal interview transcript was enormous. There were very few examples of unilateral activity, and many examples of extensive attempts to engage Ae4 in shared decision-making over plans and their implementation. For example:

*Ae4: I need to sit down and seriously look at the goals of the department and how I can actually go there and I actually need to sit and talk to my staff and get how they see the department and where the department is going....*

*A4: You think that's where you want a hand? That's a bit scary ....*

The post-Intervention #2 questionnaire responses were a little less contradictory and more positive overall concerning the extent to which the action research intervention had changed the way that A4 was dealing with negative issues. A4 not only scored that this was extensive (1 on the continuum) but also noted:

*It has given me a framework in which to confront them. The whole appraisal process does that. But I would still try to focus on the positive.*

Ae4 supported this and also suggested that s/he discussed things a little deeper and got less side tracked. Further, A4 commented on what s/he thought had contributed to changes in her/his attitude or behaviours:

*The easy manner in which you (I assume this is me) took us through it. The school also sees appraisal in a positive light. Plus, my own experiences as an appraisee have been very positive and beneficial.*

Ae4 suggested that it was A4's openness and ease to talk to which had contributed to the changes in behaviour.

Overall therefore, A4 demonstrated clear progress in openness skills (stating, or advocating, the concern, providing evidence and reasoning to support this, and using inquiry balanced with this) as Intervention #2 progressed. S/he made an absolute commitment to confronting problems rather than avoiding, and progressed to overcoming a considerable dilemma that had existed for her/him about dealing with problems with staff. This latter dilemma, I believe, contributed to the conflicting and more negative responses which A4 provided particularly early in this intervention. A4 also demonstrated a shift in bilateralism as the intervention progressed, and this became apparent in the way that A4 attempted to engage Ae4 in shared decision-making in the final appraisal interview.

#### A5 and Ae5

At the beginning of Intervention #2 both A5 and Ae5 believed that mutual trust was a feature of their appraisal (both scored this as extensive on the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire). A5 reported that it was Ae5's professionalism and personal ethics that engendered trust. There is no way of knowing whether that trust continued throughout this second intervention because neither A5 or Ae5 completed the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire.

Nor is it possible to comment on whether shifts occurred in productive reasoning skills throughout the intervention because the last recorded appraisal interaction between this pair was the initial meeting. No post-observation discussion or final interview was recorded. In the latter case Ae5 was attending a dying relative at the time that the final interview would have occurred. Despite several reminders from me to let me know when this final interview would occur, I received no response, leaving me in doubt that the final interview occurred at all. The limited information that is therefore available gives some indication of early Intervention #2 productive reasoning skills, but little else.

In terms of openness, A5 was a little less positive than Ae5 at the beginning of Intervention #2. In the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire A5 recorded that there were slightly less than extensive (score of 2) aspects of Ae5's performance than this appraisee felt would be the case (score of 1). Similarly A5 recorded (score of 3) that the discussion of these positive aspects occurred somewhat less extensively than Ae5 perceived this to have occurred (score of 2). Both reported, however, that identical issues were discussed.

In terms of openness about negative issues, or concerns, A5 simply recorded for all sections relating to this in the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire that there were no negative issues, and therefore no discussion was necessary. Ae5 differed. This appraisee reported that the appraiser did have concerns about her/his performance (score of 5, indicating some concerns), and stated what these were related to accuracy of work. Ae5 also recorded that some discussion of this had occurred (score of 6), noting that they:

*Talked on how I could improve on it.*

Ae5 also reported that extensive evidence (score of 1) was provided by A5 to support the discussion of concerns, and stated that this was derived from a discussion with another staff member. Additionally, Ae5 said that s/he had her/his own ideas about the causes of these concerns (pressure to complete work quickly). This contradiction in reporting from Ae5 and A5 was highlighted even further with Ae5 stating that s/he believed that A5 was extensively open (score of 1) in discussing concerns, despite the fact that A5 recorded

that this had not occurred at all. My own follow-up interview with both A5 and Ae5, conducted to verify the post-Intervention #1 questionnaire, substantiated this differing perception about problems. In this interview A5 stated categorically that there were no problems. When I asked how A5 would respond to problems if they did arise, this was the response:

*A5: I unfortunately have to ask Ae5 into my room so Ae5 is on the back foot coming in, but it is one of the few places which is private in the school, I can shut doors and actually Ae5's very good, if there is a problem Ae5 comes to my room and says "I need to talk to you". Ae5 is very clear on issues that arise and I have had lots of chats on things that have bothered Ae5 about other staff and something that has bothered him/her about me and Ae5 has been very up front on it and we've just taken those on board.*

This response from A5 indicated that there were problems that had been discussed, and yet when asked directly, either in the questionnaire or interview, the denial of this was absolute. This may suggest a defensive avoidance approach to problems, and I specifically sought further evidence of this in the transcript of the initial appraisal meeting conducted. This transcript did, in fact, reveal a high degree of avoidance, and also appraiser control. With the latter, A5 dominated the appraisal meeting (s/he talked approximately 65% of the time), and on three occasions made assumptions without checking them:

*A5: I know what you mean. You feel you're not being extended.*

A5 also controlled by often failing to inquire about Ae5's perceptions. This happened when there was a limited level of probing to explore issues, as demonstrated in the following example:

*A5: Okay, but you're okay about how to use that machine and how it has to be recorded*

*Ae5: mmmm*

*A5: Well those are the key tasks and the job description as we have it.*

But on two occasions, A5 used probing to inquire well, as this example shows:

*Ae5: I feel like I haven't gained as much as I would like to and I haven't fallen below what I think I should be at, the level I should be at.*

*A5: How do you mean gain? What do you think?*

When Ae5 did speak in this initial appraisal meeting, this was sometimes interrupted, another controlling strategy, as the following extract shows:

*Ae5: Because I'm producing the same things over and over again I'm not really being tested in my*

*A5: You don't think you're being extended?*

*Ae5: mmm the next one is*

*A5: the write up of the outgoing mail, I haven't seen that done for a while.*

Avoidance in dealing with any more deeply seated issues or problems was even more evident in this initial appraisal meeting. The fact that there was limited inquiry meant that deeper probing was rare, and overprotecting was also demonstrated:

*A5: that key task, how much do you do of that now?*

*Ae5: I try to get out of it as much as I can*

*A5: In actual fact, that key task could just about be taken off here, because we have somebody else who could do that, when I think about it.*

I discussed my concerns with A5 immediately after I had listened to the initial appraisal meeting tape, and again after A5 had analysed the transcript from this meeting. A5 was enthusiastic about wanting to change these defensive strategies, but the earlier mentioned lack of a final appraisal interview has resulted in a thwarted opportunity to check this.

In terms of the employment of bilateral planning, plan monitoring and implementation, the contradiction between A5 and Ae5's perceptions continued. A5 recorded at the beginning of this second intervention that no planning or plan implementation had occurred prior to Intervention #2. In contrast, Ae5 recorded that extensive planning had occurred (score of 2) and stated:

*A5 explained that were procedures that people followed where my work was concerned and that these needed to be explained again to these people.*

This statement from Ae5 indicated that it was A5 unilaterally that was suggesting what needed to be done. During Intervention #2 there was evidence that planning did occur. Ae5 provided me with a clear performance agreement action plan, even though, like all others presented by appraisees it failed to demonstrate the depth that I had outlined in training. The transcript from the initial appraisal meeting in Intervention #2 revealed that some mutual planning had occurred to arrive at this plan, but it also revealed instances of A5 unilaterally suggesting what could be included:

*A5: What do you think we could do about that, I mean is there a form we could devise or we just have to teach people what to do.*

At the beginning of Intervention #2 A5 recorded (score of 1, extensively) that the short-term training had changed the way that s/he was dealing with negative issues, but the following comment does not reveal how this might have qualitatively changed:

*A5: I used to only have one meeting per year, now will build to at least three.*

Overall, it is only possible to state that A5 demonstrated considerable defensive rather than productive reasoning strategies in the early part of Intervention #2. A high degree of avoidance, lack of inquiry, and appraiser control were evident in the initial appraisal meeting. Unilateral solution generation was also evident, but partial mutual planning also occurred. A5 articulated total commitment to wanting to improve on these defensive strategies, but has failed to show that this has happened.

#### Discussion of Overall Results on Impact of Intervention #2 on Development of Educative Process Skills

Two of the five appraisers (A3 and A4) showed total commitment to improving their productive reasoning and their educative process skills in this second intervention. In both cases the turning point had been the analysis of the transcripts from the early initial appraisal meeting and post-observation discussion. Both A3 and A4 demonstrated this improvement in the final interviews they conducted with their appraisees.

I believe that A1 would also have shown this same degree of improvement if s/he had more rigorously prepared for each of the interactions with Ae1, using productive reasoning as a guideline. This lack of preparation and review prevented A1 from focusing on the key areas that were earlier identified for improvement. My reasons for stating my belief that this improvement would have occurred are based on the fact that A1 was genuinely concerned when s/he saw for her/himself that in the final interview s/he had failed to address the unilateral behaviour that had dominated in the earlier appraisal meetings. A1 and Ae1 had an excellent relationship characterised by high trust and openness, and it is my opinion that A1 would have committed to improving this unilateral behaviour in order to maintain this relationship.

The two last appraisers (A2 and A5) not only showed highly defensive, particularly avoiding, interactions with their appraisees, they also failed to complete the appraisal cycles with these staff. It is therefore impossible to know whether the intervention resulted in any improved productive reasoning skills which would have led to an educative process.

So, did this more intensive intervention enhance the educative process skills of the appraisers? Yes, it did, but only where there was willingness on the part of the appraiser to critically reflect on her/his own performance, and to commit to making improvement.

### **The Extent to Which the Intervention Led to the Resolution of Issues or Problems**

In order to answer this research question various methods of data collection were employed. First of all the post-Intervention #1 and #2 questionnaire responses were compared for both appraisers and appraisees in order to determine whether these individuals stated themselves that they thought resolution had occurred. Second, the interviews conducted between myself and each of the appraisers and appraisees throughout the intervention were designed to extend and deepen the responses given in the questionnaires relating to problem identification and resolution. The transcript analysis from these interviews provides data on the extent of problem resolution. Third, tape transcripts from the appraiser and appraisee initial appraisal meeting, the post-observation discussion and the final interview were compared to determine whether problems were actually raised and discussed. Fourth, if student evaluation data was available, this was also summarised to confirm whether the problem resolution had impacted on teaching and learning.

#### **A1 and Ae1**

In terms of questionnaire results, A1 stated both before and after the intervention that there were no problems - this was also confirmed in my interviews with them. Her/his responses also indicated that there was no change in problem resolution as a consequence

of involvement in Intervention #2: not applicable was recorded for both pre- and post-Intervention questionnaires. In the pre-Intervention #2 questionnaire, Ae1 recorded 4 on the continuum (a “somewhat” answer on the continuum) in response to whether the resolution of any problems had occurred, despite the fact that her/his interview comments to me included that s/he thought that there were no problems. However, in the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire, Ae1, like A1, recorded not applicable, indicating that there were no problems to resolve.

This conflicting record in the questionnaire and interview responses, had alerted me to the fact that problems may have existed. This was able to be checked out in the transcriptions of the appraisal interactions themselves. Here, a considerable gap between espousal and practice was revealed. As noted in the earlier section of this chapter, there were problems raised in the initial meeting, in the post-observation discussion, and in the final interview. Specifically these problems were linked to a parent complaint about abruptness, Ae1’s concerns about class sizes and the fact that management did not seem to be doing anything about this, and about one of the classes being a dumping ground. Each of the appraisal meeting transcripts showed a predominance of A1 providing solutions unilaterally to these problems. No monitoring planning was evident in these discussions, and so I was interested to know if the problems had been resolved. This was a question I asked A1 in the final discussion we had.

In this final discussion A1 stated that s/he felt that problems had been resolved. A1 also spoke extensively about specific instances where s/he had confronted problems with other staff in the appraisal context, and that these had been resolved. However, as I report later in the section under the analysis of my own practice, with each of these examples, A1’s pattern of unilaterally providing solutions leaves me in doubt that the problems were actually resolved.

#### A2 and Ae2

As stated earlier, neither A2 or Ae2 believed there were any problems other than that Ae2 needed to improve her/his subject knowledge in order to teach higher level classes. This

concern was the only one noted and was reported both on the pre-intervention questionnaires and in the very first discussion (in February) I conducted to clarify what problems might have existed. In this discussion A2 noted:

*....s/he's got to cement her/his knowledge of ... and reinforce it ....*

By the post-observation discussion in July, however, this improvement in subject knowledge had not occurred as the following interaction reveals:

*A2: Now you need to work at perfecting your knowledge of the subject so that you can teach at other levels.*

*Ae2: I'd like to do that. Would like to officially do a course to extend my knowledge.*

Additionally, not only does this extract reveal that nothing had happened to extend Ae2's knowledge, the conversation about this concern stopped at this point and deflected to another issue. It was not raised again until much later in this post-observation discussion, as this extract shows:

*A2: In future I think you should take some higher stream classes. You need to get capable to do this. Perhaps you could sit SC papers yourself. Trial these.*

*Ae2: I'm looking forward to doing this. I wanted to do a paper through Massey. At \$500 a paper it was too expensive. I can't afford this. I will take the 6<sup>th</sup> form books home with me over Christmas to look at.*

What we see here is A2 offering a solution unilaterally, then Ae2 offering some alternatives, but not only was no planning, or monitoring discussed, there was also no other mention made of this in the rest of this conversation. Because there was no final interview conducted between A2 and Ae2, I have subsequently inquired as to whether

Ae2 did extend her/his knowledge, and whether this led to teaching higher stream classes. Ae2 did in fact extend her/his knowledge and s/he is now teaching the higher level classes.

### A3 and Ae3

Prior to Intervention #2 both A3 and Ae3 had stated that there were no problems. Similarly they stated not applicable to the question on resolution of these . However, both Ae3's performance objectives and the transcripts from appraisal meetings reveal that problems were identified. These were the issues of diversifying activities in teaching so that there was more student interaction, and enhancing problem-solving with staff. After Intervention #2, both A3 and Ae3 recorded that positive resolution of problems had occurred (both reported 2 on the continuum), despite the fact that they had both stated prior to the intervention that no problems existed. A3's supporting statements confirm this:

*A3: I suppose the appraisal process enabled Ae3 and I to zero in on perceived weaknesses regarding creativity. We implemented a process to change it. But here goes one bit of evidence. In the end of year Form 3 exam, almost all of Ae3's .... class chose the ... option. There were about 10 options and they had to pick three and I thought not many kids would pick this option and almost all of A3's guys chose to do the ... option (the one A3 had diversified with).*

Ae3 also confirmed that the problems/concerns tackled in the appraisal cycle had successful outcomes. This statement shows this:

*Ae3: I'm working on mixed ability strategies with more confidence. I've pulled back on some of my other work - perhaps not so pro-active.*

A3 was the only appraiser who actively sought feedback from the students to confirm this. A3 noted:

*Yes, Ae3 definitely did achieve this. The students in 3A were questioned by me about whether Ae3 was using more interactive teaching. The students were particularly positive - especially the students involved in the activity. The students (every one of them) in the activities reported that they really enjoyed this activity and felt it had helped them more than formal work.*

#### A4 and Ae4

In the pre-Intervention #2 questionnaire A4 noted that s/he believed that the Intervention #1 training had made a difference (score of 2 indicating extensive) to dealing with problems, and s/he stated that it had given her/him a protocol for dealing with negative issues. It is my observation, however, that this was not apparent in the earlier stages of Intervention #2. Definite problems existed with Ae4, including the management of staff, low motivation, and disappointing student exam results. The transcripts from the initial interview, and post-observation discussion, reveal that these problems existed but they also show considerable avoidance of A4 in confronting these problems, particularly through lack of inquiry strategies. This changed dramatically after A4 had analysed the transcripts from these appraisal meetings. In the final appraisal interview s/he was determined to enhance her/his ability to confront problems. A4 made an extensive shift in this interview in probing, or enhanced inquiry, in order to find out what exactly was going on, and s/he also advocated concerns more readily along with the reasoning for these.

In the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire A4 scored 3 on the continuum indicating that some resolution of problems had occurred. A4 also stated, in conversation with me, that it was too early to tell if the appraisal cycle they were involved in resolved any problems that had been identified because all of the problems were substantial and long term. Despite this, A4 also felt that the intervention had made a difference to problem resolution:

*A4: Some points of concern have been "up front" and defined. Out of these come direction for the future. Ae4 is more direct with me and shares concerns.*

Of interest is the fact that Ae4 noted in the post-intervention questionnaire that A4 had not raised any concerns about Ae4's performance, other than Ae4 needing to get to 8.30am meetings. Ae4 also recorded "no opinion" for whether A4 had discussed any of these concerns, or their reasoning for them. This response contradicts the transcription evidence, where concerns were definitely discussed in the final appraisal interview.

#### A5 and Ae5

As noted earlier in this chapter A5 stated that there were no concerns at all at the beginning stage of this intervention. This was consistent in both the questionnaire and discussion with me, but in the latter, as the following extract shows, this message was mixed:

*A5: No, no problems, but somewhere I can somehow retrain Ae5's telephone manner.*

As noted also earlier, according to the pre-Intervention #2 questionnaire, Ae5 believed that there were concerns that needed to be addressed at the beginning of Intervention #2 (score of 5 on the continuum). The sole problem noted by Ae5 in the questionnaire at this stage was a lack of accuracy. This was contradicted in my discussion with Ae5 at the same time. Here the report was that there were no problems at all.

The transcript of the initial meeting held between A5 and Ae5 revealed that several examples of concerns arose, despite continued denial of any problems by A5. These problems included a need to improve accuracy, and telephone manner. Also Ae5 felt that s/he was not being extended. There is no way of knowing how these concerns were resolved due to the lack of conduct of post-observation or the final appraisal interview.

### Discussion of Results of Extent to Which Intervention #2 Led to the Resolution of Problems

In all but one case (A4) all appraisers denied, in both questionnaires and follow-up interviews with me, that there were any problems at the beginning of this intervention. In all cases again, the early transcripts from the initial appraisal meetings and post-observation discussions revealed that this was inaccurate. All appraisers discussed problems with their appraisees.

In the case of A1 the problems were confronted quite well in the initial appraisal meetings, but unilateral decision-making on the part of A1 also occurred. Despite this A1 still felt that the problems were resolved. Tracking of the way that A2 tackled problems reveals that little progress was made by mid-way through the appraisal cycle. A3 and Ae3 stated clearly that the problems were resolved in their appraisal cycle and student assessment results and feedback both support this. In the case of A4, evidence from the post-Intervention #2 questionnaire and the transcriptions confirms that some problem resolution occurred. With A5, I am unaware if any problem resolution resulted from this intervention.

Like the results for educative process enhancement in Intervention #2, these results show that despite initial denial of problem existence on the part of most appraisers, those who were committed to resolving problems did so.

### **Participants' Other Comments on the Way in Which Trust, Openness and Problem-Solving can be Developed in Appraisal**

Responses from participants on the way that trust, openness and problem-solving can be developed in appraisal were derived from pre- and post-intervention questionnaires.

#### A1 and Ae1

A1 had several things to say about the way that trust, openness and problem-solving could be developed. The majority of this was linked to clarity in process, as the following shows:

*A1: I think to a large extent it was there before, but we've got a clear cut system that we're following and it's there in the back of your mind and up until now we've been going off and doing our own little thing. Now we give them prior warning, we tell them when we're meeting and at what time, we tell them what to bring, we tell them what's on the agenda, so I think that's all helped to instil trust, and they know what's coming, there are no surprises. They basically know the process now.*

A1 also alerted to what might jeopardise this trust:

*A1: Well there's no difficulty if there's no problem, but if there is a problem I would like to hope that it still worked effectively. I just wonder with some personalities, if their pay was being affected, just how open and honest, when you're going through their contract... and you're basically asking them has this particular criteria been met. I just wonder with some staff how honest they're going to be with putting "partially met". The other thing is with consistency within the appraisers with what they do allow to be put in these categories and how accurately they are monitoring and the extent of the evidence they seek to justify what they put into those.*

One thing that A1 therefore is suggesting is that the appraisal linkage with attestation (in turn linked to remuneration) may restrict honesty, and that also appraiser consistency and accuracy associated with this linkage may be a further jeopardy to the process.

Ae1 stated that trust, openness and problem-solving were all essential components of the appraisal system. Ae1 also alerted to the same jeopardy to this that A1 had noted:

*Ae1: Given the chance it is an excellent system carried out by a mentor but if it is incorporated into the attestation system it will not achieve its aims.*

### A2 and Ae2

When asked whether s/he had any other comments about how trust, openness, and problem-solving could be developed in appraisal, A2 simply said “No”. Ae2 made no comment at all.

### A3 and Ae3

A3 provided strong support for being direct, using the features of critical dialogue, as a way of developing trust, openness and problem-solving in appraisal. S/he stated:

*A3: Yeah, if we could talk about the most important thing in here, I think it is the ability to have problem out in front of two people and for those two people to sit back and discuss that problem without any sort of, without personalities being offended. Without any recriminations, that's really useful. This sort of idea to say what you think, to say why you're thinking it. To deal with emotions.*

They also stated that this trust, openness, and problem-solving could occur if the school used the professional development co-ordinator, rather than senior management, to communicate about the process:

*A3: Our PD co-ordinator could be the one who relates all appraisal information to the staff. At present most information is relayed by principal/DP. There is suspicion from the cynics (understandably because some are involved in competency proceedings).*

Similar to A1 and Ae1, A3 is suggesting here that the root of blockages to openness, trust and problem-solving may be problematic when personnel are linked with both appraisal and the summative systems in the school (in this case competency rather than attestation).

Ae3 alludes to the importance of existing respect between appraiser and appraisee being important to the way in which trust, openness and problem-solving occur.

*Ae3: Generally I felt the whole system was useful to me as an appraisee - as well as being given an uninterrupted ear, I had to think carefully about my goals, methods etc. But - all of this was achievable because of my respect for my appraiser. Had this not been the case, the process may not have been as valuable.*

#### A4 and Ae4

A4 stated that trust, openness and problem-solving were important to appraisal's success, however:

*A4: There is no doubt over time that it can contribute, BUT*

- 1. It must not be overdone*
- 2. It must be handled with great care and deliberation*
- 3. I prefer to do things properly, so time is always the enemy in a school.*

A4 said that having more time to prepare and interview would help trust, openness, and problem-solving to be developed in appraisal,. S/he concluded:

*A4: If we make a superficial job of appraisal then trust will disappear.*

Ae4 suggested that keeping the appraisal on a professional level was important and that:

*Ae4: The trust issue is the most important.*

#### A5 and Ae5

A5 noted "not applicable" when asked if there were any other comments s/he wished to make about the way trust, openness, and problem-solving could be developed in appraisal. Ae5 simply stated "no".

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### Discussion of Participants Comments On The Way In Which Trust, Openness And Problem-Solving Can Be Developed In Appraisal

The key features in the development of trust, openness and problem resolution which were raised by the participants are those of process clarity, existing respect, dealing with problems using a critical dialogue type approach, having time to prepare, and carrying the process out well rather than superficially. Those which might jeopardise this were stated as linking appraisal to summative processes such as attestation, and having the same personnel carrying out competency proceedings.

### My Own Demonstration of Productive Reasoning in the Action Research

As an action researcher, I have a commitment to reflecting continuously on my approaches, particularly on my ability to practise the values and strategies of productive reasoning. As part of the data gathering for the reflection in this research I undertook to audiotape all interactions that I had with the appraisers, and I transcribed and analysed these, using both the same criteria as those employed to analyse the appraiser and appraisee interactions and an extension drawn from my deeper understanding of the values and strategies. I have extracted one transcript analysis for each appraiser as the example for discussion of my own performance. In all cases this example related to dialogues between appraisers and myself in the situation where we compared transcription analyses following either their initial appraisal meeting, post-observation discussion, or final appraisal interview. My analysis results of these dialogues is summarised in Table 8.1. Note that the “appraiser solution” (AS) category shown in Appendix 13 (the transcription code used for analysis of appraiser and appraisee interactions) is replaced by “my solution” (MS).

**Table 8.1: Transcript Analysis of My Own Productive Reasoning**

A1	A+	D+	R+	A-	D-	R-	I	OQC	CQ	RQ	C	SU	BS	MS	M
Final Interview	4	2	3	2	2	2	9	8	1	0	4	2	2	0	0
A2															
Final Interview															
A3															
Final Interview	4	1	2	3	4	3	12	8	4	0	3	2	2	2	2
A4															
Post-Observation	7	6	6	8	8	7	17	15	2	0	6	1	2	2	1
A5															
First Meeting	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	6	2	0	5	0	0	1	0

**Prod. Reasoning Values/Strategies**  
*Openness About Positives*

Advocacy  
Provided Reasoning

*Openness About Negatives*

Advocacy  
Discussed Evidence  
Provided Reasoning (incl. causes)

**Code**

A+  
R+

A-  
D-  
R-

**Prod. Reasoning Values/Strategies**  
*Inquiry*

Discussed Evidence  
Open-ended Questions (*high inquiry*)  
Closed Questions (*low inquiry*)  
Rhetorical Questions (*low inquiry*)  
Checking of Appraisee's perception  
Summarised Mutual Understanding

**Code**  
I

D+  
OQ  
CQ  
RQ  
C  
SU

**Pr**  
*Bil*

My  
Mu  
Ev  
Mo

## A1

The transcript analysis of my final dialogue with A1 reveals that there were four examples of positive advocacy. With two of these situations I provided direct evidence, hard data, in the discussion, and in three I also revealed my reasoning. This example shows this:

*Me: I had written down here that you quickly came to the agenda and the goals at the beginning. I had those issues that I've already raised with you about the shared agreement of whether they were her/his solutions or whether they were your solutions. There were two places that that happened and I've already pointed that out to you. Apart from the comment that I had here, "did you really hear what s/he was saying, whose solution?" there was nothing else that I marked on this part at all, because I felt that you had followed all. There were no problems at all. You did this very well.*

There were two examples of advocating negative concerns in this dialogue with A1. In both cases evidence was provided to support my concerns, as was my own reasoning. The following example demonstrates this:

*Me: I just wanted to follow through with that because you know in light of what we saw in the transcript, one of the two things, the only two things that I identified were where you hadn't asked Ae1 about what her/his solutions were. Have you thought about asking Ae1 what the solutions might be?*

*A1: The solution is that Ae1 teach 7<sup>th</sup> form.*

*Me: But given that, you know, we talked about with that critical dialogue format, that's stating that you've got that here this is the stipulated, non alterable requirement on your part. So I'm concerned that you haven't found out what Ae1's solutions are for what else might happen to enable them to basically find some other challenge.*

There were numerous examples of inquiry (eight open-ended questions, and four checking) in the dialogue. The following two examples show situations where I used this checking to inquire further about what A1 did, but in a way which was treating my views as hypothetical:

*Me: Did you provide Ae1 with the solutions, or did s/he come up with the solutions for that? I'm asking you this question because I really didn't understand that...*

*Me: I had a question beside this one and again I'm exploring this, I don't know whether I'm right or wrong. Would it have been better that Ae1 came up with those solutions, or did you need to do that as the HoD, the faculty leader?*

There were also two examples of A1 and myself reaching something of a shared understanding about the problems, but only limited mutual planning occurred, as the following example shows:

*Me: Alright, so just to summarise it. I'm not hearing that you've got any problems with anybody, any issues. The ones that you've had to do with X, with Ae1, with both of those anyway, you've resolved them, sorted out what had to happen with those..*

*A1: I think with X I'm going to have to ask her/him again if s/he is feeling whether or not s/he would like to attempt it.*

*Me: I agree with that and with Y, possibly there's a question mark there about the possibility of going back and offering her/him the opportunity to come up with solutions of her/his own - is that right?*

*A1: I don't know what s/he can come up with other than what we probably already have discussed.*

At this point in this conversation I realise that the limited mutual planning for how A1 could have resolved this occurred because I failed to reiterate my concern that this was a continuation of A1 unilaterally resolving the problem, having predetermined outcomes and failing to seek bilateral solutions. I had confronted this several times before in the dialogue but at this final point missed the opportunity to follow this through again, and to move on to plan for change.

### A2

There are limitations to my reporting on my implementation of productive reasoning with A2. As noted earlier, although I had taped and transcribed the initial appraisal meeting between A2 and Ae2, they had rejected taping of any further interactions, including those with me. The only further appraisal interaction between A2 and Ae2 that I was aware of was that of the post-observation interview, which was manually recorded by me. I did hold a dialogue with A2 to discuss our analyses of the initial appraisal meeting and post-observation transcriptions. However, because this could not be taped it was very difficult for me to have any accurate, objective record for analysis of my own interactions. I did make notes during this dialogue session, and these are reported on briefly.

As reported earlier in this chapter, I had noted in my analysis of A2's initial appraisal meeting with Ae2 that there several examples of positive advocacy but little supporting evidence or provision of reasoning associated with these affirming statements. In our dialogue this was pointed out clearly to A2 using examples from the transcript as evidence. Similarly I pointed out where rhetorical questions had been employed, and discussed that these could be an indicator of A2 holding predetermined outcomes, a defensive reasoning strategy. The feature of the transcript which I then focused on was that of failure to sufficiently inquire into Ae2's responses. I pointed out three examples where Ae2 had provided a statement which needed further exploration, and where A2 in

response had made a comment which was either unrelated to the concern being raised, or dismissive of it. For example:

*Ae2: I think the worry is homework, we compromised on that and sort of reduced it a little.*

*A2: How do you get on with filling those reports in, quite happy?*

I then extended this concern about failure to use inquiry in the manual transcription I had made of the post-observation discussion. The four examples of this same problem in a ten minute section of the conversation were all pointed out. I was direct with A2 in stating that I was concerned that this could be construed as avoidance of confronting problems, and elaborated by showing her/him where I had intercepted in the post-observation to try to clarify if there were in fact problems that were being avoided. This happened in the following way in this post-observation conversation when there had been three examples of failure to inquire, followed by a long pause where it looked like this interview had come to an end:

*Me: Is there anything negative that happened in the observation that you would want to discuss with Ae2?*

*A2: Yes there is, but, I don't know whether its important or I'd want to say it.*

*Ae2: No, tell me I want to know...*

Perhaps it was inappropriate for me to have intervened in this post-observation discussion between A2 and Ae2, but that aside, I used this extract of my intervention to point out to A2, in our analysis dialogue, that this was direct evidence of her/his avoidance of engaging in resolving problems.

In this dialogue with A2, I also pointed out other examples of the same positive advocacy indicated in the initial meeting transcript, and stated that again the pattern of unsubstantiated affirmation was evident. What I failed to do, however, was to fully employ the third of the values and strategies of productive reasoning, that is, to gain A2's internal commitment to making some changes. We did discuss what A2 needed to do to change and improve productive reasoning, which was to some extent seeking bilateral solutions, and jointly planning for implementing these. We did not however plan for the monitoring of these other than to state that we would re-examine the transcripts from the final interview to see how things had improved. In retrospect, I wonder if I should have requested that A2 recorded this commitment to change. I resisted this because I wanted A2 to show her/his own commitment. The fact that s/he did not record anything in the room when we conducted the dialogue may have been an indication however that s/he was not committed - I will never know because s/he did not conduct the final appraisal interview, and has since left.

### A3

A3 and I conducted a dialogue to compare analyses of the final appraisal interview with Ae3. In terms of discussing/advocating positive issues with A3, this occurred regularly (four times) in our dialogue but only once with exposure of direct evidence to support my affirmations, and twice with an explanation for my reasoning. Twice I also gave a mixed message when providing this positive statement. The following extract exemplifies these weakly justified and reasoned positive advocacy from me:

*Me: I loved the ... I thought that was lovely. No, but you did come down to the point very very quickly, there was none of that, you know, what I described as easing in.*

The following is a an example of where I better revealed my reasoning when positively advocating, but still failed to justify this with direct evidence - in this case by omitting to check A3's evidence, or to publicly test this:

*Me: That suggests to me that the process that you used with her/him must have been non-defensive on it's own because if it wasn't I would predict that s/he would have gone into that defensive sort of response.*

*A3: No, there was no defensive thing there at all, because I got her/him to tell me that problem, rather than me tell her/him the problem.*

*Me: Excellent, oh that's really good.*

The way that I dealt with negative issues in a productive way was better. In all of the three cases where the problems where discussed I used direct supporting evidence, and revealed my reasoning. I also publicly tested that reasoning with A3, and inquired into her/his reaction in a way that checked explicit and implicit assumptions. The following example shows this:

*Me: I wanted to talk to you about your not using critical dialogue skills. There was one particular situation where, and I have written it on the sheet here, I wondered whether there was avoidance and why you didn't probe more to find out. Now its on page two at the top, when Ae3 talks about the way s/he used the diversity with the Year 9's, but didn't use it with the 4<sup>th</sup> form ..*

*A3: Mmmm yes*

*Me: And you said "Did you try it with the 4<sup>th</sup> form students" and Ae3 says "No not really, I must confess" and then you said "okay, but the Year 9 was a real success". I've written down here in my analysis, oh okay, why not, and is this avoidance? Can you just give me a little bit of background as to, you know I don't know whether you can remember what you were thinking there, but why you didn't perhaps ask Ae3 more about the 4<sup>th</sup> form students.*

*A3: Well that's a pretty valid pick up on, because I read that and picked up on it myself, I thought hell yeah, why didn't I hone in on that. I guess I was concentrating myself on the Year 9's, that was the class I observe. So that's a fair point to pick up on.*

*Me: When you said it, did it make you think, ah ha, I missed an opportunity there, or what did you think?*

In this example the first two guiding values of productive reasoning were demonstrated, that is, "Increasing Valid Information for All - Advocacy" and "Enhanced Freedom of Informed Choice - Inquiry". In three other parts of the dialogue the checking component of the second guiding value was employed in order to find out what A3's perception was. Also in this dialogue there were two examples of beginning the third guiding value ("Gaining Internal Commitment to Choice and Monitoring"). One of these is shown in the following example:

*A3: Ae3's a bit like me though, tends to be a space filler. I hear Ae3 doing a lot of business on the phone - ringing parents. Ae3 probably just has to learn to let a silence ride, to build a silence to get information. Whereas Ae3 tells people I think what Ae3 wants to hear from them.*

*Me: How would you help Ae3 to find that out for themselves?*

*A3: I think by doing different role play situations.*

Although this example shows a good beginning with probing how A3 might help Ae3 to work on finding solutions to this issue of "space filling", I failed then to then confront A3 with the fact that s/he was now continuing to provide solutions for Ae3 unilaterally, and I then did the same thing myself:

*Me: I'm not even going to begin to start to talk about all the things you could do now, but you have got enough material of your own to help her/him transcribe, like we have this year, to use critical dialogue, because that seems to me to be the area that Ae3 needs also to be looking at.*

There was little example here of my seeking bilateral solutions and taking joint responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring the achievement of these goals - the strategies associated with the third guiding value.

#### A4

The dialogue between A4 and myself concerning the initial appraisal meeting and the post-observation discussion was characterised by advocacy of both positive and negative aspects of A4's performance, and inquiry. Positive advocacy was, apart from one occasion out of seven, associated with the provision of direct evidence and my reasoning, as this example shows:

*A4: There seems to be a better balance, flow, later. Of course the interview was about setting objectives. That's why we were consulting documents. Really the last two pages show what we're trying to learn, but there is still a way to go.*

*Me: Okay. Can I just respond to what you've said there. I'll compare what I've got with what you've got. Overall, I totally agree with your conclusions. You've made an accurate analysis compared with mine, as we've just discussed. Ae4 was guarded at the beginning, as you've just shown, and I have that noted as well. I agree with you also that you overcompensated for this, but this decreases towards the end. I'll show you why I'm saying that (illustrated with transcript).*

There were also multiple examples (eight) of advocating negative concerns throughout this dialogue, and again in almost every case there was a provision of clear supporting evidence and my reasoning, as shown in the following example:

*A4: I think I've got a good encourager there.*

*Me: Yes, I agree with that, but I've also got written beside that "Did you explore Ae4's thinking/ideas?" This gets back to my earlier comment about who's suggestion this was - yours or Ae4's. Can I show you another couple of examples of this. See on page....*

In terms of inquiry, the second productive reasoning value, again many examples (seventeen) of this occurred in the dialogue. Almost all of the questions asked were of the open, probing type, as these examples demonstrate:

*Can you tell me where exactly?*

*Can you expand on that, that's interesting?*

*What would have happened if you'd asked Ae4 to elaborate on that more?*

Some of these questions were of the checking type, as shown in this extract:

*Me: Is what you're saying there that it wasn't important enough?*

*A4: I'd approach it in a different way - not through the appraisal system but through day to day discussion.*

*Me: How would you be direct with Ae4 about it?*

*A4: Not sure, I'm aware of (pause).... I'd try to get at it in another way (long pause, about one minute).*

There was also an example in the dialogue of reaching a shared agreement about the situation:

*A4: ...I don't buy into that. I want Ae4 to admit it. I think I've glossed over it.*

*Me: I think you've um....*

*A4: Cut and run.*

*Me: Yes! You hadn't explored it. You left it and ran on. Its interesting that you've acknowledged that. I wondered whether you'd see it and you have. That's great. So what might you have done instead?*

In terms of gaining A4's internal commitment to the choices made and the monitoring of these, there were two examples of finding bilateral solutions to some of the problems, but also two of my providing solutions. Quite an extensive amount of time at the end of the dialogue involved guiding A4 to plan for change, as this extract shows:

*Me: So what are the major things that you'll make a note of for the next interview.*

*A4: I've been thinking about that. Its almost like I need a flow diagram of probing questions I need to ask, with subquestions.*

*Me: So one of the things you're suggesting is that you'd prepare beforehand.*

This part of the dialogue also led to an investigation of how other productive reasoning values and skills could be enhanced.

## A5

Opportunities to analyse my skill employment with A5 were limited due to the fact that the only transcribed dialogue data was that from our conversation just after the initial appraisal meeting between A5 and Ae5 (they did not conduct either a post-observation discussion or final appraisal interview). This conversation contained no direct analysis of

the appraiser and appraisee interactions, but was just a discussion about how the initial appraisal meeting had gone. Later A5 and I did hold a dialogue to compare our analyses of the initial meeting after transcription, but unfortunately the tape from this dialogue was too faint to transcribe. Consequently I have little material of substance with which to analyse my own implementation of productive reasoning. The following report on my analysis of this limited material does however reveal some things.

There were no instances of my advocating either positive or negative concerns with A5 in the discussion we held following the initial appraisal meeting. None of the strategies of exposing information, disclosing my views, or inviting testing of these occurred at all. This is not surprising since this initial discussion was just to gather data on my part. It was not a dialogue.

I demonstrated several examples of implementation of the skills associated with the second, inquiry, value of productive reasoning. There were six examples of inquiry using open-ended questions, and five of my checking to establish A5's views, as the first part of this example shows:

*Me: And you remember we talked about, you know if we had a problem with Ae5 this is the way we would introduce it. You're indicating to me here, I just need to clarify this, that you didn't need to use any of the skills because there was nothing that was a problem..*

*A5: No, I do have one member of staff that that I am going to have to use that one. I've just realised that in the last two weeks.*

*Me: I would like to talk to you about how that goes when you've done that.*

*A5: Oh yes, okay*

*Me: So I'll come back to that next time. Go back to those notes (on critical dialogue) and contact me if you need to talk about them again.*

*A5: Unfortunately I won't get quite an honest response from that person, like I did from Ae5, because s/he's not a strong person.*

*Me: How would you feel if I asked you if I could get both of you to fill out another one of those questionnaires between you and her/him...*

The second part of this extract shows a failure to gain valid information about this other staff member. It also demonstrates that I did not bilaterally seek solutions, or to plan, with A5 the way this problem could be tackled. In other words, I did not gain A5's internal commitment to the choices and the monitoring of those - I missed employing the third guiding value of productive reasoning. A5 never got back to me about this issue.

#### Discussion of My Own Implementation of Productive Reasoning

Overall, I showed good employment of the strategies associated with the first of the three values of productive reasoning, that is, advocating issues. Particularly important was the good use of evidence to support my discussion of negative issues/concerns, and my revelation of the logic or reasoning behind these concerns. Occasionally (particularly with A3) I gave a mixed message when advocating positively, and failed to support my statements with evidence or my reasoning.

My use of the second value of productive reasoning, that of inquiry, was also good overall, although I employed a number of closed questions with A3 which may have blocked the opportunity to open the discussion further. Checking for clarification (in a way which treated my views as hypothetical) was also a strong feature of each of my interactions with the appraisers. Most important also was the fact that I managed to balance my use of advocacy and inquiry in my interactions with the appraisers.

My employment of the third value of productive reasoning, that of gaining internal commitment to choice and monitoring, was not quite so successful. I had some degree of reaching a shared understanding of the issues, and bilateral solution generation with three of the appraisers, but also offered my solutions to the problems. I engaged in mutual planning for improvement with two of the appraisers, but did not take this through to a deep plan format. With one of the appraisers I conducted some monitoring of the planning that occurred.

Although it is disappointing for me to see that I, like the appraisers themselves, did not engage in the bilateral solution generation, planning and monitoring, to the extent I would have wanted, this is not to say that this would not have occurred if my time had been available for this intervention. By the last point of interaction between myself and the three committed appraisers, I believe that they had just got to the point of recognising the need for developing plans for substantial and sustained change. It was my intention that my interaction with the appraisers would have continued in order to enhance the planning and monitoring process. As mentioned earlier, the truncation of the process at this critical point has been frustrating.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

Discussion and conclusions for each phase of this research have been briefly outlined at the end of the results chapter for these phases. This chapter draws upon these individual conclusions and links them back to the research questions. These questions were outlined in the Origins and Overview chapter, the introductory chapter to the thesis.

#### **CONTROL, CONCERNS, AND CLARITY**

This research was initially derived from my interest in helping appraisers and appraisees to establish appraisal interactions and relationships which were not only educative in terms of establishing trust openness (particularly about dealing with problems), shared control (bilateralism), and reduced defensiveness, but also led to effective outcomes in terms of resolving problems. It was my observation in 1996 that such interactions were difficult to develop in any management-staff relationship, let alone one which was located in the threatening environment which was usually associated with appraisal.

The beginning point of my research coincided with the introduction of new guidelines for appraisal in schools. As someone intimately involved in the implementation of these guidelines I was aware that there was a longer-term national agenda for ultimate links between appraisal and enhanced accountability. I was concerned that this heightened accountability would threaten the possibility of establishing and maintaining the type of bilateral, effective appraisal system which I believed would have positive outcomes. The first phase of the research, linked to research question 1, therefore was designed to investigate the current situation of appraisal in schools, and to explore the impact of the enhanced accountability on the process.

Increased control has been linked with increased defensiveness (Argyris, 1996b), decreased internal commitment (Robinson, 1992), and inconsistent adoption of initiatives (observed by myself in other management contexts). In NZ we had seen an incremental tightening of control in the appraisal context with progressively enhanced requirements for accountability in the post-reform (post 1989) period in schools. The fears amongst teachers of decreased autonomy associated with this increased accountability, combined with longstanding concerns about a remuneration linked hidden agenda in appraisal (O'Neill, 1997), initially heightened teachers' cynicism associated with these appraisal requirements. These fears and concerns, combined with the more generalised report of negative impacts from tightening control, could have resulted in a low level of acceptance and implementation of appraisal in schools. The first phase of this research set out to determine whether this tightening of accountability, or increased control, had eventuated in the negative consequences which I had predicted, and those described by Argyris, and Robinson.

The impact evidence was provided via the results of a four year, longitudinal, questionnaire study (a "State of Play" study). It extended from the period just prior to the introduction of the 1995 Draft National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools (DNGPMS), through to that of the mandated, promulgated, guidelines (MoE, December 1996), and finally to the prescribed performance criteria (professional standards) for teachers and managers in schools in 1998 in the primary sector (MoE, 1998) and 1999 in the secondary sector (PPTA, 1999).

Responses to the final component of the 1999 "State of Play" checklist used in this longitudinal study provided a representative summary on the impact of the tightening of control in appraisal in schools. The majority (66%) of the respondents suggested that the increased accountability had a positive impact in their school. Contrary to the predictions of Argyris and others, these respondents in 1999 did not confirm that there had been substantial negative impacts from the tightening of accountability.

These summary comments were consistent with the detailed impacts noted throughout the four years of this "State of Play" study also. The tightening of accountability did not have the predicted defensive, negative, resistance, compliance, or avoidance impact on the majority of appraisal activity. Avoidance was apparent only in the feature of assembling objective information for appraisal, but again the introduction of tighter accountability did not seem to have altered the already existent resistance and avoidance associated with this feature. There was no report of another defensive strategy, that of increased controlling behaviour (particularly unilateral decision making), in any aspect of appraisal activity. Nor was there any evidence of threat or cynicism (both also defensive strategies), or reduced internal commitment in the majority of activities. Threat already existed in the area of assembling objective information prior to the guidelines introduction. Cynicism was apparent only in 1997 in the area of conducting appraisal interviews, but of some concern, was its existence throughout all four years for the feature of appraisal training.

This study showed that the tightening of accountability in appraisal resulted in several areas of inconsistent adoption of some aspects of the appraisal process. Of particular note were those areas relating to job descriptions, interviewing, training, self appraisal, and monitoring of the appraisal process. These were demonstrably the only significant negative impacts which provided consistent evidence to support the suggested outcomes from tightening of control referred to by Argyris and others.

Despite the latter inconsistent adoption for several elements of appraisal, the data collected in this "State of Play" study confirmed that schools overall had consistently increased adoption in most activities of appraisal since the introduction of the DNGPMS, albeit at a rate somewhat lower than previous 1994-1995 ERO research had suggested. Overall, the results from this study provided clear evidence that in NZ schools, the concerns about increased accountability in appraisal leading to negative impacts could not be strongly supported. Apart from some areas of inconsistent adoption, the tightening of accountability had a considerable positive impact on almost all aspects of appraisal. In particular, it provided clarity and enhanced implementation. That is not to say that the

situation may have continued beyond 1999. As I have noted earlier in this thesis, I have observed lately a compliance obsession which is increasing in schools and which is linked to closer auditing of the accountability component of appraisal during 2000. This obsession may, in fact, escalate the increase in control activity associated with appraisal more than that of any of the previous enhanced accountability requirements implemented by the MoE. If this is the case then the data I collected between 1996-1999 may have reflected a falsely positive, almost honeymoon phase, of appraisal implementation. Further data would therefore need to be collected to provide a longer-term impact analysis related to the tightening of control.

During the data collection period for the “State of Play” study, particularly in 1997, there were strong indications that the training associated with appraisal was largely superficial, and was failing to help appraisers to deal with problems with appraisees. Respondent comment in the study confirmed this dissatisfaction. Specific suggestions indicated that more training was required for all staff, not just senior managers, and that this training needed to be effective. This (as stipulated in research question 2) led me to clarify what effective training, or intervention, meant, and how such training coincided with my own perceptions of effectiveness described earlier, that is, helping appraisers and appraisees to establish educative appraisal interactions which led to effective outcomes in terms of resolving problems.

## **PRODUCTIVE REASONING TRAINING ... EDUCATIVE PROCESS**

For the purposes of sharpening the focus for the research, one specific aspect of the training, the little considered interpersonal effectiveness area was chosen as initial focus for defining an educative process in appraisal. A broad range of research on interpersonal effectiveness (for example Cardno, 1994, 1997; Edwards, 1992; Immegart, 1994; Marshall, 1995; Middlewood, 1997; Timperley & Robinson, 1998; Townsend, 1995; Wildy, 1996) was sifted to sharpen the focus even further. This sifting led to a perception of effectiveness which reasonably closely matched descriptions of productive reasoning (Argyris, 1985, 1990, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1996). The theory, philosophy, guiding values and strategies of productive reasoning were then refined and

used to underpin the development of two approaches to training: one short (one to two days), and one long-term (an action research approach) intervention.

Initially, the evaluation of both interventions was conducted in order to determine the impact of the training on the way in which appraisers conducted subsequent appraisal interactions using educative processes (employing productive reasoning). For this, and all other impact evaluations, both the appraiser and appraisee perspective were considered. The criteria for this initial evaluation was based on the productive reasoning guiding values and key strategies which I had adapted from the work of Cardno (1994:159), and Robinson *et al.* (1990:3).

### **Intervention #1 Success in Impacting on an Educative Process**

The first of the criteria evaluated in Intervention #1 was that of openness. Essentially this involved the appraiser and appraisee advocating their position, or perceptions, through the use of valid information (both positive and negative). This advocacy, or openness, also required the disclosure of appraiser and appraisee views, premises, and evidence (hard data) for their position or perception, and the disclosure of the logic that lead to those views.

Although the results showed that appraisers and appraisees strongly reported the existence of an open relationship, it was less obvious that the productive reasoning skills of revealing negative perceptions, or disclosing the evidence and the logic associated with these negative perceptions, had been employed to achieve this openness. Not unsurprisingly, the disclosure of evidence and logic related to positive perceptions was reported to have occurred more frequently in the results than that of negative perceptions. This signals, somewhat predictably, that appraisers were more likely to avoid discussing negative perceptions than those that were positive. Of concern was the fact that many appraisers actually believed that they were extensively open in their discussion of concerns, despite the fact that several had failed to actually hold a discussion, to reveal their thinking, or the evidence that supported it. It would seem that, even with the

training, some appraisers deluded themselves about the extent to which they employed the productive reasoning skills.

The next of the productive reasoning criteria evaluated in Intervention #1 was linked to the appraiser helping the appraisee to gain internal commitment to improvement. Here, the employment of bilateral skills in planning for improvement was a key indicator of use of productive reasoning. Specifically, the appraiser needed to seek bilateral solutions, rather than imposing her/his own, and to engage the appraisee in joint responsibility for the planning, implementing, and monitoring of achievement of the planned goals. The results showed that appraisees largely did this planning without joint input from their appraiser. The productive reasoning strategy of monitoring was also lacking in that appraisers largely failed to follow-up, or monitor, the implementation of the plans which appraisees had made. It is not surprising, as a consequence, that few plans were extensively implemented by appraisees.

Overall for Intervention #1, the results showed a considerable gap between appraiser espousals and practice. This became particularly evident when the majority of appraisers reported that the training had helped them to be more open and to deal with, rather than avoid negative issues in appraisal, and yet their practice differed from this.

This espousal-practice gap revealed in this phase of the research is in keeping with the findings of Cardno (1994). She states that most people espouse productive reasoning, but few employ it in problem situations such as appraisal where contention and threat are heightened. In such situations, she believes, the stronger tendency is to employ defensive reasoning approach (Argyris, 1990), the set of automatic, highly conditioned, ineffective, responses which were described in the literature review (Chapter Four) for Intervention #1.

In fact, the way in which appraisers deluded themselves concerning their openness about negative issues (see the contrast in results referred to earlier) is in keeping with Argyris' (1990) description of a defensive response where there is a tendency to protect ourselves

and others from potential threat and embarrassment. The protection, in this case, was indicated where the appraisers failed to reveal, or perhaps even perceive, that they were not confronting the problems. This could be interpreted as a situation where appraisers avoided revealing that they were avoiding! This is an example of both appraisers and appraisees playing out strategies of an over-emphasis on pleasantness (for example mixed and softened messages) and being nice, especially in this case, when there was a difficult message to reveal (Cardno and Piggot-Irvine, 1997; Robinson *et al.*, 1990).

The conclusion at the end of this intervention then, was that the short-term training in productive reasoning had not substantially helped appraisers to overcome their highly conditioned, anti-learning (Argyris, 1990) defensive responses. The intended profound change had not occurred for many appraisers. I believe that this was mainly due to the complexity associated with learning productive reasoning. As mentioned earlier, in my experience, it “usually involves months, maybe years, of training” (Piggot-Irvine, 1995:140) to rethink and alter the sort of underlying value systems required to adopt productive reasoning. This cannot happen with a one-off training approach alone, and requires time to understand and integrate the difficult theory, and extensive follow-up. My experience is shared by Cardno (1994:222) who states that as well as the training itself, the “internalisation of an alternative and personally very demanding approach to problem-solving intensive face to face training on its own takes time”. Intervention #2 in this research was designed to provide for the longer-term training, internalisation, and follow-up practice required to make this sort of change.

### **Intervention #2 Success in Impacting on an Educative Process**

The same productive reasoning criteria applied for evaluation in Intervention #1 also applied for Intervention #2. Because more extensive evaluation tools (interviewing and observation as well as questionnaires) were able to be used for this intervention, I was able to also extend the criteria to include the examination of inquiry. My description of inquiry (adapted from Cardno, 1994; and Robinson *et al.* 1990:3) included the use of open-ended questions, appraisers checking to see how their views had been understood and finding out what the appraisee’s views were, encouraging and non-defensively

receiving the appraisee's views and disagreements without prejudgement, and checking perceptions in ways which revealed implicit and explicit assumptions. In the training, a particular emphasis was placed on the need for appraisers to balance the overall inquiry they employed with that of advocacy. The imbalance of either of these, appraisers were shown, led to either highly unilaterally controlling, or avoiding practices.

The results from this second intervention indicated that four of the five appraisers were open (advocated) about positive issues with their appraisees, and as the intervention progressed all but one of these increased their use of evidence (hard data), and revealed their reasoning (logic) associated with these issues. In terms of advocating negative concerns, three of the appraisers (A1, A3, and A4) were more successful in their application. A1, and particularly A4 (who showed the greatest shift), were consistently effective in not only stating their concerns, but also providing the data to support these, and the associated reasoning/logic. Overall, I would conclude therefore that the intervention was successful in leading to an educative process associated with the advocacy value of productive reasoning.

Inquiry (another of the values of productive reasoning), with its implicit checking component, was a strong feature of the appraisal practice of A1, A3, A4, and A5. With A5 this inquiry outweighed all other aspects of productive reasoning implementation, and in fact, demonstrated an imbalanced and highly avoiding appraisal process. Both A1 and A4 showed shifts in their openness in the use of inquiry throughout the intervention. A3 was exceptionally open throughout the intervention, and along with A4 used checking more extensively than others. Overall, therefore, the intervention was also successful in leading to an educative process in appraisal associated with the second, inquiry value, of productive reasoning.

Less success was evident in terms of this intervention leading to an educative process associated with the third value of productive reasoning, that of the appraiser helping the appraisee to gain internal commitment to improvement through the use of bilateral skills in solution generation, planning and monitoring. A1, had the biggest problem. Her/his

tendency to provide solutions unilaterally remained unchanged, despite this being pointed out in the initial stages of the intervention. All other appraisers also had problems with helping the appraisees to find their own solution, but to a much less extent than A1. In the case of A3 and A4, this tendency to provide solutions reduced a little as the intervention progressed, but they still failed to demonstrate bilateral solution generation.

Bilateral, or mutual, planning for improvement was demonstrated by A2 and A3 in the early stages of this intervention, perhaps because this skill was really only able to be applied at the initial meeting stage of the appraisal cycle. Only A1 showed evidence of mutual planning later in the intervention. Deep planning (Piggot-Irvine, 1999) was not apparent in any of the action plans developed for appraisal. The only appraiser to demonstrate any monitoring of the planning that occurred in the appraisal, was A3. It is probably not surprising that A3 was the only one of the appraisers who showed the strategies associated with the third value of productive reasoning. This is because it was with this appraiser, as revealed in the analysis of my own practice, that I demonstrated these strategies. If I had been able to continue to work with the appraisers I believe that other appraisers would have also demonstrated successful implementation of this third value.

In terms of implementation of productive reasoning overall, in particular A3 and A4 were, on the whole, honest and accurate about their practice, even when they knew it was poor. They did not try to cover up their defensive responses. A1 was also honest about her/his defensive responses, but her/his own acknowledged lack of preparation blocked A1's accuracy in interpreting her/his practice. A2 was extremely honest about her/his implementation of productive reasoning, and could be said to have the shortest espousal-practice gap of all. Right from the outset s/he made it evident that openness about problems, for example, was irrelevant, and A2's practice matched this. The results for Intervention #2 suggest that three of the appraisers were open to learning the productive reasoning skills. They did not, as Cardno (1994:223) suggests, "resist the unlearning of instinctive skills", or "block the learning of new skills". Furthermore, these results somewhat refute Cardno's (1994) contention that few people employ productive

reasoning in problem situations such as appraisal. These results also provide an indication as to the conditions which are linked to the success of employment of productive reasoning. These “conditions” are discussed next.

I believe that the success of Intervention #2, in terms of whether it led to an educative process, primarily hinged on the commitment of the appraiser. As mentioned in Chapter Eight, two of the appraisers (A3 and A4) showed total commitment to implementing the productive reasoning skills and improving their practice. Every aspect of their interaction in this intervention demonstrated their willingness to improve, and the shift in their practice to a more educative process in the later appraisal interactions is evident in their results. I suggest that this same commitment would have occurred for A1 also if they had prepared for the improvement required for the second set of interactions with Ae1. The commitment demonstrated by A3 and A4 was not linked to any prompting or pushing by me. It appeared to be strongly derived from an intrinsic motivation (see Piggot-Irvine, 2000, for an expansion of motivational characteristics) to want to do the very best for both themselves and their appraisees. This intrinsic characteristic is in keeping with one of the conclusions drawn about motivation generally by both Dinham & Scott (1998), and myself (Piggot-Irvine, 2000), that NZ teachers’ strongest commitments were altruism and personal growth values. It is also in keeping with the following conclusion drawn by Down *et al.* (2000:219):

The teachers in our study learned and changed, not because they were monitored and managed by others, but because they all shared one important attribute - a professional conscience that committed them to caring for their students and continually seeking better ways to help them achieve their potential.

I suspect also that the extrinsic impact triggered by mandated guidelines for appraisal also influenced these appraisers’ motivation, and certainly consciousness-raising derived from transcript analysis was another extrinsic motivator.

It is also my belief that the success of this second intervention strongly hinged on the use of the transcripts as a point of consciousness-raising. It was only when appraisers examined their initial meeting transcripts in the reconnaissance stage of the action research that the extent of the gap between the theory and practice of productive reasoning implementation became clear. Or to put this another way, change only occurred when appraisers saw that they had a problem in their own practice and that there was a need to change/improve. In Down *et al.*'s terms this was when the appraisers felt "the need for help" (2000:219). The consciousness-raising occurred most intensely for A1, A3, and A4. A2 articulated an interest in the transcript findings, but did not even record areas for improvement. A5 showed more interest but a complete lack of follow-through points to lack of commitment (perhaps for the reasons I have suggested earlier) to engaging in further learning. The transcripts, in effect provided undisputable evidence of practice. In Dick & Dalmau's (1999:5) terms they "generated the dissonance" which was so necessary to motivate improvement. They starkly highlighted the gap between the appraisers' espoused theories and theories-in-use (Argyris, 1982), the two facets of theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This was a turning point in the learning for appraisers, and one which was in keeping with the suggestion by Argyris (1990:95) that trainees needed to diagnose the extent to which they had created and maintained problems.

The results of this research show also that the appraisers who were committed went beyond just highlighting the espousal-practice gap. They narrowed the theory-practice gap - an intent often articulated for action research as well (for example, Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Prideaux, 1995). As the earlier summary of results shows, two (and potentially three) of these appraisers made considerable shifts in order to "to resolve the inconsistency" (Dick & Dalmau, 1999:5) which the transcripts highlighted.

I believe that another condition associated with the successes shown in this intensive intervention was linked to the extended support which I was able to offer. Not that I am suggesting I am the only one who could have supported the appraisers, but Intervention #2, because of its longer-term, follow-up characteristic, allowed me the opportunity to

provide intensive assistance for those appraisers who wanted it. This support needed to be challenging of trainee assumptions and actions on the one hand, and on the other respectful of the fragile learner. As I have mentioned in Chapter Four, when I provided this support I needed to have an immediate astuteness in recognising either defensive or productive values and strategies, that is, to be able to reflect in action (Schön, 1991). I believe that I achieved this with A1, A3 and A4, and feedback from these appraisers confirms this. An outcome of this extended support (and challenge) was greater trust between myself and the appraisers - the sort of trust and openness which I was also encouraging them to develop with their appraisees.

Another possible condition for success which was highlighted in the results for this intervention was linked to appraisers having the opportunity to repeat their learning experience with further appraisal interactions. This was in keeping with Argyris' (1990) suggested fourth stage for training for productive reasoning. In Intervention #1 the short time, and restricted funding, made available for training meant that this follow-up was not feasible. The enhanced longer-term intervention provided extended, and deepening learning due to opportunities to examine continuing practise.

I would suggest that the success of Intervention #2 could have been substantially enhanced if it had encompassed more of the elements of the action research process, the research methodology employed to guide the overall intervention. As noted in Chapter Seven, the potential of the intended action research, the PRAR Model, was only realised in a limited way. Not noted in this discussion was the fact that I had utilised this model in other contexts, both in schools, and elsewhere, with almost full implementation of the model elements. The obvious question therefore is, why this did not occur in this research? My own reflections on the reasons for this limited implementation may provide some insight. These include my belief that there was lack of sufficient appraiser ownership of the problem identified for the research, and an only partially secured practitioner-focused intent (considered important by Reason and Rowan, 1981, and Reason, 1988, 1994). Both of these limitations could have resulted in a subsequent low level of commitment from some of the appraisers. Could I have overcome this? The

answer is maybe - and this is hesitant because there is no way of knowing this without further extensive data collection. As I have done with every other action research I have co-ordinated, I could have taken more time and provided more opportunity to allow the group to identify their own problem for the research, instead of introducing the group to my own problem constructed for this thesis. This may have overcome the low involvement of appraisers in the development of criteria for evaluating their own productive approach, and reduced the possibility that I might have created a dependency in the group on my leadership and skills. It may also have increased their willingness to make time out of school hours to extend involvement and even to find common, substantial, meeting times (an issue also raised by Reimer and Bruce, 1994). I doubt, however; that it would have changed their lack of willingness to contribute beyond Level 1, the "introduction" level of collaboration (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997). The appraiser reserve associated with sharing reflections on actions or observations (the transcript analyses) meant that little collaborative dialogue could occur. It is my belief that no matter what I would have done, the heightened anxiety and threat associated with appraisal was a major deterrent to these appraisers wanting to share. Without a high level of collaborative dialogue between appraisers only limited transformation at the professional level through knowledge production could occur. This did occur to an extent, however, in the dialogue between myself and the three appraisers who completed the follow-up discussion. These appraisers were involved in "theorising about their practice through reflection on action" (Prideaux, 1995:5). Additionally, as intended in the PRAR Model, the theory and practice mutually informed each other when the practice in productive reasoning was developed from the theory, and then the theory used again to develop criteria to analyse the practice.

The results from this intervention lead me to conclude that varying the intensity of the training from a short course through to the extensive programme has impacted on the outcomes intended for this research (research question 3d). Whether this longer-term approach to development has made a sustained difference to the appraisers implementation of productive reasoning skills is unknown at this point. As noted earlier (Piggot-Irvine, 1995) it may take years of training to help appraisers to rethink and alter

their underlying value systems - the systems that must be altered if this approach is to be genuinely implemented. I would have liked to have had the opportunity to continue working with the school in order to see this change fully realised, and it is frustrating that this did not occur.

### **Overcoming Concerns ... Problem Resolution**

One indicator of success of the training (for either intervention) was whether it produced the intended double-loop learning outcomes proposed by Argyris (1996b), that is, whether the educative processes employed helped appraisers to actually resolve problems with appraisees.

Although, as mentioned earlier, four of the appraisers were exceptionally honest about their poor productive reasoning skills and showed little defensiveness associated with this, they were less honest about the existence of problems. Like Intervention #1, there was direct evidence in Intervention #2 that the appraisers deluded themselves concerning the existence of problems, and the same defensive, cover-up and avoidance, responses were apparent with this group. A5, I propose (because I did not have follow-up evidence), most extensively played out these defensive strategies which were more apparent in the Intervention #1 results and which had formerly been observed by Cardno & Piggot-Irvine (1997), and Robinson *et al.*, (1990). There is evidence that A1, A2, and A3 did this to some extent as well. All of these appraisers denied that there were any problems, despite the fact that the early transcripts from the initial appraisal meetings and post-observation discussions revealed that this was inaccurate and that they actually discussed problems with their appraisees.

Despite this initial denial of problem existence on the part of most appraisers, those who were committed to resolving problems did so. This provides new and rare evidence to demonstrate that appraisal can improve teaching and learning. Both A1 and A4 were insistent that problems were resolved, and their appraisee feedback supported this. A3 not only stated clearly that the problems were resolved, but evidence from student assessment results and feedback supported this. It can be concluded that this intervention

not only somewhat met the double-loop learning outcomes intended but it also has provided evidence that one of the concerns raised about appraisal can be overcome. This concern was linked to the paucity of evidence which could convince appraisers that the process could lead to any potent (problems solved, improved performance) outcomes, that is, that it was worth the effort. This research has provided some evidence to answer the type of question which Nathan *et al.* (1991:252) posed about whether “performance reviews actually change subsequent employee performance”. It adds evidence to the work of the likes of Stiggins & Duke (1988) to refute the unsupported conjecture that appraisal is a time-wasting process, providing little feedback for staff improvement, and offering little influence on personnel development or teaching. It confirms that not only should enhanced development of teachers and better student learning be the predominant outcomes of the process of appraisal in schools (Bosetti, 1994; Mortimore & Mortimore, 1991), but that these **can** be the outcomes.

It is my contention that the potent outcomes reported from this research will only be achieved if appraisers are provided with the skills to develop the sort of educative processes outlined in this thesis. These results confirm that, with training in approaches such as productive reasoning it is possible to realise “a continuous dialogue about problems of practice among the practitioners themselves” (Darling-Hammond, 1986:549). The outcome of this is not only the enhanced professionalism which Darling-Hammond recommends, but also better learning in our schools.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE IN APPRAISAL AND ACTION RESEARCH

#### CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

There are multiple implications from this research which may be considered for future policy and practice in both appraisal and action research, the methodology which guided Intervention #2. Most of these implications have already been raised in other sections of this thesis and they are now elaborated further in this chapter. The penultimate section of this thesis concludes with an overview of the contribution that this thesis has made to knowledge and understanding of appraisal in NZ schools. Finally, suggestions for further research are indicated.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR APPRAISAL

##### **Objective Information and Effective Appraisal**

The reconnaissance, “State of Play”, results pointed to a continued avoidance of appraisers and appraisees assembling objective information for appraisal. It is essential that appraisal discussions are based on factual, objectively collected, “data-based” (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996:20) information if the process is to be considered as a valid, fair, rigorous, and reliable approach to managing the performance of staff. If such information is not being collected currently, and this continues to be the case in the future, then I believe we will see an outcome of the perception of appraisal as a poorly constructed process which reinforces inadequate, inaccurate, and subjective decision-making at management level. This in turn, will inevitably lead to a climate of substantial mistrust between managers and staff, and the demise of appraisal as a credible process for enhancing organisational and individual improvement.

In particular, this lack of assembling of objective information will, I predict, create a potentially explosive situation given the current trend to associating promotion with appraisal. Lack of objective information will be linked to lack of transparency, and subsequent iniquitous decisions and injustice, in summative decisions made about the most sensitive issue in teacher's lives, that is, their remuneration. I further predict that this will result in a proliferation of litigation between aggrieved staff and the BoT whose responsibility it is to ensure an effective performance management system.

What can be done about this? Foremost, in appraisal, there should be an emphasis on the establishment of appraisal procedures which ensure valid information gathering. This means that the sort of approach to triangulating, or "multiple perspective" (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996:20), data collection which has been incorporated in this research in Intervention #2 should be a feature of all appraisals. In my practice in appraising principals, for example, I now have a non-negotiable expectation that principals are part of a cycle which incorporates data collection in the form of documentary evidence (which the principal her/himself has the responsibility for collating), self-evaluation, student (if teaching), staff, and BoT (and possibly community) feedback. In the case of the latter feedback gathering, the use of a sampling process, and well designed data-collection tools, can mean that this is an efficiently co-ordinated system which should not be overly burdensome in terms of time or cost to the school.

Implicitly linked to this objective information gathering, is the requirement for confidential, and transparent processes. At first glance, these two descriptors may seem contradictory, or self-cancelling. This is a misconception, and if interpreted in light of the values and strategies of productive reasoning, there is a logical congruency between confidentiality and transparency. I will use my own practice in appraising principals, once again, to illustrate this. In this process I am absolute in maintaining my own confidentiality in dealing with information that is shared with me whether it is from respondents providing feedback, documentary evidence or information from the principal, or whatever. However, I am also clear with all respondents who provide information on the principal's performance (for example in feedback questionnaires) that

their information will be verbatim reported by me in a way which is unaltered. I am careful to make respondents aware that **they** have responsibility for not revealing their own identity when providing feedback. The latter is an example of the way in which I try to be transparent about my process in dedicating to represent the situation as it is, without my own alteration or interpretation. It also shows, I hope, that confidentiality is assured from me only if the respondent also protects their own identity from being revealed. This, in my experience, is the only way to ensure that objective information is utilised in appraisal.

### **Institutionalisation and Effective Appraisal**

Fullan (1986) describes the institutionalisation of a change process (of which appraisal is an example) as a situation where there is acceptance by staff and the process is operational in the organisation. Such institutionalisation, Fullan says, is essential for any change initiative to have continuing success. The “State of Play” results reported on in this thesis provide strong evidence that such institutionalisation of appraisal was still largely unrealised in schools in 1999.

For appraisal to be institutionalised in schools the process needs to have not only initial preparation, planning and policy establishment, and documented processes, but also committed and sustained follow-through at both the school and national Ministerial level. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, unfortunately the lack of continuation of national funding for further training in 1999 may have thwarted this follow-through just at the time when schools had begun to demonstrate a shift to institutionalising the process. The “State of Play” results showed that when MoE funded training was not offered in 1999 the commitment from schools to train staff reduced (1998, 53%; 1999, 48%). I believe that unless this training continues in schools the gains shown for increased implementation will quickly reverse. If this occurs, I predict that most schools in NZ will omit to link the demise of the appraisal process with inadequate training, or lack of sustained follow-through by the school, but only perceive it as another MoE led failure.

What can be done about this? Schools themselves must shoulder some responsibility for ensuring that staff are adequately trained to carry out appraisal (either as appraisers or appraisees). If the schools have inadequate funds to do this, then active lobbying for increased funding must be an imperative from principal associations, PPTA, NZEI, and other national groupings, including the ERO. My comments concerning the ERO in a later section of this chapter will indicate why they are in a unique position to know the extent of need for training in appraisal. The active initiation of a call for funding for this from the ERO, would offer them a positive opportunity to make a contribution to the well-being of education in NZ.

### **An Integrated Development and Accountability Approach and Effective Appraisal**

The DNGPMS (MoE, 1995), and later mandated guidelines for appraisal, clearly articulated a balance of developmental and accountability requirements. More recent documentation (MoE, 1998) outlined an enhancement of the accountability, checklisting against the new professional standards, component of the process and designated this as “appraisal”. Additionally, this document distinguished this “appraisal” as separate to the professional development component of the process. In my opinion, this separation has rendered almost defunct the DNGPMS and mandated guidelines’ stipulated balance of developmental and accountability goals in appraisal.

Hellner (2001) also suggests that we have lost the balance in appraisal. He states:

Are we too formal, too serious, too driven by a fetish for policy compliance in our appraisal of teachers?... Yet much of the focus and value of professional development is squandered because too many teachers feel appraisal is threatening. (Hellner, 2001: 1)

In 1999 I predicted that the outcome of this shift to an emphasis on professional standards checklisting would result in appraisal as a superficial, or surface (Piggot-Irvine, 1999) approach to development, as opposed to the deeper and more improvement orientation

for which it held the potential. I noted that such superficiality would reverse the positive gains in implementation and acceptance of appraisal recorded in the reconnaissance results for this thesis.

At this point I am unable to provide data to support my predictions, but this opens up an area for continuing research. This research could focus on whether my prediction is accurate, that this positive response to the enhanced accountability in appraisal shown in the reconnaissance “State of Play” results may not continue in the future if the balance of development and accountability is tipped in favour of just the latter component.

### **Separation of Discipline Processes From Appraisal and Effective Appraisal**

Participants in Intervention #2 were asked to note their perception of the key features in the development of trust, openness and problem resolution in appraisal. One aspect that they emphasized would jeopardise the process was having the same personnel carrying out competency proceedings. I have stated my support for this critical separation elsewhere (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997), but want to re-iterate this in the form of a recommendation. Under no circumstances should this, or any other disciplinary processes, be incorporated with appraisal. That is not to say that appraisal may not alert the appraiser and management to the areas which need to be addressed under competency proceedings, but in my opinion, once this has occurred then either a different individual should carry out this disciplinary-based system, or if the appraiser is to be nominated as carrying out this process, then a new appraiser should be appointed.

### **Quality Time and Effective Appraisal**

Participants in both Intervention #1 and #2 stipulated that making and taking enough time to carry out the appraisal process well was important for the establishment of an approach which led to trust, openness, and problem-solving enhancement. The implication from this is that management in schools must provide time, or support priority in time being given, to appraisal activity.

How can time be provided in a context which is as frantic as that in schools? Many schools are demonstrating successful appraisal processes and this, in my observation, is primarily because the management have accorded appraisal a priority in the plethora of management tasks which occur in schools. I notice that there is a direct link between the management of the school perceiving appraisal as a crucial staff development and improvement approach, and the support that they provide in terms of clearly articulated and smoothly running processes, training, and time allocation for appraisal conduct. I also observe, that in these schools, the senior managers themselves fully engage in their own appraisal, that is, they model that it is a priority for themselves, and they demonstrate that it is worthy of a high priority in their time management.

There are multiple ways that time can be allocated for appraisal. At least one school that I know of opens (with official MoE consent) one hour later, two times a term, to allow for appraisal interactions to occur. Multiple other schools are using specified teacher only days for appraisal. Others still are recognising that this is too important an activity to squeeze into a free period during the school day, and they make use of time before and after the timetabled day to conduct the process.

### **Internal Locus of Control and Effective Appraisal**

It was my observation in 2000, as a appraisal consultant working with approximately forty schools, that the closer auditing of the accountability component of appraisal systems by the ERO during 1999 and 2000 had created a flurry of activity in schools which I would describe as 'compliance obsession'. Every school which I had been engaged with had become absorbed with meeting the paperwork requirements for the ERO visits, particularly the ERO's emphasis on stronger checklisting requirements than any of the MoE guidelines had stipulated. In doing this, I observed that schools had not only often completely lost a sense of balance about the developmental and accountability intent of appraisal, but had also inadvertently shifted the "locus of control" (Schell, 1975:262) for appraisal.

Such compliance obsession, as that observed informally in 1999 and 2000, is at odds with any internal commitment to appraisal, and shifts the locus of control from internal to external: from that of the individual teacher intrinsically wanting to engage in development and improvement through appraisal, to that of checklisting to meet the requirements of an external auditing body. It was the heightened auditing requirement, externally imposed by the ERO, which I believe had the most significant impact in terms of tightening of control in appraisal, and this only occurred from late 1998 onwards. For this reason, I believe that the 1996-1999 "State of Play" data may no longer present an accurate picture of the impact of tightening of control, because in effect the significant control mechanisms had not been substantially enacted until later in 1999. I would recommend that on-going examination of the impact of this enhanced externally imposed control would provide a more accurate picture of the status of implementation of appraisal.

### **Transparency and Effective Appraisal**

As mentioned in the previous section, the ERO enhanced its external auditing of appraisal from late 1998 onwards. I have no issue with external auditing per se. In fact I think that such processes are critical to the well-being of consistent standards in education in any country. What I have got issue with is the lack of transparency in the criteria used for auditing.

I have spent many hours investigating the public documents which the ERO has issued to schools, including the official website for the office. This investigation was conducted in order to establish a clear picture of the criteria which are used for review of appraisal by the ERO. My interests in doing this were not generated by a desire to check on the ERO, but instead from a genuine intent to determine the best way that I could help schools to have training and processes which met review requirements. My examination of documentation provided me with only the subheadings for criteria (see ERO, 1998) and so I then attempted (via correspondence and a meeting in 2000) to ascertain from the ERO itself the precise nature of these criteria for reviews. It is unfortunate that I have to report that the ERO did not respond to my correspondence. This correspondence was

written with a genuine and positive intent on my part to co-ordinate constructively with the ERO so that I could ensure that the training and appraisals that I conducted were preparing schools for effective practice. This, it seems, would be in the best interest of parents, teachers and students. I can only conclude that the ERO, at this time, did not have this intent for effective practice in mind.

What can be done about this? The ERO must adopt a more responsive, collaborative, and constructive intent with all stakeholders (including people like myself) if it wishes to make a genuine impact on the consistent employment of best-practice in schools. In order to do this, a first action is to collaboratively and transparently establish criteria for both appraisal and other aspects of review in schools. These criteria must be developed with a genuine intent for improvement, and not checklisting alone, and they should be well publicised and explicitly detailed. These criteria should not then be a surprise (or shock as is often reported to me by principals) when reviewing/auditing is conducted, but provide clear guidelines for practice. Finally, these criteria should also be developed in a way which is reflective of the integrated development and accountability intent of the MoE guidelines, and which promote intrinsic motivation for improvement, rather than extrinsically located checklisting to meet auditing requirements.

In late 2000 a Ministerial review conducted of ERO itself provided a series of recommendations which included a greater requirement for the sort of responsive, more balanced developmental and compliance approach that I have also suggested. Rivers (2001) summarises the tenor of the recommendations as:

... ERO reviews should focus on educational improvement rather than compliance principles - an "assess and assist" model... (Rivers, 2001: 3)

She further summarises that the review states that ERO's role should include "providing workshops on the review process" (Rivers, 2001: 3). This is also in keeping with my suggestions linked to providing greater transparency about criteria.

Whilst I am hopeful that the ERO will positively adopt the review recommendations, I also have reservations. I share the caution of authors such as Smith and Clinton (2001) who state that the ERO is currently under-resourced, and that there is no indication of this changing to meet the review recommendations. Referring to the transformation of role that would be required to carry out the more formative, and improvement oriented, approach suggested by the review, these authors also conclude that:

Changing the culture, ethos and philosophy of ERO, whilst a laudable aim, may be difficult to achieve in reality. .... The proposed assistance role has been one that ERO, as an evaluator, has vigorously avoided and rejected in the past. It may be difficult to change the organisational ethos in this direction. (Smith & Clinton, 2001:13)

### **Developing Open Interactions Leads to Resolved Problems and Effective Appraisal**

My literature review of what makes appraisal effective revealed multiple facets, but of particular emphasis was the interpersonal effectiveness area. Linked to interpersonal effectiveness was the oft-stated requirement for open, trust-based relationships. Elaboration beyond such broad statements was rare in the general appraisal literature, and it was the more specific literature on productive reasoning (Argyris, 1985, 1990) which led me to determine that openness and trust, in my opinion, could only be established if appraisers and appraisees created an educative relationship. The nature of such a relationship has been described in detail earlier in this thesis, but an essential feature was that the relationship needed to be educative, that is based on bilateralism (shared control, shared thinking, shared evidence, shared planning and monitoring) leading to appraisers having more confidence to help appraisees to confront and resolve problems.

I believe that the dearth of literature on how to help appraisers to develop the sort of educative, problem-resolving, interactions in appraisal, is indicative of the extent to which this is overlooked and perhaps even avoided. I suggest that this should be an essential feature of all appraisal training. The findings of the research (particularly

Intervention #1) clearly indicate that such educative process training has to be in a different format to that of the standard one to two day block allocation which was used in Intervention #1. There is evidence from the results in this thesis that although the short-term training in appraisal was largely ineffective in helping appraisers to sustain the development of educative processes in appraisal, the longer-term intervention showed that where appraisers were committed these processes could be developed. This indicates that the training developed must not only allow time for commitment to develop and the "... complexity of the curriculum ...to be ... learnt, internalised and acted upon" (Cardno, 1994:222), it must also be associated with follow-up over a long period of time. For this to occur, school management must first be helped to overcome their pre-occupation with budgeting to support the quick-fix, one day (or even shorter), approach to training.

I recommend that the training/intervention principles and content are largely in keeping with that which was developed for Intervention #1 and #2, and which was outlined in detail earlier in this thesis. First the training needs to be directed at a personal level, with a focus on personalised actionable knowledge (Argyris, 1993), where individuals were helped to examine their own causal reasoning, and to take responsibility for both detecting and correcting defensiveness associated with interactions.

Second, the training must help appraisers surface their own theories about openness, and problem solving in appraisal, and to move beyond this reflection on their "*knowledge platform*" to surfacing and reflecting at an "*action platform*" level (Cardno, 1999b:45). There is an essential implication that in the training appraisers must be encouraged to expose the gaps in their practice, that is the gap between their espoused theories and theories-in-use - two facets of their theories of action (Argyris & Schon, 1974). This exposure must also involve challenge and critique.

Third, the training programme must introduce appraisers to a more effective model for interacting in bilateral, open, non-defensive, and problem confronting ways. This model may not necessarily be that of productive reasoning, or Model 2, but examination of the

literature has revealed that this is the most substantially elaborated and appropriate model for appraisal. Whichever model is chosen, it must be presented at a level which is both simple and concise, “yet its complexity must not be underplayed” (Cardno, 1994:237). To have understated the complexity of productive reasoning in this research, for example, would have provided shallow, ineffectual outcomes.

Fourth, the training programme must engage participants in taking this model from an espoused theory (from a belief state) to a theory-in-use, that is to implementation.

The most substantial learning which the research findings from Intervention #1 revealed is that the new learning developed in the training must be followed-up by intensive, on-going practise. The one to two day block format which was designed for this training was developed to meet national funding constraints associated with MoE contract conditions, and in response to school resistance to spending longer on the training. This format created a one-off, enjoyable at the time (as the research feedback indicated), but obviously forgettable experience, if the results are an indication of long-term implementation. The need to repeat the learning experience to solve problems in new situations as they arise, is a critical requirement of long-term learning, and it must be incorporated in the training programme. My experience in other contexts suggests that the follow-up is best designed in a series of spaced (say one to two months) sessions of approximately three to four hour duration over at least a year. This spacing, or “time-lapsed learning” as Cardno (1994:240) calls it allows participants to assimilate and internalise their new learning. I have found this design to have been very successful in other non-school contexts, and in situations in which the appraisers were highly committed to improvement. This latter feature was particularly highlighted in the results from Intervention #2, and is elaborated in the following section.

### **Consciousness-Raising and Effective Appraisal**

The Intervention #2 results demonstrated that real change did not occur until there was consciousness-raising when the transcripts of taped appraisal interactions were used to highlight gaps in practise. This was a turning point in the training when the reality of the

gap between the theory and practice of productive reasoning implementation became clear through this undisputable evidence. I also have consistent evidence, from other training contexts, that even with individuals who are most reluctant to recognise the gaps in their practise, the use of transcriptions (from video or audio-taped interactions), accelerates learning. The only situations where I have not seen this acceleration is in circumstances where the trainee had no intention of changing (as with A2 in this research), or would not confront the learning required (as I suspect with A5 in this research).

Another implication for training, and one which particularly appeals to me, is that the consciousness-raising which eventuates from the use of transcripts, takes the pressure off the trainer/facilitator. As a facilitator I am sometimes caught in the trap of being labelled (a defensive blame-shifting response) as an inaccurate diagnostician when I have verbally reported evidence of my observations of theory-practise gaps. Employing the use of the transcripts allows me to provide hard evidence (essential in productive interactions) which is irrefutable, and as a consequence, removes any dispute about my own diagnostic ability.

What are the implications for training generally? I am not suggesting that all training needs to be based on the use of transcripts to highlight the espoused theory-practice gap, but in my own experience this has been the most powerful tool that I have used in any training/development approach. Whatever approach is used, it must be capable of allowing appraisers to diagnose the extent to which they create and maintain problems before they are expected to fully implement changes (Argyris, 1990:95).

### **Setting Deep Objectives and Effective Appraisal**

Intricately connected to the issue of diagnosing and confronting problems is the establishment of appraisal objectives and plans for improvement associated with problems which are in a “deep” as opposed to “surface” format (Piggot-Irvine, 1999). By deep I am referring to plans that are in effect outlining small action research type projects which are carried out on an individualised scale. I have described an example of such a

deep plan as containing elements of reconnaissance (identifying the current situation with the problem or issue), planning for implementation, carrying out the implementation, and then evaluating its effectiveness. At all stages of the plan, the rigorous expectations of data-based reflection, are similar to those anticipated for the PRAR Model. I strongly recommend that such deep plans are developed as a feature of all appraisal objective setting.

### **Commitment to Improvement and Effective Appraisal**

In the appraisal context, commitment to improvement is related both to the appraiser's dedication to improve on the way that s/he interacts with appraisees, and it also relates to the way that appraisers and appraisees are committed to change, improvement, or development as part of the appraisal process itself.

The results from the Intervention #2 phase of the research demonstrate that commitment is a key component of effective appraisal. Commitment, in this intervention, was shown in varied ways including a willingness to expose their practice, to confront the gap which this exposure illustrated in non-defensive ways, to want to participate in new learning in order to close the gap, and to continue practising newly acquired skills. Commitment was also shown in the way that these appraisers had an absolute focus on the way in which they could use their learning to improve the way that they interacted in open, bilateral, that is educative ways, with their appraisees. Their goal was not singularly with self-improvement but to develop processes which enhanced their relationship with appraisees in order to help them to improve their own teaching practise. This commitment particularly showed aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as explained in Chapter Nine.

How can we develop such commitment in appraisers? Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational influences are complex in terms of origin and manifestation, no matter whether it is the appraisal context or any other (see Piggot-Irvine, 2000, for a summary of motivating factors). I would recommend that this motivation can be enhanced through the sort of consciousness-raising employed in Intervention #2, and by putting into place

all of the other recommendations linked to effective appraisal which are outlined in this chapter. In particular, if managers in schools focus on creating a climate which fosters the sort of productive reasoning values which have been supported in this thesis, and they show an absolute commitment to modelling these themselves, then the climate for motivation can be established. It could also be enhanced by teachers becoming more aware of the fact that, given this right climate, appraisal can lead to improvement in teaching and learning.

## **Creating Openness and Trust Outside Appraisal and Effective**

### **Appraisal**

Participants in both Intervention #1 and #2, and their appraisees, indicated that a predominant component of trust development in appraisal was established through honest interactions in all situations - not just that of appraisal. Existing respect, an appraiser noted, was created through such openness. One appraisee concluded that this had to extend to establishing a culture of trust and openness in the whole school (from the top down), and another that the appraiser had to deal with issues as they arose rather than waiting for appraisal.

The implications for practice from this feedback are clear. I agree with the sentiment that openness, in the way that is described in a productive reasoning approach, must be a facet of all interactions in the school. In order to do this all staff must have an opportunity to be involved in the sort of training which has been recommended in this section of the thesis, but most vitally, senior management must lead by example in this training and its implementation.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION RESEARCH**

One of the most disappointing facets of this research was the limited implementation of the intended action research approach, the PRAR Model, especially since I had already utilised this model in other contexts, both in schools, and elsewhere, with quite considerable success. I have already discussed (in Chapters Seven and Nine) my own conclusions as to reasons for why the potential of this model was unrealised, and also

why some aspects were realised. The most substantial of these which have implications for the practice of action research are discussed in the following sections.

### **Ownership and Successful Action Research**

There is an indication, from this research, that any action research which centres on an issue generated by an outsider such as myself runs the increased risk of attracting the same commitment problems which I encountered. This is a point which I was well aware of before embarking on the second intervention, and which I felt, probably arrogantly, I could overcome because of my existing experience with this methodology. The most significant implication for future practice is that the central concern, issue, or problem area which forms the beginning point for action research should be participant generated and therefore hopefully owned.

### **Commitment and Successful Action Research**

Lack of commitment, I believe, was inextricably linked to lack of ownership in the action research conducted with the appraisers. It was played out in many ways including dependency responses on me as the facilitator, and a low level of willingness to make time for involvement. The implications for practice involve initiating the approach with the type of enhanced ownership already mentioned, and then creating opportunities to continuously ensure that participants have on-going control over the way that they develop their own direction. Creating these opportunities requires considerable time. In a school setting, if action research is to succeed, this time must either be volunteered by participants, or provided for by management. It is my experience that the latter has only ever occurred with other action research projects I have led if there has been MoE funding to cover the costs associated with relief from timetabled teaching. I have never yet worked with a school which itself has self-funded a longer-term development intervention. So commitment, therefore, needs to be generated at national, institutional, and individual levels. Additionally, a precursor to this commitment to provide resources, is a commitment, at each of these levels, to the philosophy that value and behaviour shifting change best occurs in longer-term interventions. This is a point which has already been raised in this chapter.

### **Collaboration and Successful Action Research**

Appraiser reluctance to contribute beyond Level 1, the “introduction” level of collaboration (Piggot-Irvine & McMorland, 1997) in the action research, could not only be attributed to the lack of ownership, and lack of commitment, already mentioned. As already noted in Chapter Nine the threatening context of appraisal itself also contributed to appraiser reluctance. The implication is that this type of threat has to be reduced if the higher levels of collaboration in action research are to be achieved. I believe that the implementation of the values and strategies associated with productive reasoning provide an approach for overcoming this threatened, defensive response. As already noted in my outline of the PRAR Model, productive reasoning should be an essential, integral, component of action research. If implemented well, the outcome should be the high trust, open, interactions which were the goal for appraisal itself. I believe that these interactions had just started to happen towards the end of the second intervention, and I also believe, that with time, the higher levels of collaboration, and attendant reflective, collaborative, and transformative dialogue, within the group of committed appraisers, would have eventuated.

### **Reflection and Successful Action Research**

Where appraisers actively engaged in reflecting upon their practise (particularly through transcript analysis) the greatest improvements in practise were made. For whatever reasons A2 and A5 showed little engagement in this reflection, and for these appraisers the improvement in practise was least evident. The PRAR Model emphasises the importance of reflection, both in and on action, and at a personal and collaborative level. Although the collaborative reflection was unrealised with the action research group, the results have underscored the significant role that reflection at a personal level plays.

The role of reflection on my own practise in this action research has also been crucial. Although this action research project would never be considered by me to the most “successful” I have facilitated, it is the one that I have learnt most from. This learning, which hopefully will lead to my own improved practise, was strengthened through

reflection on tape transcript analysis of my own interactions with the appraisers individually and as a group.

### **Mutually Informing Theory and Practice and Successful Action Research**

As intended in the PRAR Model, in Intervention #2, the theory and practice mutually informed each other. Appraisers used their own practice (the transcripts) as an observation point, and the theory of productive reasoning to provide criteria for analysis of the transcripts. The analysis, in turn, provided a catalyst for further practice, which was further informed by the theory linked to the criteria. This complex, dialectical, and mutually interdependent relationship between theory and practice, led to successful learning for three out of the five appraisers. I recommend therefore that all action research enhances opportunities for such informed action based on a reciprocal theory and practice relationship. This is a point also supported by Grundy (1987).

### **CONTRIBUTION OF THE FINDINGS**

A major consideration of the worth of any research, or any thesis reporting on the research, is whether it has made a contribution to the relevant academic field. I would like to conclude this chapter with a summary of that contribution.

First, this thesis provides some evidence to refute the suggested negative impacts of tightening control. Contrary to predictions, the increased accountabilities associated with tightening control in appraisal requirements in NZ during 1996-1999, has not overall, as yet, led to increased defensiveness, decreased internal commitment, or inconsistent adoption. The "State of Play" results show that between 1996 and 1999 the tightening of accountability could be seen to have had a considerable positive impact on many aspects of appraisal, and provided clarity and enhanced implementation. The results also showed that the institutionalisation of appraisal was still largely unrealised in schools in 1999, and in particular that training needed to assist appraisers to establish relationships which created an environment where problems could be confronted and resolved.

Second, this thesis provides evidence that the sort of short-term training which has traditionally been favoured for appraisal, makes little difference to the ability of appraisers to develop educative, problem resolving, relationships with appraisees. The results demonstrate that longer-term, intensive, development can be effective in helping appraisers to develop such relationships given conditions of high commitment, and on-going support.

Third, this thesis outlines the precise nature of the training required to develop appraisers for an educative appraisal process which has double-loop learning outcomes. This training must be established in the sort of high trust, open, supportive, yet challenging relationship which parallels that required in appraisal. It must also not only allow for exposure of espousal-practice gaps, but be associated with follow-up which closes those gaps.

Fourth, this thesis describes an action research model (the PRAR Model) which provides a guide for creating a learning context for the employment of the type of training outlined. My own reflections on the use of the model with the appraisers has helped me to reconsider the ways that this approach can be implemented, and my own role in this implementation. Like action research itself, the model is not, nor probably ever will be, in a complete and perfect format. It is evolving and improving, and so am I..

Fifth, and most importantly, the results reported in this thesis confirm that potent, improved learning and teaching outcomes can be a consequence of appraisal. They also provide a clear indication of the conditions required to create these outcomes.

Overall, this thesis has answered the following overarching research question which was posed at the beginning of the study:

*How can we develop approaches which overcome the negative climate of fear associated with increased hierarchical control, reduced autonomy and collaboration, and inadequate outcomes often associated with appraisal?*

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Multiple implications for further research are indicated in this thesis. Several of these are noted in this final section of the thesis.

As reported in this conclusion section, my observations in 2000 suggested that increased accountability auditing by ERO during 1999 and 2000 (an externally imposed control) might have been linked to a compliance obsession, and checklisting, type response from schools. I have predicted that such a response could reverse the positive gains shown in the reconnaissance phase of this research. The “State of Play” examination of appraisal could be continued in further research in order to determine if the positive responses to increased control in appraisal reported in this thesis were sustained after 1999, or if my predicted reversal was an outcome.

Almost all aspects of my conclusions concerning the features of effective appraisal could be examined in more detail in further research. For example, whether allowing more time for appraisal, enhancing commitment, developing more transparent criteria for auditing appraisal, enhancing consciousness raising about appraisers own interactions with appraisees, setting deeper objectives, and so on, could lead to more effective appraisal, are all issues worthy of further examination.

Of particular interest for further research, is the area of the extent of linkage between general implementation of a productive reasoning climate in a school (particularly that modelled by managers) and that demonstrated in appraisal interactions. This could also be extended to examine the further links between productive reasoning climate in general, interactions in appraisal, and improved teaching and learning.

Extended, and more extensive, comparative studies which replicated the examination of the impact of short and longer term training interventions in appraisal could also be the focus of further research. The research reported on in this thesis is small scale for both the short and long term interventions, and therefore generalisation is limited. A more extensive examination may allow for such generalisation and may also offer confirmation of the findings in this research.

In terms of further research associated with the action research feature of this study, again, almost all of the features of successful action research provide indicators for further examination. These include features of enhancing ownership and commitment, examining links between the collaborative level in action research and the extent of productive reasoning implementation, and exploring ways of creating practices which allow for reciprocal theory and practice relationships in the busy school environment.

## **THE FINAL WORD**

In summary, this research has not only revealed a plethora of issues which could be further examined, but it was also intended to lead to practical improvement for the individuals involved in appraisal, for their school appraisal process and general interpersonal interactions, for training approaches implemented in appraisal, for action research approaches adopted, and most importantly for student learning. In striving to achieve these aims, I hope that I have come some way to meeting the sort of intentions articulated by Swann (2000: 12):

The pursuit of improvement requires decisiveness, clarity and rigour, and a commitment to analysing assumptions (one's own, those of other people, and those embedded in social institutions) in terms of the extent to which they correspond to facts.



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*Note that components of this thesis which have been published are bound separately onto the thesis itself.*

# Appendix 1

## The 1996 National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools

12 DECEMBER

NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE

4725

### 1. The Preamble:

#### What is performance management?

Performance management involves the development and implementation of policies and procedures to ensure that the teachers and staff provide education and services which effectively meet the needs of their students consistent with the goals and objectives in each school's charter.

An effective performance management system should encompass many personnel management activities. These would include:

- the recruitment and retention of staff;
- the selection and appointment of staff;
- those clauses of collective and individual employment contracts which relate to the performance management of staff;
- the statutory requirements for registration;
- the appraisal and assessment of staff;
- the professional development of staff;
- career development and succession planning;
- remuneration management;
- the discipline and dismissal of staff.

This prescription establishes minimum requirements for the appraisal and assessment of teachers.

### 2. The Context for Performance Appraisal in New Zealand Schools:

The primary purpose of these requirements is to provide a positive framework for the improvement of the quality of teaching (and therefore learning) in New Zealand schools. The mandatory requirements provide flexibility to allow boards of trustees to design performance appraisal systems appropriate to their school and community within a minimum quality assurance and accountability framework.

#### 3. The Matters to be Taken into Account:

The Secretary for Education hereby prescribes the following matters to be taken into account by the employers' when assessing the performance of teachers:

- principles which should underpin the policies and processes boards have in place for the appraisal of teacher performance;
- features of the process which is followed in appraising teacher performance;
- aspects of teacher's performance which should be appraised.

#### 3.1 The Principles:

Boards of trustees should ensure that policies and procedures for the appraisal of teacher performance:

- i. are part of an integrated performance management system operating within the school;
- ii. are appropriate to individual teachers, the school and wider community;
- iii. are developed in a consultative manner with teachers;
- iv. are open and transparent;
- v. have a professional development orientation;
- vi. are timely and helpful to the individual teacher;
- vii. give consideration to matters of confidentiality, including the provisions of the Privacy Act and the Official Information Act.

#### 3.2 The Features of the Appraisal Process:

3.2.1. The board of trustees is responsible for ensuring that:

- i. a policy for the appraisal of teacher performance is in place which is in accordance with *the principles*;
- ii. responsibility for the implementation of the appraisal policy and process is formally delegated to a professionally competent person or persons;
- iii. the appraisal process for each teacher is completed in accordance with the policy;
- iv. each teacher participates in the appraisal process at least once within a 12 month period.

3.2.2. Boards of trustees must have a documented policy on the appraisal of teacher performance. This policy must:

- i. specify the person(s) responsible for the implementation of the appraisal policy and process;
- ii. specify the process which will be followed in the appraisal of teacher performance;
- iii. include a statement on confidentiality;
- iv. specify a process for dealing with disputes.

3.2.3. Boards of trustees (through the person(s) responsible) must ensure that the appraisal process includes the following elements:

- the identification of an appraiser, in consultation with the teacher concerned;
- the development of a written statement of performance expectations in consultation with each teacher;
- the identification and written specification of one or more development objectives to be achieved during the period for which the performance expectations apply;
- for each development objective, the identification and written specification of the assistance or support to be provided;
- observation of teaching (for those with teaching responsibilities);
- self-appraisal by the teacher;
- an opportunity for the teacher to discuss their achievement of the performance expectations and the development objective(s) with their appraiser;
- An appraisal report prepared and discussed in consultation with the teacher.

#### 3.3 The Aspects of Teacher Performance to be Appraised:

Boards of trustees (through the person(s) responsible) must ensure that:

3.3.1. The performance expectations for teachers must relate to the key professional responsibilities and key performance areas of their position;

3.3.2. Key professional responsibilities/performance areas are:

- i. teaching responsibilities (such as planning and preparation, teaching techniques, classroom management, classroom environment, curriculum knowledge, student assessment);
- ii. school-wide responsibilities (such as contribution to curriculum leadership, school-wide planning, school goals, the effective operation of the school as a whole, pastoral activities and student counselling, and to community relationships);
- iii. management responsibilities (such as planning, decision-making, reporting, professional leadership, resource management).

This notice shall be effective from 1 January 1997.

Dated at Wellington this 9th day of December 1996.

## Appendix 2

### The "State of Play" Checklist

Consider the following statements and respond to them related to the current situation with appraisal in your school. Please indicate the status by ticking the appropriate column (1=No, 2=Somewhat, 3=Yes). Make full comment where appropriate.

STATE OF PLAY	STATUS COMMENT		
	1	2	3
<b>INITIATING APPRAISAL</b>			
* The current situation has been evaluated			
* Awareness has been raised about what needs to be done			
* Purposes and plans for proceeding have been discussed and agreed			
* A committee or task group has worked on policy, system design and issues of: - time - who appraises whom - confidentiality			
<b>IMPLEMENTING APPRAISAL</b>			
* Policy has been written and agreed to by staff and Board of Trustees			
* Staff with management responsibilities have job descriptions			
* Job descriptions contain objectives and state measurable outcomes			
* All staff have job descriptions			
* Objective information is assembled, e.g. -classroom observation feedback -peer comment -student comment			
* Appraisal interviews are conducted			
* Staff engage in self-appraisal			
* Staff have received training in appraisal, e.g. - writing job descriptions - interviewing - classroom observation etc			
<b>INSTITUTIONALISING APPRAISAL</b>			
* Appraisal and feedback are norms in the school			
* Training is being continued			
* The process is being monitored and problems acknowledged and resolved			
* Dates for regular review of policy and the appraisal system have been set.			

How do you think the tightening of legislation for appraisal in the last three years has impacted on any of the above areas (comment in full)?

## Appendix 3

### The "State of Play" Study Consent Form

#### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**RESEARCHER: Eileen Piggot-Irvine**

**RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE:**

State of Play with Appraisal

**I have been given and have understood an explanation of the above mentioned research project to be conducted by Eileen Piggot-Irvine.**

**I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my school will be used in any public reports unless I agree otherwise, and that I may withdraw myself or any information I have provided from this project without penalty of any sort.**

**I agree to take part in this project**

**Name:** Richard Swart

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 9/7/99.

## Appendix 4

### The “State of Play” Study Information Sheet

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

To: Education Management Centre Participants  
From: Eileen Piggot-Irvine  
Head of Education Management Centre

You are invited to take part in research which I am conducting. Your participation will involve:

- a) signing a formal consent form to show that you are aware of what the project involves and that you are prepared to participate.
- b) agreeing to participate in a questionnaire/checklist relating to the status of the appraisal system in your school.

The results from the research will be used to write a research paper which compares pre- and post-Appraisal Guidelines “State of Play” in schools.

All information will be treated confidentially, and since this a voluntary exercise you have the right to withdraw participation, as outlined on the participant consent form.

If you have any questions relating to the research you can contact me at work by phoning (09) 43 22 512.

Thankyou

Eileen Piggot-Irvine

## Appendix 5

### Collated Summarised Results of the “State of Play” Study (as percentages)

Key: Y = Yes; N = No; P = Partially

	1996			1997			1998			1999		
	Y	N	P	Y	N	P	Y	N	P	Y	N	P
<b>Initiating Appraisal</b>												
<u>1. The current system has been evaluated</u>												
	85	10	2	65	10	25	65	18	16	67	8	25
<u>2. Awareness has been raised about what needs to be done in appraisal</u>												
	66	7	12	79	0	21	80	4	16	69	8	23
<u>3. Purposes and plans for proceeding have been discussed and agreed</u>												
	55	15	20	53	12	35	78	4	18	73	13	15
<u>4. A committee or task group has worked on policy, system design and issues of: - time, who appraises whom, confidentiality</u>												
	59	15	20	53	12	35	78	4	18	77	13	10
<b>Implementing Appraisal</b>												
<u>1. Policy has been written and agreed to by staff and Board of Trustees.</u>												
	54	24	7	79	9	9	82	4	14	88	4	8
<u>2. Staff with management responsibilities have job descriptions</u>												
	76	7	10	91	2	7	78	4	18	88	6	6
<u>3. Job descriptions contain objectives and state measurable outcomes</u>												
	59	24	5	68	14	16	76	8	16	65	10	23
<u>4. All staff have job descriptions</u>												
	37	27	7	84	5	11	71	7	14	77	10	13
<u>5. Objective information is assembled, e.g.- classroom observation feedback, peer comment, student comment</u>												
	27	24	39	26	12	60	59	20	16	65	6	29
<u>6. Appraisal interviews are conducted</u>												
	59	22	10	79	0	18	84	2	12	94	0	6
<u>7. Staff engage in self-appraisal</u>												
	61	15	17	65	9	18	59	8	31	50	6	42
<u>8. Staff have received training in appraisal, e.g. - writing job descriptions, interviewing, classroom supervision etc</u>												
	34	29	24	14	35	47	47	27	27	29	23	44
<b>Institutionalising Appraisal</b>												
<u>1. Appraisal and feedback are norms in the school</u>												
	41	32	17	61	14	22	57	8	35	65	16	19
<u>2. Training is being continued</u>												
	46	34	7	47	33	16	53	18	29	48	23	27
<u>3. The process is being monitored and problems acknowledged and resolved</u>												
	46	29	12	53	21	19	53	6	40	48	19	33
<u>4. Dates for regular reviews of policy and the appraisal system have been set</u>												
	51	27	7	49	30	14	57	16	22	63	27	8

## Appendix 6

### Course Notes for Intervention #1 Training

#### ENHANCING INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN APPRAISAL

*The ability to get along with others is always an asset, right? Wrong. By adeptly avoiding conflict with co-workers, some executives eventually wreak organisational havoc.*

Argyris (1986:74)

Wreaking havoc by avoiding conflict is not confined to executives at the organisational level in the commercial sector. In performance appraisal, my own research has revealed (Piggot, 1993), the oft stated goals of openness, examination of underlying issues, honest sharing and collaboration are frequently a sham, and exist as little more than liberal rhetoric or espousals.

I have investigated and practised many ways of becoming effective interpersonally. There is one approach which has worked for me. This involves the sophisticated action science methods for improving interpersonal effectiveness outlined by Argyris (1990) and Robinson (1993a).

In this session I want to introduce you to this approach - it is just a taster. The action science approach on its own is extremely complex and usually involves months, maybe years, of training. The reason for this is that the approach requires rethinking and altering our underlying value systems, and this involves changing many automatic, conditioned responses. Such values and responses cannot be changed in two hours! Robinson *et al* (1990:55) describe the training time as taking as long as it requires for a veteran tennis player to relearn how to correctly grip a racket and to eliminate backhand slices. For many of us this takes an extremely long time and some people never learn at all!

#### The Action Science Approach to Improving Interpersonal Effectiveness

The three main aspects of the approach used in this session are:

- (1) the use of Argyris' (1990) **case writing and analysis** (which provides a window into our values and actions; it exposes the gap between what we think, in terms of interpersonal effectiveness, that is our espousals, and what we do); and
- (2) the theory behind the productive reasoning approach; and
- (3) Robinson's (1993) critical dialogue skills (the skills required to improve interpersonal effectiveness).

Before discussing the theoretical underpinning of the approach, I am going to ask you to experience the process of determining the gap between your espousals of interpersonal effectiveness and your actions.

*Your Espousals (Beliefs)*

Record 5 of your beliefs about giving negative feedback when trying to resolve problems in performance appraisal interviews. Note these over the page in bullet point form only.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

These ideas will be collated and used as the basis for comparison with the research conducted on what effective interpersonal interactions in problem situations.

*Mapping Your Actions*

Think of a situation you have been personally involved in with another staff member where you have needed to confront and resolve a problem. Describe this situation, by detailing the conditions that existed when the situation arose, the actions that you think that you employed to deal with the situation, what you think the consequences of your use of these actions might have been, and how you think you might be influencing the situation being perpetuated.

Conditions that existed when the situation arose:

Actions that you think that you employed to deal with the situation:

The reasons for the actions that you employed:

What you think the consequences of your use of these actions might have been:

How you think you might be influencing the situation being perpetuated:

Summarise your main actions, reasoning, and consequences

Actions	Reasoning	Consequences

*Case Writing*

On the right hand side of the table below write your conversation with the colleague. State what you actually said. Beneath this, write their response. Continue writing this for about 1-2 pages. In the left hand column write any ideas or feelings that you had that you did not communicate for whatever reason.

What I thought

What We Said

---

What I thought

What We Said

## **Theory Underpinning Interpersonal Effectiveness Work**

Many of the responses demonstrated in the case analysis are described by Argyris as defensive, and we act defensively because we are afraid, threatened, anxious, or embarrassed.

Argyris (1990) defines defensiveness as the tendency to protect self and others from potential threat and embarrassment. This is done by covering up or bypassing threat; being indirect, giving mixed messages, or withholding information. Defensiveness, he says is an anti-learning process. It leads to misunderstandings, distortions, and self-fulfilling processes.

Defensiveness is most often conditioned, routine, automatic behaviour that is below our level of consciousness, where it remains untested and unexamined. It has roots in our early childhood experiences, where we are instilled with the virtues of caring, helping and supporting; respecting others; upholding honesty; advocating to win; and sticking to our principles, values and beliefs. People do not set out deliberately or consciously to behave in this way. Our behaviour becomes so automatic that we are often completely unaware that we behave in such a way or that there is a gap between what we espouse, in terms of dealing with problems, and what we do.

Argyris' research, observing the way that thousands of people behave, has revealed that this conditioned defensiveness is the norm in our society. Based on this research he has described the guiding values, strategies and behaviours associated with defensive reasoning, and has labelled this as Model 1 theory in use.

Figure 1: Model 1

GUIDING VALUES	KEY STRATEGIES
WIN DON'T LOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* When working or talking with others:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- keep control of the process</li> <li>- keep control of the content</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Make unilateral decisions about what to disclose, when, and how - so that the purposes as you see them are best served.</li> </ul>
AVOID UNPLEASANTNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Make unilateral decisions about whether, how, and when to disclose information that you believe may be upsetting to self and others.</li> <li>* Avoid unpleasant interactions if possible</li> <li>* Be as pleasant as possible in communicating potentially unpleasant messages, stress the positives: ease-in, soft-sell.</li> <li>* If there is no other way, 'give it to them straight'.</li> </ul>

Cardno (1994)

(Adapted from Robinson et al, 1990:5)

The essential features of Model 1 have been summarised in the following way:

*...people seek to win rather than lose and to do so with a minimum of unpleasantness. People strive to win by keeping control of both the process and the content of key conversations. They make unilateral judgements about how to interpret information, and about the goals to pursue and how to achieve them. In addition, they seek to involve others in way that protects their own judgements from challenge.*

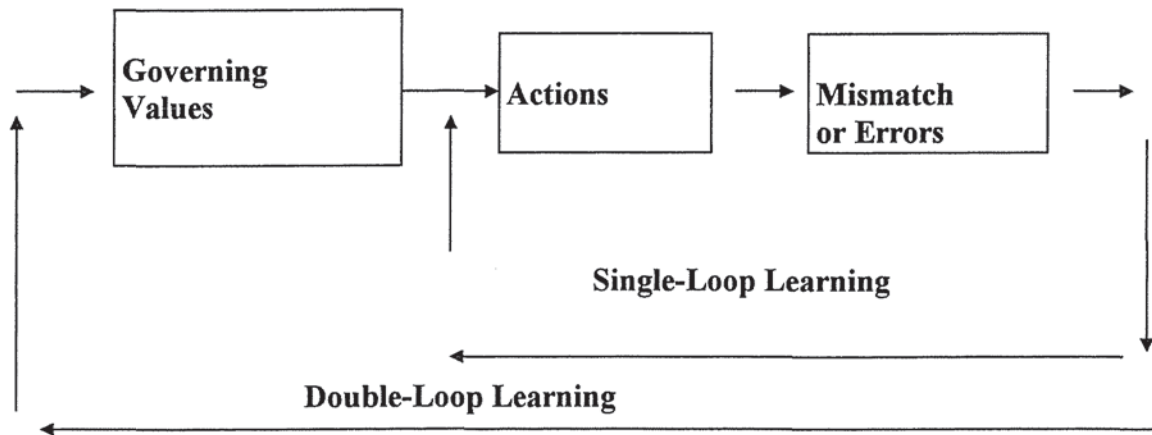
Robinson et al (1990:2)

Model 1 should not necessarily be viewed in a derogatory way. In fact when there is no contention, when little is at stake, or when it is easy to be collaborative, Model 1 is likely to be effective.

In non-routine situations when individuals are likely to resist control (and my observation is that this occurs often in managing teachers) or when change is threatening, Model 1 is not likely to be effective. This type of situation requires us to overcome our defensiveness and this is a far from easy task. Overcoming defensiveness involves altering our governing values, and looking at the way that we are implicated in the problem. Such learning is described by Argyris (1990) as Double Loop learning, as opposed to Single Loop learning where we would just learn new skills or techniques, but not surface the underlying problems.

Figure 2

### Single-Loop and Double-Loop Learning



Reproduced from Argyris (1990:94)

Altering governing values is of course a task which involves massive re-conditioning; a task which is life changing but which will enable you to move from what Argyris describes as defensive reasoning to productive reasoning, or Model 2 theory in use.

Figure 3: Model 2

GUIDING VALUES	KEY STRATEGIES
INCREASE VALID INFORMATION FOR ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* When working or talking with others:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- share control by exposing rather than withholding key information:</li> <li>- share responsibility for goal achievement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Disclose views and the evidence or logic that lead to those views</li> </ul>
ENHANCE FREEDOM INFORMED CHOICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Treat views and reactions of self and others as hypotheses to be tested</li> <li>* Check to see how our views have been understood and what views others hold</li> </ul>
GAIN INTERNAL COMMITMENT TO CHOICE AND MONITORING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Manage difficult emotional issues as a joint responsibility</li> <li>* Seek bilateral solutions and joint responsibility for achievement of goals</li> </ul>

Cardno (1994)

(Adapted from Robinson et al,  
1990, p.3)

The essential elements of Model 2 are summarised as:

*...a disclosure of our views together with the evidence of logic that led us to those views...to enhance the freedom of others to express differing views and to make uncoerced choices about courses of action, including about how to resolve impasses.*

Robinson et al (1990;p.2)

Note that Model 2 is not the opposite of Model 1. This would mean that everyone would have equal control: everyone a winner. This is unrealistic in today's society.

Most people espouse Model 2, but few are able to act in this way consistently in difficult situations.

That is not to say that you should expose all of your thoughts to others. Some of our thoughts should stay hidden, and our internal sensors often wisely direct us, but in order to arrive at

mutual understanding there is much of what is thought (the left hand side column of your case) that does need to be exposed.

You may be questioning at this point whether in fact you would want to become this honest. Not everyone does. Individuals who act in ways to overprotect themselves, and others, will not feel happy with Model 2. Also, in dysfunctional organisations which support the practice of Model 1 many individuals have distanced themselves and have chosen to play it safe; to not rock the boat. Such individuals learn to disguise or suppress their Model 2 tendencies as a way of protecting themselves.

The situation is different for individuals who genuinely care about their individual performance, and who are committed to striving for excellence, and who want to live out their values of honesty and integrity.

Learning and practising the skills of critical dialogue will assist you to live the values of Model 2 theory in use.

### The Skills of Critical Dialogue

You will need to recognise that in learning these skills developed by Robinson (1993a) you will have to slow down. This is difficult because most of us are impatient to learn.

Carol Cardno, at the Education Management Centre, UNITEC, Auckland has coined the phrase the “triple I” approach to describe the first three rules of critical dialogue skills. The “triple I” refers to:

1. Inform;
2. Illustrate; and
3. Inquire

---

<b>Rules</b>	<b>Examples</b>
1. Say what you think.	“I feel that I can’t rely any longer on your support to revise this programme..”
2. Say why you think it.	“...because you didn’t attend yesterday’s meeting or the one before that.”
3. Check with others.	“Where exactly do you stand now on this matter?”
4. Deal with emotions.	“I am very disappointed.”

---

Cardno (1994:165)

---

These skills involve disclosing your opinion and reasoning and then checking whether others see the situation in the same way that you do, i.e. disclosure, checking and inquiry.

*Practising Critical Dialogue Skills*

Stick with the same scenario that you have used in your case analysis. Select an aspect of this case which is able to be amended to a critical dialogue format. Write down what you would say in this format.

Note that just changing the words will not be enough. Becoming candid yet holding Model 1 “win, don’t lose” values is a recipe for distrust and disaster. In order to live the values of Model 2 you need to practise double loop learning and to change your underlying values.

Role practise this dialogue in triads with the third person critiquing the dialogues using the checklist overleaf. Note that it may be necessary to repeat Steps 1-4 (in a *cracked record* way).

Learning these skills requires many practice sessions, and repeated trials in numerous problem situations.

**STEPS IN PRACTISING  
CRITICAL DIALOGUE**

1.	STATE YOUR CONCERN (inform)				
2.	STATE THE REASONS FOR YOUR CONCERN (illustrate)				
3.	CHECK OTHERS' REACTIONS (inquire)				
4.	SUMMARISE SHARED UNDERSTANDING				
*	<i>REPEAT STEPS 1-4 IF NECESSARY</i>				
5.	SUGGEST AND EVALUATE SOLUTIONS JOINTLY				
6.	DECIDE TOGETHER ON A SOLUTION				
7.	AGREE NEXT STEP AND PLAN JOINT MONITORING				

Cardno (1993)

One of the unexpected payoffs of learning these skills is that you become quick at recognising Model 1 defensive routines without being drawn into them; you do not have your buttons pushed by others who are using these routines.

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## Appendix 7

### Case Writing Analysis Checklist

#### *Analysis of the Case*

In effect the case writing becomes the artifact through which you can examine your own thinking; a window to your values and actions.

Argyris (1990) uses case writing and analysis to expose the gap between our espousals and what we actually do. Video and audio-taping (and subsequent tape transcription) are often used either instead of, or to support, the written case writing.

Check off (as a tally) whether you used any of the following in your right hand column:

- \* Started with positives or assurances (often called 'easing in')
- \* With-held information
- \* Failed to state your position, where you were coming from
- \* Treated your own views as self-evident rather than ideas to be checked or refuted
- \* Made judgements or assumptions without testing/checking them
- \* Failed to check what your appraisee thought about the information you provided
- \* Provided little or no clarification of ideas/views presented
- \* Resisted or closed down questioning of your own ideas
- \* Used persuasion
- \* Gave false reassurances - to cloud your message
- \* Gave mixed messages or confused the message in an effort to be nice
- \* Tried to keep things comfortable
- \* Decided on the outcome before the conversation
- \* Decided to hold back in order to protect your colleague from embarrassment or threat
- \* Name dropped to support your argument
- \* Ignored or downplayed information provided by your colleague
- \* Made statements without illustration, evidence, or explanation
- \* Used questioning in order to disguise your own view
- \* Intellectualised or suppressed your own emotions
- \* Concentrated on the argument and ignored the feelings of your colleague
- \* Avoided disclosing your own feelings
- \* Avoided disclosing information that may have upset your colleague, or weakened your position
- \* Provided your own solutions to any problem with the appraisee
- \* Took responsibility for following up any problems yourself
- \* Failed to plan for any improvement where problems might have been raised
- \* As a last resort decided to 'give it to them straight'.

*Reflect on the following questions in relation to your case:*

---

Which of the above are avoidance strategies?

To what extent did you employ avoidance strategies in your conversation with your appraisee?

Which of the above are controlling type strategies?

To what extent did you employ these controlling type strategies with your appraisee?

To what extent did you cover up what you were thinking with your appraisee ie you failed to reveal what was in your left hand side column?

Why did you fail to reveal this?

Do you think that your appraisee would have sensed that you were covering this up?

# Appendix 8

## Pre-Training Questionnaires

### PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE: APPRAISAL INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Appraiser questionnaire

##### Introduction

This questionnaire seeks your views on the quality of communication that took place in the most recent appraisal that you were involved in.

I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire in a full and frank manner, so that I may learn about how teachers experience appraisal and, in particular, what they see as the challenges that developers such as myself should be focusing on.

Q.1. What position do you hold in the school:

- Principal
- Senior Management Group
- Head of Department
- Teacher
- Other
- State) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.2. Which of the following best describes the relationship that exists between appraiser and appraisee in your current appraisal system:

- Equal relationship (peer appraisal)
- Hierarchical (line manager is appraiser)
- Other (Specify) not more spec

Q.3. For how long have you been conducting appraisal?

- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- More than 5 (Specify number) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.4. How many staff have you personally appraised?

- None
- 1-3
- 4-5
- More than 5 (Specify number) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.5. Have you, yourself, been appraised?

- Yes
- No

Q.6. What type and length of appraisal training had you received before embarking on the process?

Q.7. Was any of this training concerned with helping you to develop any of the following interpersonal skills for problem solving? *Tick the box if you received training.*

- employing good listening skills
- developing an agreed agenda and process
- establishing shared control of information and decision making
- using processes which value open, clear messages
- raising and discussing difficult messages
- supporting openness with evidence (data)
- developing action plans to work on difficult issues
- Other (specify):

Q.8. Which of the following types/sources of feedback were used as the basis for discussion in the appraisal process? *Tick the box where appropriate.*

- student feedback
- peer/collegial feedback
- manager feedback
- self-evaluation
- other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions with relation to the most recent appraisal you have conducted, by circling the point on the rating scale which reflects your opinion. Feel free to make any additional comment where necessary.

Q.9. How clearly did the job description for the appraisee identify performance duties?

Very clearly							Not at all clear	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

*good*

Q.10. How clearly did the job description define the standards of performance the appraisee was expected to meet?

Very clearly							Not at all clear	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.11. To what extent were the job description and performance standards determined/reviewed through consultation with the appraisee?

Extensively							No consultation		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x	

Comment:

Q.12. Did you believe there were positive aspects of your appraisee's performance?

Many positive aspects							No positive aspects		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x	

Please provide examples:

Q.13. To what extent did you **discuss** positive issues with the appraisee?

Extensive discussion							No discussion		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x	

Please provide examples:

Q.14. To what extent did you have any concerns about your appraisee's performance?

Extensive concerns							No concerns		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x	

Please provide examples:

Q.15. To what extent did you **discuss** these concerns?

Extensive discussion					No discussion			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples of how you discussed these concerns, or if your answer was negative explain why you did not discuss these concerns:

Q.16. In discussing these aspects, to what extent were you able to support your views with evidence (data)?

Extensive support					No supporting evidence			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.17. In Q.14 I have asked you whether you had identified any concerns about the appraisee's performance. Did you have any ideas/thoughts about the causes of these concerns?

Yes   
No

If yes, please describe your ideas:

Q. 18. To what extent did you discuss these causes with the appraisee?

Extensively discussed					Not discussed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.19. To what extent were you able to be **open** in discussing your concerns?

Extensively open						Not open		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please describe how you consider you demonstrated this openness:

Q. 20. To what extent were you able to plan for any improvement relating to any concerns which you discussed?

Extensive planning						No planning		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment on the planning:

Q.21. How extensively was this plan implemented?

Extensively implemented					Not implemented			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.22. To what extent do you consider that the process of appraisal with this staff member was characterised by mutual trust?

High degree of trust						No trust		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.23. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the way in which trust, openness, and problem solving can be developed in appraisal?

Comment:

The existing research on appraisal suggests that appraisers and appraisees tend to see the process quite differently, so I would like to compare your perceptions with those of the person you appraised. For this reason, I am asking you to identify both yourself and your appraiser on this form. You can be assured that no-one else, apart from my research supervisors at Auckland University, will see your name (the forms will be coded before I collate them) and that your view of the process will not be communicated in any form to the appraisee. Your completion of the attached consent form is necessary for your participation.

Your name:

Your school:

Your appraisee's name:

Your appraisee's school:

Date of your most recent appraisal with this appraisee:

Thankyou for completing this questionnaire.

Eileen Piggot-Irvine

**PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE: APPRAISAL INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

**Appraisee questionnaire**

**Introduction**

This questionnaire seeks your views on the quality of communication that took place in the most recent appraisal that you were involved in.

I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire in a full and frank manner, so that I may learn about how teachers experience appraisal and, in particular, what they see as the challenges that developers such as myself should be focusing on.

Q.1. What position do you hold in the school:

- Principal
- Senior Management Group
- Head of Department
- Teacher
- Other
- (State) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.2. Which of the following best describes the relationship that exists between appraiser and appraisee in your current appraisal system:

- Equal relationship (peer appraisal)
- Hierarchical (line manager is appraiser)
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.3. For how long have you been appraised?

- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- More than 5 (Specify number) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.4. How many appraisals have you personally conducted?

- None
- 1-3
- 4-5
- More than 5 (Specify number) \_\_\_\_\_

Q.5. Please describe the type and length of appraisal training you had received before embarking on the process?

Q.6. Was any of this training concerned with helping you to develop the following interpersonal skills for problem solving? *Tick the box if you received training.*

- employing good listening skills

- developing an agreed agenda and process
- establishing shared control of information and decision making
- using processes which value open, clear messages
- raising and discussing difficult messages
- supporting openness with evidence (data)
- developing action plans to work on difficult issues
- Other (specify):

Q.7. Which of the following types/sources of feedback were used as the basis for discussion in the appraisal process? *Tick the box where appropriate.*

- student feedback
- peer/collegial feedback
- manager feedback
- self-evaluation
- other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions with relation to the most recent appraisal you have been part of, by circling the point on the rating scale which reflects your opinion. If you have no opinion, or you are unable to answer the question, please circle the "X" at the end of the scale. Feel free to make any additional comment where necessary.

Q.8. How clearly did your job description identify performance duties?

Very clearly							Not at all clear	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x

Comment:

Q.9. How clearly did your job description define the standards of performance you were expected to meet?

Very clearly							Not at all clear	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x

Comment:

Q.10. To what extent were the job description and performance standards determined/reviewed through consultation between yourself and the appraiser?

Extensively							No consultation	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.11. Did you believe that your appraiser had positive perceptions of your own performance?

Many positive perceptions							No positive perceptions	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.12. To what extent did your appraiser **discuss** positive perceptions with you?

Extensive discussion						No discussion	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.13. Did you believe your appraiser had any concerns about your performance?

Many concerns							No concerns	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.14. To what extent did your appraiser **discuss** these concerns?

Extensive discussion						No discussion	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples where your appraiser did discuss these concerns, or if your response to this question was negative explain why you think the concerns were not discussed:

Q.15. In discussing these concerns, to what extent did your appraiser support his/her views with evidence (data)?

Extensive support						No supporting evidence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.16. In Q.13 I have asked you whether you believed your appraiser had any concerns about your performance. Did you have any ideas/thoughts about the causes of these concerns?

Yes   
No

If yes, please describe your ideas:

Q. 17. To what extent did you discuss these causes with the appraiser?

Extensive discussion						No discussion	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.18. To what extent do you think your appraiser was **open** in discussing concerns with you?

Extensive openness							No openness	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please describe how he/she demonstrated this openness:

Q.19. To what extent did you and your appraiser plan for any improvement relating to any concerns which were discussed?

Extensive planning							No planning	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment on the planning:

Q.20. How extensively was this plan implemented?

Extensive implementation							No implementation	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.21. To what extent do you consider that the process of appraisal with your appraiser was characterised by mutual trust?

Extensive trust							No trust	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Comment:

Q.22. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the way in which trust, openness, and problem solving can be developed in appraisal?

Comment:

The existing research on appraisal suggests that appraisers and appraisees tend to see the process quite differently, so I would like to compare your perceptions with those of the person who appraised you. For this reason, I am asking you to identify both yourself and your appraiser on this form. You can be assured that no-one else, apart from my research supervisors at Auckland University, will see your name (the forms will be coded before I collate them) and that your view of the process will not be communicated in any form to the appraiser. Your completion of the attached consent form is necessary for your participation.

Your name:

Your school:

Your appraiser's name:

Your appraiser's school:

Date of your most recent appraisal with this appraiser:

Please return this completed questionnaire, in the stamped address envelope provided, to Eileen Piggot-Irvine, PO Box 1590, Whangarei.

# Appendix 9

## Post-Training Questionnaires

### POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE: APPRAISAL INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Appraiser questionnaire

##### Introduction

This is a follow-up to the training (specifically that on trust development) you completed earlier this year. It seeks your views on the quality of communication that took place in a recent appraisal that you were involved in.

I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire in a full and frank manner, so that I may learn about how teachers experience appraisal and, in particular, what they see as the challenges that developers such as myself should be focusing on, so that we can review the success of training.

Please answer the following questions with relation to a recent appraisal you have conducted, by circling the point on the scale which reflects your opinion. If you have no opinion, or you are unable to answer the question, please circle the "X" at the end of the scale. Feel free to make any additional comment where necessary.

Q.1. Did you believe there were positive aspects of your appraisee's performance?

Many positive aspects							No positive aspects
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.2. To what extent did you **discuss** positive issues with the appraisee?

Extensively						No discussion	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.3. To what extent did you have any concerns about your appraisee's performance?

Extensive						No concerns		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.4. To what extent did you **discuss** these concerns?

Extensively						Not at all		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.5. In discussing these aspects, to what extent were you able to support your views with evidence (data)?

Extensively						No support		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x	

Please provide examples:

Q.6. In Q.3 I have asked you whether you had identified any concerns about the appraisee's performance. Did you have any ideas/thoughts about the causes of these concerns?

Yes   
No

If yes, please describe your ideas:

Q. 7. To what extent did you discuss these causes with the appraisee?

Extensively						No discussion	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.8. To what extent were you able to be **open** in discussing your concerns?

Extensively						No openness	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please describe how you consider you demonstrated this openness, or if you were not open explain the reasons for this:

Q. 9. To what extent were you able to plan for any improvement relating to any concerns which you discussed?

Extensively						No planning	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment on the planning:

Q.10. How extensively was this plan implemented?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.11. To what extent do you consider that the process of appraisal with this staff member was characterised by mutual trust?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.12. To what extent do you consider that you have changed the way that you are dealing with negative issues in appraisal?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples of these changes:

Q.13. What do you think has contributed to any changes in your attitudes or behaviours?

Q.14. To what extent do you consider that the appraisal has actually resulted in the resolution of any of the issues or problems that you identified earlier in Q.3?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples of resolution of issues:

Q.15. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the way in which trust, openness, and problem solving can be developed in appraisal?

Comment:

The existing research on appraisal suggests that appraisers and appraisees tend to see the process quite differently, so I would like to compare your perceptions with those of the person who you appraised. For this reason, I am asking you to identify both yourself and your appraisee on this form. You can be assured that no-one else, apart from my research supervisor at Auckland University, will see your name (the forms will be coded before I collate them) and that your view of the process will not be communicated in any form to the appraisee. Your completion of the attached consent form is necessary for your participation.

Your name:

Your school:

Your appraisee's name:

Your appraisee's school:

Thankyou for completing this questionnaire.

Eileen Piggot-Irvine

**POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE: APPRAISAL INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

**Appraisee questionnaire**

**Introduction**

This is a follow-up to the training on appraisal (specifically that on trust development that your appraiser completed earlier this year. It seeks your views on the quality of communication that took place in a recent appraisal that you were involved in.

I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire in a full and frank manner, so that I may learn about how teachers experience appraisal and, in particular, what they see as the challenges that developers such as myself should be focusing on, so that we can review the success of training.

Please answer the following questions with relation to a recent appraisal you have been part of, by circling the point on the scale which reflects your opinion. If you have no opinion, or you are unable to answer the question, please circle the "X" at the end of the scale. Feel free to make any additional comment where necessary.

Q.1. Did you believe that your appraiser had positive perceptions of your performance?

Many positive perceptions							None at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x

Please provide examples:

Q.2. To what extent did your appraiser discuss positive perceptions with you?

Extensively							Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		x

Please provide examples:

Q.3. Did you believe your appraiser had any concerns about your performance?

Many concerns						None at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.4. To what extent did you and your appraiser **discuss** these concerns?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.5. In discussing these aspects, to what extent did your appraiser support his/her views with evidence (data)?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples:

Q.6. In Q.3 I have asked you whether you believed your appraiser had any concerns about your performance. Did you, yourself, have any ideas/thoughts about the causes of these concerns?

Yes   
No

If yes, please describe your ideas:

Q. 7. To what extent did you discuss these causes with your appraiser?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.8. To what extent do you think you were **open** in discussing your concerns?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please describe how you consider you demonstrated this openness, or if you were not open explain the reasons for this:

Q. 9. To what extent were you and your appraiser able to plan for any improvement relating to any concerns which you discussed?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment on the planning:

Q.10. How extensively was this plan implemented?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.11. To what extent do you consider that the process of appraisal with your appraiser was characterised by mutual trust?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Comment:

Q.12. To what extent do you consider that this year's training has changed the way your appraiser is dealing with negative issues in appraisal?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples of these changes:

Q.13. What do you think has contributed to any changes in their attitudes or behaviours?

Q.14. To what extent do you consider that the appraisal has actually resulted in the resolution of any of the issues or problems that you identified earlier in Q.3?

Extensively						Not at all	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	x

Please provide examples of resolution of issues:

Q.15. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the way in which trust, openness, and problem solving can be developed in appraisal?

Comment:

The existing research on appraisal suggests that appraisers and appraisees tend to see the process quite differently, so I would like to compare your perceptions with those of the person who appraised you. For this reason, I am asking you to identify both yourself and your appraiser on this form. You can be assured that no-one else, apart from my research supervisor at Auckland University, will see your name (the forms will be coded before I collate them) and that your view of the process will not be communicated in any form to the appraiser. Your completion of the attached consent form is necessary for your participation.

Your name:

Your school:

Your appraiser's name:

Your appraiser's school:

Thank you for completing this research questionnaire.

Eileen Piggot-Irvine

## Appendix 10

### Consent Form Intervention #1 & #2

#### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TITLE:

Interpersonal Effectiveness (Problem Solving) in Appraisal

**RESEARCHER:** Eileen Piggot-Irvine  
Education Department  
University of Auckland

I have been given, and have understood, an explanation of the above mentioned research to be conducted by Eileen Piggot-Irvine, and I have been offered an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports unless I agree otherwise, and that I may withdraw myself or any information traceable to me at any time up to the first of November 2000, without giving a reason.

I have also been offered the opportunity to request information about the outcome of the research.

I agree to take part in this project

Name:

Date:

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS  
ETHICS COMMITTEE January 1998.**

# Appendix 11

## Information Sheet Intervention #1 & #2

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

To: Participants in the research:

My name is Eileen Piggot-Irvine. I am a student at the University of Auckland conducting research on “Interpersonal Effectiveness (Problem Solving) in Appraisal” and have chosen this field because it will provide important information on the way in which appraisal impacts on schools.

You are invited to participate in the above research and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. In this research I am using the work of Chris Argyris on interpersonal values, strategies and skills as the benchmark for the development of a training programme designed to enhance interpersonal effectiveness.

Initially, I will be using questionnaires to determine appraisers’ pre- and post-training perceptions of problem solving in appraisal. These perceptions will be compared with those of appraisees. This will allow me to determine whether any shift in problem solving has occurred, and to examine the impact of training. Each questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete.

At latter stages of the research I will be employing a longer-term, action research, training approach with one school. Here, I will also be observing and audio taping appraisers and appraisees in appraisal interviews.

All information you provide will be treated anonymously and confidentially, and you have the right to withdraw participation, as outlined on the participant consent form. You are welcome to request a summary of the research findings once completed.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. Could you please confirm that you are prepared to be involved in this research by signing the formal consent form to show that you are aware of what the project involves and that you are prepared to participate. If you have any questions relating to the research you can contact me by phoning (09) 4322512, or write to me at PO Box 1590, Whangarei.

My supervisors are:

Dr Viviane Robinson and Dr Helen Timperley  
Education Department, University of Auckland, Ph 09 3737999.

Thankyou  
Eileen Piggot-Irvine

## Appendix 12

### Types of Action Research and Their Main Characteristics

(adapted from Carr and Kemmis, 1986, who in turn derived this from Habermas, 1972)

Type	Aims	Facilitator Role	Relationship between Facilitator and Participants
<b>Technical</b>	Effectiveness/efficiency of educational practice Professional development	Outside "expert" instigates and facilitates process	Co-option of participants who depend on facilitator
<b>Practical</b>	As above Practitioner understanding Transformation of consciousness	Socratic role, encouraging participation and self-reflection	Co-operation (process consultancy)
<b>Emancipatory</b>	As above Participant emancipation from the dictates of tradition, self-deception and coercion Participant critique of bureaucratic systematisation Transformation of the organisation and the educational system	Process moderator (responsibility equally shared by participants)	Collaboration Dialogue as basis for unimpaired communication Non-domination of facilitator

# Appendix 13

## Coding for Interview Data for Intervention #2

<b>Productive Reasoning Values/Strategies</b>	<b>Code</b>
<i>Openness About Positives</i>	
Advocacy	A+
Discussed Evidence	D+
Provided Reasoning	R+
<i>Openness About Negatives</i>	
Advocacy	A-
Discussed Evidence	D-
Provided Reasoning (incl. causes)	R-
<i>Inquiry</i>	I
Open-ended Questions ( <i>high inquiry</i> )	OQ
Closed Questions ( <i>low inquiry</i> )	CQ
Rhetorical Questions ( <i>low inquiry</i> )	RQ
Checking of Appraiser's perception	C
Summarised Mutual Understanding	SU
<i>Bilateral solution generation</i>	BS
Appraiser's solution	AS
Mutual planning	MP
Evidence of deep planning	DP
Monitoring of planning	Mo
<b>General Appraisal Interviewing Skills</b>	
Appraiser Talk ( <i>should be about 20%</i> )	AT
Paraphrasing	P

# Appendix 14

## Example of a Coded Transcript

### TRANSCRIPT OF A2 AND Ae2, APPRAISAL OBSERVATION DISCUSSION

23 July

A2 observed Ae2's questioning skills in teaching maths to F4 class.

A2: I was very impressed by the manner you had with the kids, a good manner. Others could benefit from seeing you.

Work was pitched at just the right level ....if you want to discuss any of this just let me know and stop me.... Everyone was doing something. You used good questioning. Spot on for the class.

Ae2: Its good to get positive feedback. I don't get it from all staff.

I didn't do anything special for you coming. Felt comfortable with you there.

I used a variety of questioning techniques.

I mainly used talk and chalk.

A2: You had good variety .. OHT, board, graphs.....it was pitched at the right level.

Now you need to work at perfecting your knowledge of the subject so that you can teach at other levels.

Ae2: I'd like to do that. Would like to officially do a course to extent my knowledge.

That same group don't work well with all teachers. The ethos in my class is an expectation of good behaviour. The kids meet that. There are no low expectations ....there are in other classes...

I gave them a couple of minutes at the end to wind down.

They enjoy a range of questions.

Did you notice that I sometimes cut off the question half way through?

A2: Yep No follow-up to explore first issue raised

Ae2: It helps them to build their own answer.

A2: I was impressed.

You related the lesson to their own level, ... it was concerned with fencing... the money...practical stuff.

Ae2: One answer threw me.

A2: Yeh

Ae2: I tried every possible way to explain. The least likely kid gave an answer. The other kids made a real fuss about it. The kids were still giving him a hard time the next day.

A2: Gives them a sense of achievement ??

False reassurance? A clouded message.

Ae2: One thing I'm trying is to not give them the correct jargon at first. I use anecdotal expressions. Then later I introduce the mathematical terms. Then I insist on them using these when asking questions.

They're difficult to manage as a class. Some of them only got 23% last year.

A2: One thing needed (and I forgot to do this) was to compliment them before I left the room.

I thought they did really well.

A+ The worst kid was really good, meek and mild.

? Probe further  
Onto own issue here  
- Ae2's issue left.  
Ignored information provided by Ae2.

Ae2: He's not naughty...attention seeking....he seems to work well with me.... responds well. I can empathise with these kids.

AS A2: In the future I think you should take some higher stream classes. You need to get capable to do this. Maybe you could sit SC papers yourself...trial these.

Ae2: I'm looking forward to doing this. I wanted to do a paper through Massey, At \$500 a paper it was too expensive... I can't afford this.

I will take the 6th form books home with me over the Xmas to look at.

I need to update.

The kids are ..... I'm struggling with 5M. Its a difficult class, there is an unpleasant feel... lots of underachievers...they're difficult.

low inquiry  
- No exploration of how this could be done by Ae2.

A2: Every teacher has a class we could put at the bottom of the pile..

Keeping things comfortable

But other problems existed - not examined

Ae2: They have a nasty streak. You need to ensure that they don't get you upset.

They have to meet you halfway.

Avoidance - colluding?

A+ A2: Good, I'm impressed with your effort.

No illustration/explanation/evidence

Ae2: The question is what this will lead to. I like to think this year will lead to a change to teaching better classes.

? Probe further

A+ A2: I'm pretty with the way things have gone. That's all....

Long pause

Eileen: Is there anything negative that happened in the session that you would want to discuss with Ae2?

With-held information

A- A2: Yes there is.....but.....I don't know whether its important or I'd want to say it.

Avoided earlier

Ae2: No, tell me I want to know...

Holding back information - protection?

AS A2: I would have spent more time calibrating the axes and plotting points.

The kids filled in spaces, squares, but you might have helped them to do more.

Presented own ideas as

self-evident - no checking with Ae2.

These are minor points...

Ae2: No, I want constructive criticism. Its good. That's been helpful.

AS A2: Sometimes I have three boards, so that I can keep one free for plotting graphs.

Ae2: Was there anything else?

*No checking of Ae2's response*

A2: Nothing, they were just small points.

A+ Good maths teaching comes from good discipline. You've done that.

*Statement not based on information/evidence*

*? Follow-up monitoring?*

Ae2: I appreciate that the relationship I have with these kids is different.

A+ A2: You provide a good balance...it sinks in... you have a quick repartee....its ideal.

*Specifics not included - evidence?*

Ae2: They're a neat bunch of guys to work with. One was expelled a while ago, and that unsettled them.

They're much better than they used to be.

Lunch bell

A2: Okay I think we've finished

Ae2: Yep

# Appendix 15

## Intervention #2 Interview Analysis

A1 and Ae1	A+	D+	R+	A-	D-	R-	I	OQ	CQ	RQ	C	SU	BS	AS	M
Initial Meeting	4	1	0	3	3	3	9	3	5	1	0	1	1	10	0
Post-Obs.Discussion	6	3	5	1	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Final Interview	6	2	3	2	2	2	11	9	2	0	0	0	2	9	1
A2 and Ae2															
Initial Meeting	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	3
Post-Obs.Discussion	8	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Final Interview															
A3 and Ae3															
Initial Meeting	5	0	2	5	0	2	23	21	2	0	6	0	1	4	3
Post-Obs.Discussion	8	5	1	0	0	0	4	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	0
Final Interview	6	4	0	2	1	1	24	20	2	2	3	0	0	0	0
A4 and Ae4															
Initial Meeting	4	1	1	3	1	2	27	9	11	7	3	0	0	4	0
Post-Obs.Discussion															
Final Interview	4	0	1	5	2	5	26	14	9	3	5	0	0	2	0
A5 and Ae5															
Initial Meeting	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	23	5	1	2	0	0	5	0
Post-Obs.Discussion															
Final Interview															

# Appendix 16

## Intervention #2 Questionnaire Results

Quest.N	Pre-Q A1	Post-Q A1	Pre-Q Ae1	Post-Q Ae1	Pre-Q A2	Pre-Q A3	Post-Q A3	Pre-Q Ae3	Post-Q Ae3	Pre-Q A4	Post-Q A4
1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	2
2	2	1	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	3	4
3	7	7	6	NA	5	7	6	NA	6	4	4
4	7	NA	3	NA	5	NA	5	NA	3	6	7
5	NA	NA	4	NA	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	4
6	NA	NA	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	NA	NA	1	NA	5	NA	4	NA	5	3	7
8	NA	NA	2	NA	5	NA	1	1	1	5	1
9	NA	NA	3-4	NA	5	NA	3	NA	2	4	4
10	NA	NA	3	NA	5	NA	2	NA	3	3	4
11	1-2	1	3	2	5	2	1	1	1	4	2
12	3	3	1-2	3	7	2	1	3	NA	2	1
13											
14	NA	NA	4	NA	7	NA	2	NA	2	NA	3
15											

## Appendix 17

### MAKING PRINCIPAL APPRAISAL WORK

*“Finding a performance appraisal system that works seems nearly impossible”*

John Robertson (Employment Today, Nov/Dec 1998)

I don't agree with John! In my experience schools **can**, and have, set up appraisal systems (especially at senior management level) that work. There are many key features to the effectiveness of these systems. In this article I want to highlight just one of these features - and one that is most commonly disregarded. This feature is good planning for a cycle of appraisal activity. First of all though, I would like to put this feature into context.

#### A Cycle Based on Clarity

In our book “Effective Performance Appraisal” Carol Cardno and I have established that successful appraisal requires a full annual cycle of activity which is based on clarity.

Amongst many other things, such clarity relates to:

- job descriptions;
- performance agreements;
- personal annual development objectives linked to school strategic goals;
- developmental planning;
- data-based information and evidence; and
- direct, trust based, two-way feedback (called critical dialogue).

In our Integrated Model, principal appraisal involves a full year of well planned developmental and accountability activity.

This conception of a cycle of on-going activity flies in the face of what I frequently hear about the practice of principal appraisal. In too many situations the process has been reduced to a once a year, tick-the-box analysis of performance in order to meet Ministerial requirements. Such an approach denies the principal and the school community of a unique opportunity for quality development.

#### A Key To Effectiveness - The Performance Agreement as a Developmental Plan

Good performance planning (and plan monitoring) is a key feature of the success of the appraisal cycle. I would go even further and suggest that many appraisal systems fail because attention is not given to the importance of this planning. I am not suggesting here that the plan is developed separately to the performance agreement, but that this document incorporates the features of a good, developmental plan. To demonstrate this I will relate the experience of two principals.

## A Story of the Good and the Bad

The two principals are called Jean and John - they are mythical names but drawn from a conglomeration of real situations.

Jean first. Jean employed me to help the school establish an appraisal system. Once this was completed she then invited me to act as her own appraiser. At the beginning of her cycle of appraisal (the initial meeting) we spent time clarifying and updating her job description. Jean had difficulty determining what she would focus on for development objectives, and so we agreed that I would facilitate a confidential process for collecting staff feedback (based on her job description) on her performance generally. We used the results of this feedback as a type of needs analysis to guide her focus for development.

The next step in the process was for Jean to spend a couple of weeks reflecting upon the results from the feedback, to make her specific choice for development objectives, and to flesh these out into a comprehensive performance agreement action plan (PAAP). I had given her an example of how to write such a plan.

At our next meeting Jean presented her plan. The following sample extract, just a small section of the plan (she had six similarly written objectives), will give you an idea of her content.

### Jean's PAAP (Performance Agreement Action Plan):

Objective	Actions	Measurable Outcomes	Resources/\$	Date for Completion
To improve written communication to staff (the feedback indicates such communication is a weak area of performance).	Attend 1 day "Report Writing" workshop in Wellington in September	Improved written communication to staff	\$400.00 (course fee) \$500.00 (travel) \$200.00 (accommodation and meals)	October 1999

I want to compare this with John's PAAP. John and I followed a fairly similar process to that of Jean for arriving at development objectives.

John's plan is also shown in sample (he had five other objectives) extract form.

**John's PAAP (Performance Agreement Action Plan):**

Objective	Actions	Measurable Outcomes	Resources/\$ (Recorded for each action)	Date for Completion
To improve the way that I facilitate meetings with staff.	1. Check how I facilitate meetings currently by: a. asking staff to complete a quick response questionnaire on my effectiveness b. asking a colleague to check and record what I do in meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased personal knowledge of effective meeting facilitation, and a clear set of criteria for this</li> <li>Improved/more effective meeting facilitation as recorded in feedback from staff, and my observer colleague</li> </ul>	1. a Photocopying of questionnaire \$5.00	April 20th
	2. Do some reading on meeting facilitation and develop some criteria for effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More productive meetings.</li> </ul>	1. b Nil	April 20th
	3. Think about the results from the feedback etc. and develop a plan for the way I will improve		2. Photocopying of articles \$5.00	June 1st
	4. Attend a 2 hour workshop on meeting facilitation		3. Nil	June 15th
	5. Observe		4. Workshop fee \$80.00 Travel \$20.00	June 20th
			5. Nil	June 25th
				End July

	<p>another manager who is reputed to facilitate good meetings</p> <p>6. Put my plan for improved facilitation into practice for 2-3 meetings</p> <p>7. Seek further feedback from staff on improvements, and ask my colleague to observe against my criteria for effective facilitation</p>		<p>6. Nil</p> <p>7. Photocopying \$5.00</p>	<p>August 15th</p>
--	---	--	---	------------------------

Can you pick the difference between Jean and John's approach to improvement?

### Surface and Deep Approaches

Jean's approach is the more typical one that I have struck in the masses of appraisal work I have conducted in both consultation and research. It is a quick fix approach: one which is concerned with getting the objective out of the way as quickly as possible. I describe this as a "surface" approach to appraisal.

John's approach, however, is "deep". He is committed to a thorough examination of his facilitation of meetings, to changing his practise, and then to checking to see if what he has done has worked. He is basing his decisions for change upon his reflections on data and background reading. It will not cost the school any more than Jean's to meet his development objectives, and yet the outcome is most likely to be substantial change at both a personal and professional level. Such change should be what appraisal is about! Without this, in my opinion, appraisal is no more than a compliance activity.

Surface and deep learning (Biggs, 1987) are now quite well known terms in tertiary education, but less known in schools. The surface approach, McKay and Kember (1997, p.58) state, is "based on a motive to minimise effort and also to minimise the consequences". Jean has adopted this minimalist approach.

Deep learning is a situation where the person is interested in the task and strives for understanding. This is what John is doing.

## Links with Double and Single Loops

Both Jean and John's approaches also fit into Argyris' (1990) definition of double and single loop learning. Jean's approach is concerned with single loop learning where she will probably learn a few new writing skills or techniques but not expose, examine or change any underlying values associated with the way she communicates with the staff.

John is planning for double loop learning where he is hopefully going to alter not only his practise but his underlying values as well.

## What Happens in Your School?

So, what do you and your school do in principal and staff appraisal? Do you adopt a surface, single loop learning approach to this important task, or do you go somewhat deeper? If you are doing the former, my guess is that your appraisal system's effectiveness will be short-lived and will be rated eventually as a time-wasting activity.

The deeper approach, with the associated planning described above, will begin the process of ensuring effectiveness.

Of course, there is lot more required for appraisal to be effective. Developing trust between the appraiser and the principal is an area which is critical.....but this is another article on its own.

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## Appendix 18: Raw Statistical Data and Spearman's Results

Q	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11	12	14												
	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E												
1	2	1	2	2	7	7	7	4	2	1	7		2	1	1	4	1		3					
2	3	4	3	7	4	6	5	6	3	4	7	5	3	4	4	7	4	7	3		6	7	6	
3	2	2	3	3	6	6	6	4	7		5	2	1	1	6	3		3	1	1	7		2	
4	2	2	2	2	6	6	6		4				2	2				2	2	3	1			
5	1	1	2	1	7	7	6		2				1	1		4			1	1	4	1	7	
6	3	2	3	4	5	6	5	6			4	2	3	1	7		7		3	1	4		7	
7	1	1	3	4	7	7													1	1		7	7	
8	1	1	2	2	7	7	7	7			7		1	1		7	2		1	1	3	7	2	
9	4	2	3	2	6	6	5	5	6	5	3	2	3	2	4	2	5	2	3	3	2		4	
10	1	1	2	1	6	6	5	2		5	6	3	2	1	4	2	3	2	2	1		2		
11	1	1	2	1	7	6		1	2	1		1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	2		2	1
12	2	2	2		6	6	3	2	4	4	3	2	2	1	3	1	7	4	2	1	3	4	5	4
13	1	2	2	2	7	6		6					1	3		1		3	1	1	5	6		
14	2	2	2	4	7	6		6			6		2					2	1	4	3			
15	3	3	2	3		7		7		7				2		5		7	1	2	2	5		
16	1	2	1	5	7	6	4	3	3		2		1	1	3	3	1	4	1	3		5	1	
17	1	2	3	3	7	7	7	7						3		5			1	2	1	3		6
18	2	2	3	3	5	6	7		7		7			2		7			3	1	6		7	
19	1	5	2	4	1	3	1	4	2	7	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	3	2
20	1	1	1	1	7	7													1	1	2	1		
21	2	2	2	2	5	7	4	6	3		3	4	1	1		2		2	2	1	1	4	3	
22	2	1	2	2	5	7	4				4		2	1	4				2	1	3			
23	1	2	3	2	7										3		2		4	1	1		7	
24	1	1	3		7	7	7		6		6								1	1	7		7	
25	2	1	3	1	6	6	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1		2	3	1	3		3	1
26	1	1		3	7	7	7						2						2	2		6		
27	1	1	4	1	7	7	7							1		1		2	2	1	1			
28	2	3	1	1	4	5	4	4	4		2		1		1	3	4		3	1	1			
29	5	1	5	3	7	7	7												1	2	7		7	
30	2	2	4	2	4	6	4	3		4	1	5	3	3	3	4		4	2	1	3		3	3
31	1	2	5	3	3		4	7	2		5	7	2	2	7				2	1	6		3	7
32	3		2		5		2		2		7		3		2		2			1	2		4	
33	4	2	5	3	7		2				7			3		2		4	4	2	2		7	
34	1	1	4	1	7	7	7	3		3	7			2		2		6	2	1	3			
35	2	2	2	2	6	6	2	2	2	4	4	6	1	1	2	3		3	1	1	2	7		
36	2	2	2	2	6	4	4	4	7		5	3	2	1	4	4			1	2	3	5		4
37	1	2	1	2	7	6										3			1	1	3	3		
38	2	3	2	2	7	5		6	1			2		6		2		4	1	3	2	4		5
39	2	3	3	5	7	7													1	2	3			
40	1	3	3	5	7	4	7	4		6		5		5		4		4	1	2	4	5		3
41	2	1	3	2	7	5	7	6	7	1	7	6	7	1	7	2	7	6	1	1	1		7	
42	1	1	2	3	7									1					2	1	2	3		
43	2	1	3		4	7	6		2		3		5	1	4		3		4	1	2			
44	2	2	2	3	7	6	7	3		4	7			2		3		3	1	3	3	1		4
45	2	1	2		6	3	3	2		2	3	4	2	2		2		2	3	2	3			2
Q	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11	12	14												

R = Appraiser; E = Appraisee

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