Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback: a qualitative study.

Warwick Ford

School of Education and Professional Studies

Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University
Australia

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Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or a diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and believe, the dissertation contains no materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself

Signed Warwick Ford

Warwick Ford
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Dedication

For My Teacher Mentor

Mr Tony Chanter

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Abstract

This research explores Highly Accomplished teachers’ perceptions of feedback provided during their annual performance appraisal/review. It looks at what constitutes effective feedback for this select group of teachers and the social practices that enable this. It identifies feedback practices that these teachers consider useful for future improvement as well as those practices that need attention with a view to improving overall feedback experiences of Highly Accomplished teachers undertaking a performance review.

Underpinning my research is the belief that improving teaching across the school will improve student outcomes. To enable quality classroom teaching, feedback on performance must also be quality and have utility in terms of improvement. It is widely recognised that quality feedback is integral to the success of any appraisal process; however, the literature reviewed to date suggests that there is limited evidence available capturing teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes ‘quality’ in the feedback they receive revealing a gap that needs to be better understood.

This research seeks to make sense of how Highly Accomplished teachers experience performance feedback. Given that feedback is a key component in fostering the motivation to learn and improve, this research examines aspects of current teacher appraisal processes that may be improved to better enable Highly Accomplished teachers to continue to teach well, advance in their career, and increase their job satisfaction levels. This research discusses some of the key research connected with teacher performance review, including current best practices to delivering feedback that will contribute to positive performance review. Finally,
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this suggests ways in which feedback can be enhanced within the research school fostering continual teacher growth and improved teacher quality throughout the school.

**Keywords:** Feedback, feedback on teaching, classroom observations, teacher perceptions, highly accomplished teacher, professional standards for teaching
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Chapter I Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study explores how feedback is experienced by a group of Highly Accomplished Teachers (hereafter HATs) during their annual performance review process. The research specifically examines teachers’ perceptions of the efficacy of the feedback provided by their line manager/supervisor in relation to how it influences their career pathway decisions, and its utility in enabling performance improvement and motivation in their leadership roles. The research is underpinned by the premise that feedback is the link between an assessment event (such as the performance review) and learning and is integral to any future learning improvement. That is, without feedback, an evaluation in any context is meaningless for improving future performance (Black & Wiliam, 1998). For teachers, effective feedback delivered correctly, provides them with information about what they are currently doing, what they need to do to improve, and how they can improve (Carless, 2006).

The focus of this thesis is understanding how HATs experience and respond to feedback about their professional practice. Research shows that feedback is important for teachers due to its potential to impact professional development (Jensen, 2014), performance in the classroom (Carless, 2006) and teachers’ contributions to the operation of the school outside of their classroom practice. Khachatryan (2015) define feedback as “actions taken by an external agent to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one’s task performance” (p.15). According to Hattie (2007), feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, a sentiment supported by Hounsell (2003) who had earlier noted that “it has long been recognized, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings.” (p. 67). According to Carless (2016), this means that we learn faster, and more effectively...
when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might need to do in order to improve. Recently there has been an emphasis on feedback in the scholarship around effective teaching, however there are relatively few studies that systematically investigate its meaning within the content of the performance review process for teachers.

The feedback I am referring to in this study concerns that provided to teacher-leaders during their annual performance review process. It encompasses dialogue between the HAT and their supervisor (normally their Head of Department) who has the responsibility of appraising their work performance. Carless (2006) argues that receiving feedback within an appraisal process is one of the significant quality events in the lives of the teacher. According to AITSL (2012) feedback of this nature can have multiple functions: advice for improvement of current teaching practices; develop professional aspirations and identify achievements and areas for improvement.

In my experience I have always preferred to receive feedback informally from an equal peer. I find that this approach more personable that the often contrived situation that the annual performance review can create. I feel that I am more likely to engage with and act on informal feedback and I presumed that my teacher colleagues were similarly interested in, and motivated, by the sort of informal feedback they glean from their students and teaching peers. I also assumed that most teachers did not engage much in the formal feedback process with their Head of Department because of a comment from a colleague who suggested that “the whole process is fake, and I refuse to act on the information provided” (Anon, n.d). Comments such as this were what motivated me to explore the provision of formal feedback to teachers in schools and to undertake this research.

Feedback provided to the teacher during the annual performance review can be a key lever for improving teacher quality and effectiveness. For teachers the APST outline what a
teacher should know and be able to do (AITSL, 2012). Standards are used in many performance review processes to evaluate and guide teacher development (Elliott, 2015), with general agreement that standards and a shared understanding of quality teaching are foundations of effective appraisal systems (Jensen, 2014).

Ever since the late 1980s and early 1990s there has been a research focus on teaching quality and how this is achieved in initial teacher education programs (Ingvarson, 2010). Australia was not alone in the focus on quality teaching during these decades, with the adoption of rigorous standards figuring in public debate in the United Kingdom and United States (Louden, 2000; Sachs, 2005). Understanding what constitutes ‘quality’ in relation to teaching has been a preoccupation of researchers in education for many years. Additional public and political concerns about the quality of teaching in schools has led to the development of a range of pedagogical frameworks by statutory authorities that capture and illustrate teaching quality. Examples of these include the NSW “Quality Teaching Framework” (DET, 2003), the South Australian “Teaching for Effective Learning” (DECS, 2011) framework and more recently, “Age Appropriate Pedagogies” (The State of Queensland, 2017) developed for Early Childhood Education and Care sector in Queensland.

Currently, in Australia, a description of essential teaching skills and knowledge’s is encapsulated in the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (hereafter APST) (AITSL, 2012). The publication of these standards by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2011 signalled a shift towards a more consistent approach to teaching standards and accreditation of initial teacher education program (AITSL, 2012) and the maturation of the country’s teaching profession. The APST are a public statement that provides a framework for the requisite professional knowledge, practice and engagement required to be demonstrated by teachers across their career. The framework is organised
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According to seven professional standards, each with a number of focus areas and the standards are categorized according to a continuum of four career stages for classroom teachers from *Graduate Level to Proficient, Highly Accomplished* and finally *Lead* (AITSL, 2012). By providing a common understanding and professional discourse around effective teaching practice, the APST support focused and purposeful discussions about what teachers are expected to do in classrooms and schools. In the context of this study the APST at the *Highly Accomplished Teacher* level serve as the foundation for performance review at the end of the appraisal cycle. Therefore, what follows is some explanation about this group of teacher-leaders.

According to AITSL (2012) HATs are teachers that consistently demonstrate their ability as effective and skilled classroom practitioners, capable of working independently and collaboratively on improving their individual practice and the practice of their colleagues (AITSL, 2012). Additionally, they must demonstrate current, discipline-specific knowledge of the subjects they teach and work with their colleagues to plan, evaluate and modify teaching programs to improve student learning (AITSL, 2012). Most importantly, HATs must strive to build a reputation whereby they are recognized as professional, ethical and respected individuals within the school and the wider community. In other words, HATs are considered as the first level of teacher as pedagogical and curriculum leader.

I am a *Highly Accomplished Teacher* in a large public secondary school in South-East Queensland and have held this role for the past five years. To achieve the HAT rating I have lead processes aimed at improving student learning outcomes such as evaluating and revising work programs, analysing and acting on student assessment data and feedback from members of the broader school community such as parent’s / care givers. In practical terms this includes additional duties: implementing whole school numeracy and literacy initiatives;
organising year level camps; mentoring inexperienced teachers; organising and leading school excursions and presenting information to parents at various school events. The feedback I have received regarding my professional practice has generally been complimentary, however it has rarely provided any measureable or practical indicators about how to improve my performance so I could be promoted to Lead Teacher. A recent career change to my current school further piqued my interest in the teacher feedback process experienced in quite dissimilar school contexts.

The aim of this study is to examine how HATs experience feedback during their annual performance review process with a specific focus on perceptions of the efficacy of the feedback provided in relation to how it influences career pathway and professional development decisions and how it motivates them in their roles as HATs. The research is underpinned by the premise that feedback is the link between assessment and learning and integral to all future learning.

Also underpinning my research is the belief that improving the quality of teaching across the school will improve student outcomes. To enable this to happen effective feedback on classroom performance must be provided to all teachers so that they can see what aspect of their work needs improving and how to go about that. It is widely recognised that effective feedback is integral to the success of any appraisal process; however, the literature reviewed to date suggests that there are further opportunities available to explore teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes ‘quality’ in the feedback they receive.

This study is situated in the scholarship and research around assessment for learning which itself sits within broader theories about how people learn or cognitive theory and how this is linked to assessment. Cognitive theory also plays a role in understanding quality assessment. This theory focuses on how assessment can enhance learning. Original theories
around assessment for learning purposes arose from Bloom (1984) where ‘feedback’ and ‘correctives’ were the terms used to improve student learning. That was until 1998 when Black & Wiliam imbued the phrase ‘assessment for learning’ with more prominence as they uncovered formative assessment practices that research found to clearly promote student achievement. Sadler (1989) identified assessment for learning to include students’ need to understand the assessment purpose, understand the standard they have achieved and be able to identify action to address the shortfall in their understanding. Therefore, the purpose of feedback identified the gap in learning and the use of corrections are used to “alter the gap in some way” (William, 2011, p.4). In the context of this study assessment can be considered to be the review process whereby the teacher is provided with feedback about their teaching performance benchmarked against the APST. So ultimately how and what the teacher learns from the review process underpins the purpose of assessment. Consequently, the research seeks to understand the current teacher appraisal process. The theoretical perspectives on the purposes of assessment and the connection of assessment between pedagogy practices are fundamental to this research project.

**Situating the study in its school context**

The research reported in this thesis was conducted in a state secondary school located on the Gold Coast in South East Queensland. With an enrolment of 1783 students the school implements the Australian Curriculum for Years 7-10 and the Queensland Certificate of Education in Years 11 and 12.

The school’s vision is to Innovate Thought, Cultivate Passion & Generate Leadership. The school has a commitment to personal excellence, caring relationships, the development of individuals, and the work hard at realising these values through their actions. To promote these values, the school embraces: a sense of community and belonging, curriculum diversity,
flexible approaches to new technologies. The school focuses on individual achievement, responsible behaviour and citizenship, education of the whole person, providing opportunity and choices and celebrating success. A wide range of curriculum offerings provides thoughtful enrichment to every student’s school learning experience and early access to specialisation. All students can pursue career and interest pathways through a wide range of curriculum options in both traditional disciplines as well as some more specialist fields of study such as robotics, marine studies, dance, high performing sports and film studies. The school curriculum is underpinned by an inclusive approach to ensure we cater for the full spectrum of learning ability, ranging from ACE (Enrichment and Acceleration), Mainstream, Specialist Learning Support, and Special Education.

The leadership profile of the school includes; one principal, two directors of school, three deputy principals, three heads of curriculum, seven heads of department, six deans of students and one hundred and sixty teaching staff. The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage [ICSEA] rating of 1017 which is above the average ICSEA rating of 1000 suggesting that students attending this school have a relatively higher level of educational advantage. My position at the school is the Dean of Students for 367 Year 9 students and my teaching duties are a junior science class. I have been employed at the school for seventeen months.

Table 1 Workforce Composition: Staff composition, including Indigenous staff

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2017 Workforce Composition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Full-time Equivalents</td>
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The Annual Performance Review

The current teacher appraisal process at the school utilises the APST as the criteria for judging HATs professional performance. There are currently twelve members of staff who have used the APST to self-identify as a HAT. This process is offered via a questionnaire on the ATSL website where teachers can locate their practice against 37 Focus Areas in the APST. (AITSL, 2012). Teachers receive a digital report confirming their Career Stage at Highly Accomplished. Only teachers self-identified at this level of career progression are included in this study.

In my current school, the annual performance review for teachers and HATs is an identical process. The process requires HATs, in consultation with their line managers (or Heads of Department), to identify aspects of practice from the APST that they wish to develop further. This part of the process occurs early in term one. During term two, teachers work with a coach around these goals in preparation for their performance appraisal. This process includes having a coach observe a series of lessons and provide feedback to the HAT on the performance against goals set. During term three teachers are formally observed teaching by their Head of Department (who self-identify as Lead Teachers) who assesses their performance against the Highly Accomplished section of the Standards. It is recognised by school leadership that there are areas for improvement within the current appraisal process. A key area identified for improvement is the length of time between goal setting, lesson observation and (where necessary) linking in with expertise coaches to support a teachers’ performance. The research school is currently investigating the benefits of increasing the number of coaches within the school to decreasing the time between initial goal setting and feedback about teaching performance.
Aims of the study

The primary aim of this study is to examine HATs’ experiences with the feedback provided during their annual performance review. It examines what this particular group of teacher-leaders believe to be effective feedback in terms of its impact on their overall teaching, job satisfaction and its utility in career progression and professional development decisions. The study also aims to identify aspects of the performance review process by examining the associated social practices and feedback discourses in light of what research considers to be ‘best practice’ when it comes to effective feedback. The intention is to present this information as recommendations to improve the performance review process to the school executive team for consideration.

Based on these aims the following research questions were formulated:

- How do HATs experience the assessment provided during their annual performance review?
- How does the feedback provided to HATs compare with internationally recognized best practice?
- What social practices and feedback discourses associated with the review process could be improved to enhance the experience for HATs

Significance of the study

It is important that HATs are provided with feedback specific to their roles and which keeps them motivated to continue to improve their performance through ongoing professional development and fulfil their career aspirations. HATs play a crucial role in schools both at the classroom and leadership level (ATISL, 2012). They are expected to model effective teaching strategies to less experienced teachers as well as coordinate and implement educational initiatives that are aimed at improving student learning achievements (AITSL, 2012). Thus,
their role is considered complex and demanding, requiring high levels of teaching and communication skills. Generally speaking, HATs have a number of years of teaching experience to draw upon which tends to position them at the interface between the school administration team and the general teaching staff. Given that feedback is a key component in fostering the motivation to learn and improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), this research is unique in that it specifically examines aspects of current teacher appraisal processes that enable HATs to continue to teach well, advance in their career goals, and increase their job satisfaction levels.

The research outlined in this thesis is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it will add to extant research on the teacher appraisal process for secondary school teachers which predominantly addresses improving practice in the classroom. Second, this research aims to explore the process of providing feedback to teachers about their performance. This study builds on recent research that shows a growing demand for ongoing teacher professional development and how feedback can enable improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). A review of the literature indicates that feedback of this nature may provide the teacher with skills and knowledge to assist with professional development, career advancement and can impact on their overall performance and satisfaction levels.

Secondly, it will add to the limited body of research investigating factors that influence the teacher appraisal processes. There is a need to identify the extent that the APST have had some impact on the teacher performance appraisal process. One of the aims of this research is to explore aspects of the appraisal process that HATs believe influence the outcome and its effectiveness. Current research into teacher feedback is more focused upon pedagogical skill development (Greenlee, Edwards & Anthony, 2015) rather than examining teachers’ perceptions of feedback provision regarding their career advancement, and how feedback is
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provided to them and its utility in enabling them to improve their classroom performance. This highlights that there is a research gap into how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback.

Thirdly, this study is significant because it aims to improve the teacher appraisal process in my school by ensuring the findings discussed with those administration team responsible for implementing the annual review.

**Structure of thesis**

This chapter sets the scene for the research by situating it in its school context and in the broader Australian policy context of certification and regulation of teachers. In this chapter I have also described my position as a HAT in a Secondary School before outlining the aims of the study, the research questions the significance of the study.

The following chapter situates the research in its scholarly context with a review of extant literature and explains how this process enabled me to refine my research questions. Chapter Three provides details about the research methodology including the lens or framework through which the research will be conducted and the methods by which the data will be collected and analysed. The research findings are presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five which is the final chapter of the thesis that concludes by reviewing the limitations of this study and presenting ideas for further research opportunities.
Introduction

Since the 1980s, effective feedback practices for teachers have become a key driver to enhance teacher effectiveness (Hobsen et al., 2008; Elliott, 2015). During this time, considerable in-school effort, time, and resources have been allocated to teacher development (Jensen, 2014). This study examines how HATs experience performance feedback by reviewing the existing evidence base, revealing what is known, not known about effective feedback practices for HATs.

The chapter begins by briefly outlining advancements made in effective feedback practices to teachers and outline the key factors that have prompted its rise, before discussing the major themes revealed by a review of relevant research literature. In this section of this review I narrow down the findings to recent evidence of effective feedback practices for teacher development and conditions necessary to make this happen.

For the purpose of this review to describe the concept of ‘feedback,’ I use Duijnhouwer’s definition (2010) of ‘information provided by an external agent regarding some aspect(s) of the learner’s task performance, intended to modify the learners’ motivation and/or behaviour for the purpose of improving performance’ (p.16). This definition was selected because providing feedback to the learner about their performance develops their understanding of what quality teaching looks like which is a central component to this study.

A review of the evidence base on feedback practices for teachers

There are few comprehensive studies prior to 1990 detailing the nature and consequences of providing feedback as a mechanism for supporting teachers (Little, 1990). To a degree the current evidence base is still limited, partly because of the difficulties
associated with unravelling the effects of feedback from other kinds of assistance available to teachers. More recently there have been a number of limitations within these studies, as discussed in this literature review. In this review I attempt to understand and examine what constitutes effective feedback practices associated with the performance appraisal process. I highlight the main implications in practice for providing HATs with feedback in the performance appraisal process and identify opportunities for further input into this area of research.

Previous literature reviews examining the effect of feedback on individual performance have included studies across a range of fields, both in educational contexts (Primary Schools and Secondary Schools) and in non-educational contexts (feedback in the corporate sector). For the purpose of this study, this review examines the literature confined to Australian education context. The intention of this research is to uncover common themes for effective feedback practice on teachers’ professional practice.

Feedback is frequently referred to as an effective tool to encourage student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). However, even in the best-research areas of providing feedback to teachers, there are limitations within the evidence base. According to Scheeler, Rul, and McAfee (2004) comparatively few studies have focused on effective feedback for teachers. Some studies that have focused on effective feedback for teachers include; Elliot (2015); Carless (2006); Jensen (2010). Despite the limitations of individual studies, however, and given the existence of a number of common and reoccurring findings amongst studies employing a variety of methodologies and in a range of contexts, I feel that I can state with a degree of confidence that research has enhanced our understanding of the feedback process in a number of specific ways, which I present here in the following review of the literature.
Some studies have suggested that providing feedback to teachers is an effective form of improving teaching performance (Carter & Francis, 2001; Franke & Dahigren, 1996; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). A comprehensive report developed by the Australian Teacher and Development Framework (2012) indicates that more effective feedback leads not only to effective teaching but also, more importantly, to successful learning. The report suggests conservative estimates that students with a highly effective teacher learn twice as much as students with a less effective teacher (Australian Teacher and Development Framework, 2012). In practical terms Jensen (2010) suggests that this equates to improvements in student learning by as much as 20 to 30%.

McIntyre and Hagger (1996) document a wide range of benefits to teachers receiving feedback, including reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, professional growth, and improved self-reflection and problem solving capabilities. In a comparative study conducted by Bullough & Draper (2004) results suggest that feedback plays an important role in the socialisation of teachers, helping them to adapt to the norms, standards and expectations associated with teaching in general and with specific schools. The structure of this professional knowledge is significant for the nature of professional identity and the capacity to generate trust and confidence in professional judgement, and therefore for the future sustainability of the profession (Horden, 2015). Based on these findings it may be implied that the effective provision of feedback of feedback could impact the overall performance and job satisfaction levels of HATs.

Some of the literature reviewed suggested that the various benefits of providing teachers with feedback about their performance are not always realised in practice. The following three main problems are documented.
First, current literature (Jensen, 2010; AITSL, 2012) reports that teachers are being disadvantaged when they receive meaningless feedback about their work performance. Jensen (2010) reports that even though the frequency of providing Australian teachers with feedback about their work performance is high compared to other countries, with 76% of Australian teachers receiving feedback on their work at least annually, teachers report it is merely little more than an administrative exercise (Jensen, 2010). On average, less than one-fifth of Australian teachers report that feedback about their work led to a moderate or large change in their teaching (Jensen, 2010).

Secondly, research has found that sometimes teachers experience feelings of insecurity, nervousness, threat and even inadequacy at the prospect of their lessons being observed or by their supervisor (Head of Department) presenting new ideas (Bullough, 2004; Hobson, et al, 2008). Results from a comparative study conducted by Higgins et al, (2001) suggests that teachers are often dissatisfied with the feedback they receive in terms of lacking specific advice to improve negatively impacting on teachers’ self-perception and confidence as cited in Carless (2006).

Thirdly, some studies have suggested that when teachers receive feedback about their teaching performance that does not take a strength based approach it has the potential to isolate teachers in their role (Hobsen, et al, 2008). This may lead to a teacher feeling isolated in their role or in extreme cases intimidated from their peers causing emotional harm (Bullough, 2004).

Whilst on the surface this information suggests that teachers (or in this context HATs) may in reality actually benefit from avoiding feedback about their practice, this is not the case. HATs are encouraged to seek feedback about their performance. To mitigate against problems or concerns associated with feedback HATs are encouraged to develop an
understanding of the key components required for feedback to be effective. This will allow them to distinguish effective (and beneficial) from ineffective (potentially harmful) feedback.

**Components of effective feedback**

According to McInerney and McInerney (1998) there are three components required for feedback to be considered effective. First, feedback is most effective when it focuses the learners’ attention towards meta-task processes often referred to as ‘mastering a task’. Such emphasis of personal progress enhances self-efficacy, encourages effort attributions, and reduces attention to social comparisons (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Second, feedback should take place when it is still clearly relevant (Khachatryan, 2015). In practical terms this means that it should be given during the task, or just after the task is completed. Finally, feedback should be specific and related to need (Carless, 2006).

Each of these three key components of effective feedback are contextualised within the following conceptual framework adapted from Kluger and DeNisi (1996).

**Error! Reference source not found.** Figure 1 Feedback Intervention Theory hierarchy of feedback processing

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) performed one of the most cited meta-analyses on the effects of feedback interventions, which resulted in the development of Feedback.
Interventions Theory (FIT). A Feedback Intervention (FI) is any “action taken by external agents to provide information regarding some aspect of one’s task performance” (Kluger & Denisi, 1996, p.255). According to FIT, there are three variables at work during the feedback-giving process: (a) what the feedback says (cues) to the recipient, (b) context in which feedback is being provided, and (c) the difficulty of the task being performed (Khachatryan, 2015). The way in which these three variables interplay influences the effectiveness of feedback (Kluger & Denisi, 1996, p.255).

Feedback Interventions cue recipients to focus their attention in three ways, with varying levels of impact on performance (Khachatryan, 2015). FI cues direction attention to (a) the self, (b) the focal task, or (c) the details of the task, hierarchically affecting future performance (Kluger & Denisi, 1996). Feedback focused on the task details encourages learning and achievement among recipients, while feedback that directs attention to the top part of the hierarchy, focused on the self, impedes learning (Khachatryan, 2015). Each of the three FI cues are discussed below in the following conceptual framework.

The FIT framework offers a lens through which to analyse feedback that HATs receive about their teaching and its potential impact on their professional learning. Kluger & Denisi (1996) interpretation of the FIT framework for feedback suggests that HATs can expect to see changes in performance if feedback directs their attention to learning or motivational processes, away from met-task processes (Khachatryan, 2015). The first type of FI cue is self-feedback. Khachatryan (2015) explains that self-feedback directs the recipient’s attention to the self or ego because these comments are about the teacher’s skills and dispositions, such as “You are an amazing teacher.” Self-feedback activates meta-task processes that will most likely reduce effects on performance, regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996). If the feedback is praise about
the self, intrinsic motivation of the recipient may be reduced (Kohn, 1999). If the feedback is negative, the learner (in this instance the HAT) must expend cognitive resources to protect himself or herself from the native personal feedback before, or instead of, attending to the task performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Forcing, the HAT to divert critical thinking away from the task, likely leading to disengagement (Khachatryan, 2015). An example of such negative self-related feedback reported by a HAT is “you’re poor with your in-class behaviour management.” In short, self-feedback, whether positive or negative, most likely reduces effects on performance (Kohn, 1999). In order to increase effects on performance, feedback must direct the HATs attention to motivational or learning processes. In other words, feedback must increase motivation or learning within the recipient in order for it to increase effects on future performance.

As a mechanism to lift the learner (HATs) motivation, feedback must be about the “focal task” or task at hand (Kohn, 1999). The feedback should be about the product or end result of performance (Khachatryan, 2015); referred to in literature as product-feedback (Kohn, 1999). Product-feedback takes the form of an evaluative comment about how well someone performed or accomplished a task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). An example of product-feedback received by a HAT is “Today’s science lesson was great, it showcased an effective use of a 70-minute lesson segment” or “the learning intention and success criteria were clear and well explained to the class.” Whether positive or negative, product-feedback directs attention to how well the recipient accomplished or did not accomplish the focal task (Khachatryan, 2015). This level of feedback is beneficial to the learner (HAT) as it has the potential to increase motivation and subsequent effects on performance (Khachatryan, 2015).

The most effective feedback, according to FIT, directs a recipient’s attention to learning processes (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996). This type of feedback focus on the task at
hand, outlining the key steps involved in completing the task (Khachatryan, 2015). Khachatryan (2015) refers to this as process-feedback. In the context of this study process-feedback directs the teachers’ attention to learning processes because it outlines the particular details involved in task performance, making clear how particular steps were performed. A recent example that I have received about my performance of this includes:

“Your behavioural management of our students has been adapted to better fit the culture and background of our students. The respectful welcome that you receive when you enter a room is a clear examples of how you have adapted your practice around management to match out students.”

Providing the learner with constructive criticism or suggestion within process feedback has positive effects on performance (Kohn, 1999), partially because it outlines the steps taken and which steps require attention and correction (Khachatryan, 2015). Process-feedback’s ability to point to errors in HATs’ work supports their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Other studies on feedback also found corrective or correct solution feedback to enhance learning and performance, as long as it does not threaten self-esteem (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Khachatryan, 2015, Kohn, 1999). According to Kohn (1999) corrective feedback specifies “the type and extent of error and specific ways to correct the error.” For example, process-feedback paired with a corrective suggestion could be: “You utilised the traffic light system to check for student understanding, which according to Education Queensland (2017) is always a good strategy as it demonstrates that the teacher is teaching for understanding.

Essentially, teacher’s responses to feedback will partially depend on the type of feedback they receive (Khachatryan, 2015). If a teacher receives self-feedback, their teaching is unlikely to change (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). If the teacher receives product-feedback,
there is likely to increase, and teaching is likely to change (Khachatryan, 2015). If the teacher receives process-feedback, they can learn about their teaching moves and will likely be able to adjust practice to better suit the needs of their students (Khachatryan, 2015). The FIT model helps to provide a framework for thinking how best to provide feedback to HATs about their teaching performance. HATs’ reflections on feedback comments (later explored in greater detail in the discussion) outline what is currently happening in practice.

**The effective provision of feedback**

Ideally, the effective provision of feedback should be drawn at least three sources: students, peers and administrators (Jensen, 2010). Information gleaned from these sources can focus on content relevance and delivery modes or teaching strategies, as well as on the teacher-student interaction during instruction (AITSL, 2012). The following section outlines some of the more prominent ideas to arise from the literature about how to effectively provide teachers with feedback about their professional performance.

A number of contrasting findings have begun to emerge from the research regarding the timing of feedback which impact on the success of the feedback provided to the participant. It is thought that optimal timing of feedback depends on the nature of the learning task (Price, Handley, Millar, and O’Donovan, 2010). When the learner acquiring new, complex knowledge or skills, real-time checks for understanding and tips can prevent them from developing misconceptions or incorrect practices (Perkins, 1992). But when they are extending and applying knowledge (for example, solving a complex theorem), delaying feedback somewhat can enable them to self-correct, develop perseverance, and take responsibility for their own learning objectives (Harks, Rakoczy, Hattie, Besser & Klieme, 2016). In this context it is recommended that feedback should be given to the HAT about
Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback

their performance as soon as is practicable after the event. Further study in this area is required to assess if this is currently occurring in Australian schooling context.

In addition to timely feedback, it is recommended that learners receive regular ongoing feedback about their work (Perkins, 1999). Ongoing feedback helps the learner consistently achieve a high quality of performance (Perkins, 1999). Current literature reviewed suggests that generally formal feedback is provided once per year to teachers about their teaching performance (Jensen, 2010). To demonstrate best practise Perkins (1999) recommends increasing the frequency of feedback provided to the teacher about their work. This integration of regular feedback (on-going feedback) provides the learner with more opportunities to receive feedback about their work and apply this new knowledge to future lessons helping to improve overall teaching performance (Perkins, 1999). Thomas and Arnold (2011) suggest that ongoing feedback can be provided in one of two ways. First, feedback can regularly be provided to address areas in which the learner is already performing at a high level. The purpose of this feedback is to increase the learner’s awareness of the skills and increase the frequency with which they are used (Kohn, 1999). Second, if there is a gap between the learner’s performance and a standard, the purpose of this type of feedback is to facilitate identification of the discrepancy and collaborate with the learner to make a plan to improve performance (Bandura, 1993). Over time, the process of providing ongoing feedback about performance is the help the learner self-reflect, learn to identify their own learning needs, and design improvement plans resulting in consistent improved high quality performance.

According to Leibold and Schwarz (2015), the tone of the feedback is as important as the content of the feedback. Kluger and Denisi (1996) recommended praising the learner by pointing out skills well done. For example, consider the difference in feedback phrased in a
positive, encouraging way, and feedback that is not positive and encouraging (see Table 4).

Praise and encouragement can serve to both reward and motivate the learner to continue their hard work and strive to continue to develop and improve (Kohn, 1999).

Table 2 Positive and Negative Examples of Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Feedback Tone</th>
<th>I can see that you worked hard this lesson to reinforce classroom expectations. Perhaps in future lessons you might consider using essential classroom management strategies as a mechanism to improve student compliance within the classroom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Feedback Tone</td>
<td>Your classroom management was poor and needs improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback provided to the HAT must allow them to easily identify and understand what they specifically should do more or less of next time to improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). A message that includes enough detail so the learner is able to understand the meaning is preferred. Vague comments such as “good work,” and “you made a mistake today” (see Table 5) do not provide the learner with enough information to be able to take action to improve performance. Wiliam (2011) suggests that effective feedback is clear, and encompasses specific strategies or tools provided to the learner, helping the learner to improve. When feedback is vague it can adversely affect the learner, resulting in uncertainty, decreased motivation (Wiliam, 2011). In a comparative study conducted by Kohn (1999) reiterated that all feedback be specific, facilitating self-questioning and monitoring.
Reflective questions such as ‘what am I asked to do here’” or ‘do I understand this?’ or ‘How else could I have gone about this task?’ encourage the HAT to take more personal control of, and responsibility for, their learning. These reflective questions promote critical thinking (Perkins, 1999) in the HAT encouraging a deeper level of understanding.

Table 3 Specific Feedback versus Vague Feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Good job using the OneNote program in your classroom today to capture your classes’ thoughts and ideas about the topic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vague</td>
<td>Good job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balanced feedback is the use of positive, negative, and positive feedback (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015). Also known as the feedback sandwich method of feedback, which is a three-part technique (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015). First, level of feedback starts with a positive comment, then a comment about an area for improvement, and then a positive comment. Feedback sandwiches serve to soften the impact of constructive criticism (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015). Comments should be specific and appropriate to the level of the high accomplished teacher (see Table 5 for example). That is, the comments would vary for a beginning teacher verses a HAT.
Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback

Table 4 Balanced Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>A positive comment that focuses on an item done correctly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Two</strong></td>
<td>Focuses a comment about something that needs improvement. Include corrective feedback, such as a resource with information or asking a probing question to facilitate learner thinking on the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Three</strong></td>
<td>Includes a positive comment about something done correctly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of recommendations that support the effective provision of feedback. These related to (i) contextual support for the provision of feedback; (ii) feedback pairing.

Critically assessing available literature revealed a number of common findings regarding the factors which impact on the provision of feedback to teachers. A number of recent studies suggest that the provision of successful feedback is dependent on the ‘willingness’ to receive feedback (Turner, & Pressley, 2008). According to Hobson, et al., (2008) this is a matter over which teachers and administrators have only limited influence. This early literature provides a platform for further research into a teacher’s willingness and openness to getting the most out of available feedback pertaining to their work performance.
Research indicates that the successful delivery of feedback is influenced by a range of contextual factors. Such studies document, instructional coaching programs, additional release or non-contact time assigned to the gathering and interpretation of feedback, financial reward / other sort of reward systems on offer to those teachers involved in the delivery / reception of the feedback process (Hobsen., et al, 2008). Several studies investigating contextual support associated with the provision of feedback suggest that instructional coaching programmes are key influences in the delivering effective feedback to teachers (Carless 2006, Lingren, 2005). Instructional coaching appears to be effective method of providing teachers with feedback about their performance. It involves a ‘coach’ (nominated teacher within the school) working one-to-one with a teacher, to model and observe classroom practice and to support reflection and professional conversations about practice focused on supporting the professional growth of individual teachers based on an identified need (AITSL, 2012) e.g. classroom management, content enhancement, pedagogy, assessment and more. Research suggests that the provision of effective feedback to teachers via a coaching program requires benefits from a schools with a positive school culture (characterized by collegial and learning cultures); where teachers feel confident engaging in professional dialogue to improve performance both in and outside the classrooms (Education Queensland, 2017).

Literature suggests that the effective provision of feedback to teachers requires careful selection and partnership between the teacher and the person providing the feedback (the coach / manager / supervisor). It is recommended that the provider of the feedback be an effective teacher, who can model best practice (Roehrig et al., 2008), and who possess sufficient knowledge and experience of teaching the teachers’ subject specialism (Carless, 2006). Other desirable traits include being supportive, approachable, non-judgemental and
trustworthy, have a positive demeanour, and possess good listening skills and the ability to empathise, as well as the willingness and ability to take an interest in the teachers’ work and lives (Hobson., et al, 2008). Based on this information, literature (Hobson., et al, 2008; Khachatryan, 2015) recommends that teachers have input into who provides them with feedback. Recommendations to the teacher on who should provide them with feedback should be based around who can best provide feedback around their individual strengths and limitations (AITSL, 2012), and where the teacher and provider of feedback both personally and professionally get along (Hobson., et al, 2008). Who this is within the school setting is largely unknown. There is sizable literature on the impact of coaches and their feedback on instruction, interactions with coaches in some schools have yielded positive changes in teacher performance in terms of student outcomes (Khachatryan, 2015). However, there is little research on how coaches do their work, and the work of coaching varies widely (AITSL, 2012). What we do know that if teachers do not find the feedback they receive in performance to be meaningful and useful, their practice will not change.

The following section investigates feedback in the review process, exploring broader aims and objectives and current recommendations for best practice.

**Feedback in Performance Reviews**

Feedback in performance reviews provides the supervising teacher with a process to appraise the teacher’s current work and to discuss career aspirations and plan support and professional development to continue to build their capabilities (AITSL, 2012). Its broader aims are to promote and maintain a positive workplace culture based on quality conversations about work-related practice and performance (Education Queensland, 2017). Despite the importance of teacher appraisal and feedback, it would appear that the majority of Australian teachers are not receiving it (Jensen, 2010). According to Talis (2009) the Organisation for
Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] survey published in 2008 of lower secondary teachers showed that in Australia, current systems of teacher evaluation are largely seen as a bureaucratic exercise and are not linked to teacher development or improved classroom teaching (Jensen & Reichl, 2012). Resulting from this lack of meaningful feedback of teachers’ work means that teachers receive no recognition for quality teaching (Jensen, 2010). Not only is this demotivating for teachers but it also implies that more meaningful feedback needs to be delivered to teachers supporting their development and wider school improvement.

A review of the available literature suggests that high-performing systems focus on student learning and use multiple implementation tools to develop and effectively operate performance and development systems in schools (Jensen, 2010; AITSL, 2012). A common trait belonging to an effective Teacher Appraisal Process is a belief that for a teacher to improve, we need to watch what they do and tell them how to improve (Kohn, 1999) and that improving teachers’ understanding of their teaching methods and teaching practices leads to better student outcomes (Jensen, 2010). Providing feedback to teachers that aims to enhance individual strengths, weaknesses and areas requiring further development appears to be an effective method to add more meaning to the feedback being provided.

The question still remains as to who should provide feedback to teachers. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson (2008) argue that only a person who understands and approves of the teacher’s philosophy and style should provide feedback to a teacher as they will be better able to assist their development in a more harmonious relationship. Others contend that teachers will learn more from feedback if they have different beliefs and styles from the person evaluating their performance (Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development, 1999). Robust research needs to be conducted to provide firm evidence regarding appropriate allocation of staff to the feedback process.

**Feedback in School Context**

Investigations into current teacher appraisal processes found little conclusive evidence to show that schools are adequately meeting the requirements and conditions necessary to provide feedback to their teaching staff (Carless, 2006; Jensen, 2010). Findings from these studies suggest that teachers are often dissatisfied with the feedback they receive, in terms of lacking specific advice to improve, being difficult to interpret (Chanock, 2000) or having a potentially negative impact on their self-perception and confidence (James, 2000). To overcome these findings and to maximise the effectiveness of the teacher appraisal process, school leaders are encouraged to ensure that the supervisors providing feedback to the teacher are well trained in appraisal procedures and understand that individual teacher goals need to be aligned with the school’s goals (Jensen, 2010). To maximise the uptake of this information the outcomes of the performance appraisal process, including development goals, must also be clearly communicated in a timely and meaningful manner.

To make feedback more meaningful and relevant research suggests that effective teacher appraisal processes within the school context draw a direct line to effective teaching and learning and incorporating continuous feedback for teachers into the appraisal of their work (Jensen & Reichl, 2012; AISTL, 2012). To provide more comprehensive feedback to the teacher during the appraisal process, current research suggests that schools should adopt the 360-degree feedback method to providing feedback to teachers about their performance (Jensen, 2010; Jensen & Reichl, 2012). This model is recommended as it provides teachers with information about their teaching performance from a range of sources: the school principal; senior teachers; peers; students and parents (Jensen & Reichl, 2012). This 360-
degree method adds more meaning to the feedback provided by better capturing the dynamics of the school environment (Jensen, 2010). This enhances the teacher's ability to contextualise the information being fed back to them about their performance helping them in a positive way to moving forward in their teaching.

**The current teacher appraisal landscape for Queensland Teachers**

The Developing Performance Framework (DPF) supports Queensland teachers to engage in quality performance and development practices (Education Queensland, 2017). The DPF provides a framework whereby teachers can clarify their work roles and priorities, discuss future career aspirations and set performance and career goals to facilitate professional growth (Education Queensland, 2017). It was developed in partnership with the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), Together (formerly Queensland Public Sector Union), United Voice (formerly Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union), principals' associations and the Queensland Parents and Citizens Association (Education Queensland, 2017).

An initial pilot was conducted (2006 to June 2007) to ensure the suitability and flexibility of the DPF, with the first stage of the state wide implementation occurred from October 2007 to December 2008 (Education Queensland, 2017). The APR processes builds on the Developing Performance Framework to provide revised performance development processes. The Annual Performance Review (APR) process for teachers was introduced in all Queensland state schools from Term 1, 2015 (Education Queensland, 2017). The current APR process in Queensland for teachers aims to enhance the quality of teaching and strengthens the focus on teacher performance and development in improving student outcomes (Education Queensland, 2017). Aligning with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the process provides clarity around what constitutes quality teaching
Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback

(AITSL, 2012). The APR process for teachers involves the development, implementation and review of an Annual Performance Development Plan (APDP) by every teacher over a 12-month cycle, with ongoing feedback, input and support from principals and other school leaders (Education Queensland, 2017).

In Queensland State Schools the Annual Performance Review process comprises of three distinct phases (Education Queensland, 2017):

1. Reflection and goal setting
2. Professional practice and learning
3. Feedback and review

Phase 1: Reflection and goal setting

The APR process for Queensland teachers aligns with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and serves as the benchmark when teachers reflect on their individual areas of strength and areas for development (Education Queensland, 2017). It is not mandatory, however a useful resource for teachers wishing to identify goals that are based on the school’s shared view of effective teaching, and reflective of systematic, professional and local priorities and context it is recommended that they engage in Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) online self-assessment tool for teachers (AITSL, 2012).

Education Queensland (2017) recommend that up to three performance development goals be established between the teacher and their supervisor. It is recommended that one goal (based on the identified strengths and areas for improvement) is developed for each of the domains of teaching that frame APST (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement) (AITSL, 2012). At this point the teacher and their supervisor need
to map out an action plan that supports the achievements of the goals and indicators of success (AITSL, 2012). Understanding how teachers reflect and goal set is vitally important to this study.

Phase 2: Professional practice and learning

During this phase, the teachers’ APDP is actioned on a day by day work basis and where necessary is supported by targeted professional learning opportunities specific to identified goals (Education Queensland, 2017). Having agreed on the plan and goals, it is important to have regular conversations about progress (AITSL, 2012). These may be formal and informal discussions (Education, Queensland, 2017). Understanding to what extent this occurs in the school setting is critical to this study.

Phase 3: Feedback and review

The APR process for teachers requires annual assessment of performance against the goals established in the APDP for teachers (Education Queensland, 2017). This provides the teacher and their supervisor the opportunity to discuss whether each goal was achieved or not achieved (Education Queensland, 2017). At this stage of the review the feedback will indicate whether the teacher has met the expectations and agreed goals during Phase 1 of the process (Education Queensland, 2017). Expectations may not be met for a range of reasons, including contextual changes within a study group (Education Queensland, 2017). The principal or delegate may provide feedback to the teacher where the evidence indicates the teachers’ performance has exceeded or not yet met expectations against the agreed goals (Education Queensland, 2017). Understanding what HATs do with this information is important to this study.
Implications

Teachers, along with parents and the broader community, share a significant responsibility in preparing young people to lead happy and productive lives (AITSL, 2012). The research suggests that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance (Jensen, 2010, Jensen & Reichl, 2012). The teacher appraisal process therefore is vitally important both as a way of assessing teachers’ performance in order to identify any particular strengths and areas for development with the overall outcome of improving student outcomes.

Effective feedback provided within the teacher appraisal process also informs the development of professional learning goals; provide a framework by which teachers can judge the success of their learning; and assist self-reflection and self-assessment (Robert, Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000). A system of more meaningful teacher evaluation has the capacity to identify each teacher’s developmental needs, allocate the required developmental resources, and monitor its impact over time (Jensen, 2010). Current literature suggests that educational systems operating in Australia are not consistently achieving these important objectives.

This literature review has identified some areas where the evidence base is lacking. These relate to:

1. To what extent does the HATs willingness to engage in the feedback process effect future performance; and,
2. Feedbacks role in informing professional growth and building capabilities within the HAT.

Additionally, I draw attention to two other areas in which there is an absence of robust research evidence. First, question still remains, as to who should provide feedback to teachers
(or in the context of this study HATs). Hobson., et al (2008) argues that only a person who understands and approves the teacher’s philosophy and style should provide feedback to a teacher as they will be better able to assist their development in a more harmonious relationship. Others contend that teachers will learn more from each other if they have different beliefs and styles (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999). Robust research needs to be conducted to provide firm evidence regarding successful allocation of staff to the feedback process.

Second, in relation to how feedback works within the HATs learning process, there is currently a lack of agreement in the literature on whether the provision of feedback to teachers can be both positive and negative. Some writers argue that feedback that is negative and positive can be beneficial to the teacher, whilst others suggest that teachers will learn more from positive feedback experiences (Hobson., et al, 2008). The power and purpose of feedback is repeatedly stated in articles about teaching and learning (Hattie, 2007), but to my surprise there have been only a small number of studies that have investigated feedback effects within the teachers learning process.

The majority of research into the effective provision of feedback to teachers focuses on the formality of the feedback process (Boud, 1995). In the light of some research evidence highlighting benefits arising from more informal arrangements (Tracey., et al, 2008), research might explore the merits and demerits of providing feedback formally and informally (Hobson et al., 2008).

**Limitations**

Before I conclude I discuss some of the limitations associated with the evidence base in general and of this particular review of literature. There is a large amount of research dedicated to feedback, however, there were challenges within this evidence base that I was
unable to overcome. As such I am reluctant to make claim to finite and definitive conclusions concerning effective feedback practices for HATs. The primary issue that I discovered here is that most studies focus on the teacher providing feedback to their students and not that of teachers providing feedback to teachers or in the context of this study HATs receiving feedback about their teaching performance.

I believe that the lived experiences of HATs are essential to understanding effective feedback processes, and that HATs accounts may be the most important primary source of evidence relating to feedback processes in their field. I also acknowledge that participants’ accounts housed within the literature may for a number of reasons lack validity or credibility. For example, the concept of social desirability (Hobsen., et al, 2008) suggests that research participants have a tendency, in their interactions with researchers, to seek to present themselves in a favourable light (Dingwall, 1997). Further to this, given that the privacy of a one-to-one relationship is an essential feature of feedback (Carless, 2006), it would appear that a number of researchers in this area (Dingwall, 1997; Roehrig., et al, 2008) have avoided bring together and attempted to balance the views of both sets of participants in particular teacher-supervisor relationships.

For this reason a number of key researchers in this area (Jensen, 2014; Hattie and Timperley, 2007) have recommended that alternative or additional methods of data generation to strengthen the current evidence base. For example, Roehrig et al. (2008) suggests that greater use might be made in this context of observational research while Smith and Ingersoll (2004) call for large scale randomized or quasi-randomised experimental studies. This according to Hobsen., et al (2008) might give us greater confidence in existing research findings and might provide answers to some presently unanswered questions, for example
specifically which aspects of the current feedback / evaluation process has the most effect on improving teacher performance.

Regarding my own review of the evidence base, I accept that, because of (i) limited resources, namely time (ii) my own prior knowledge and pre-conceived ideas, thoughts and feelings on the matter, the review of research that I have presented is not exhaustive and account of the research on feedback provision to HATs. Having said this, I believe that I have conducted a critical review of available literature and believe that this review provides a valuable contribution to the literature, and potentially to the knowledge and work of HATs.

Conclusions

The review of available research evidence presented in this paper provides an existing account of feedback and its influence on teachers. It is clear from this review that feedback has a positive impact, although not all types of feedback are equally effective (Harks et al., 2014). It has also demonstrated that the effective delivery of feedback has the capacity to improve a teachers’ teaching skills and may also improve the way they relate to students and colleagues and their job satisfaction, all of which stands to positively impact individual student outcomes.

The research evidence presented here also shows that teacher appraisal and feedback significantly improves teachers’ understanding of their teaching methods, teaching practices and student teaching. Feedback is central to the ongoing development of the teacher, however to date there is limited evidence of high quality research addressing this topic. Understanding how teachers perceive processes around performance feedback may benefit teacher professional development and could also be used as a mechanism for constructive advice on their current performance and pathways to improvement.
A review of the available literature into the strategies required for the effective delivery of feedback found conclusive evidence to suggest there are a number of strategies and tactics associated with the provision of feedback to teachers. Such studies document, teacher appraisal and feedback, classroom observation and teacher mentoring and coaching. Despite these findings, it is noticeably less clear which strategies promote which of the potential outcomes or benefits of the provision of feedback to teachers. Key researchers in this area (Jensen 2010, Kohn 1999) have investigated the strategies for delivering effective feedback and their findings suggest that the feedback process needs to be individualised to account for personal differences and preferences in receiving feedback about their work.

Investigations into feedback evaluations found little conclusive evidence to show that schools are adequately meeting the requirements and conditions necessary to provide feedback to their teaching staff. Findings from these studies suggest that teachers are often dissatisfied with the feedback they receive, in terms of lacking specific advice to improve, being difficult to interpret, or having a potentially negative impact on their self-perception and confidence. Overall, this research suggests that effective feedback practices should aim to provide feedback that is understandable, timely and able to be acted upon.

The review of the literature also revealed that effective evaluation and recognition is important for improving job satisfaction levels of teachers. Therefore, if teacher appraisal processes do not provide feedback that recognise effectiveness, it appears likely that teachers’ job satisfaction levels may decline. The literature suggests that a 360-degree feedback model (or equivalent) maybe one effective method that should be considered as a means of providing meaningful and relevant feedback to teachers about their work.

Finally, while it may not always be possible to promote all key features of effective feedback in practice, the weight of research evidence in their favour does lead me to advocate
for further efforts to explore and describe key features of feedback in more detail. It would appear that feedback has the ability to enable the HAT to self-reflect, learn to identify their own learning needs, and design improvement plans resulting in consistent improved high quality performance.

**Central Phenomenon of the Study**

The primary aim of the following phenomenological study is to investigate how HATs experience feedback in performance reviews. The study specifically seeks to understand the lived experiences of HATs from the perspectives of the HATs themselves.

For the purpose of this paper, success is defined as the HAT being able to act on feedback provided to them within in the appraisal process. Feedback experiences within the school context are defined as social life events, in which participants engage or experience while they are working within the secondary school setting. Qualitative methodologies have been recommended for studying research questions relating to how teachers experience feedback (Moustakas, 1994). The differences in highly accomplished experiences may be best understood by using qualitative method specifically designed to look at the participants’ understanding of their own experiences.

The current descriptive seeks to gain an understanding of how a sample of HATs experienced feedback within performance reviews through describing their experiences.

The chapter that follows discusses how the research is designed to respond to the following questions:

- How do HATs experience the assessment provided during their annual performance review?
- How does the feedback provided to HATs reflect best practice?
What social practices associated with the review process could be improved to enhance the experience for HATs?
Chapter III Research Methodology

In this chapter I explain how the research responds to the questions posed in the previous chapter. I begin by outlining the methodological approach adopted to examine the research problem and argue for its suitability. The first section explains and justifies the research design and methods employed to undertake the research. This is followed by a discussion of the specific instruments used to collect the data and how the analysis of the data has been undertaken.

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gathering and analysing data. This approach provided me with real time, real context, and practical in detail information about HATs’ experiences of feedback within the performance appraisal process. This approach allows the researcher to understand individuals within a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction (Creswell, 2013). It is largely an investigative process where the research gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A descriptive qualitative approach (Creswell, 2013) was chosen to explore the research phenomenon to gain an understanding of how HATs’ experience feedback within the performance appraisal process.

This research thesis adopts a phenomenological approach to make sense of how HATs experience performance feedback. The use of phenomenology keeps the studies focused on how HATs make sense of feedback provided within the performance appraisal process and it captures their “experiences from the first person perspective” (Castree, Kitchin, & Rodgers, 2013, p.13). Based on my readings of Moustakas (1994) in this instance the most appropriate method for gathering evidence from HATs was semi-structured interviews.
Research Design

This section describes the research design that frames the conduct of the research. The research design is important because it informs the methods employed and the type of data to be collected.

The use of semi-structured interviews involves asking a similar set of questions in the same way of each participant, which allows for a sequential process that can make analysis easier (Travers, 2010). The interviews were conducted face to face because this approach typically ensures higher participation rates compared with other types of interview via telephone or written responses (Walters, 2000). The benefit of using interviews is the richness of communication that they can provide (Gillham, 2000). The face-to-face interaction allows a more personal exchange where the interviewees are able to express to another individual their thoughts and feeling and according to Creswell (2013) face to face interview can put them at ease. The use of open-ended questions, typical of in-person interviews, also allows for more flexibility in how responses are sought (Walters, 2000). The interviewer can ask additional questions that prompt an interviewee for more information, or probe a response to clarify what was meant (Gillham, 2000; Travers, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are consistent with a phenomenological methodology (Walters, 2000); they allow interviewees to reflect on both their recent and past experiences, in the context of this study how HATs have experienced feedback within the appraisal process. Questions were ultimately designed to ultimate answer two overarching questions (Moustakas, 1994):

- What have HATs experienced in terms of the phenomenon? And
- What situations have typically influenced or affected HATs experience of the phenomenon?
**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology provides the framework for this research project. Phenomenology has practical implications for the student, the teacher, the reader and the scientist by influencing the way they make meaning and their understanding of the world they live in (Walters, 2000). Phenomenology, originating from the work of Edmund Husserl, seeks via systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of experience (Menon., et al, 2015). Phenomenology also pertains to how and why people undertake certain experiences (Castree, Kitchin, & Rodgers, 2013). The two major variants of phenomenology are hermeneutic and existential methodologies (Schwandt, 2001). A hermeneutic approach is an interpretation of lived experience, whereas an existential approach is a description of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). The hermeneutic approach was used in this study, as it focused on the perspectives and experiences of the participants and made an attempt to interpret these experiences to make sense of how HATs experience performance feedback.

From the phenomenological perspective the relationship between theory and practice is also pertinent to this study. Van Manen (1990) notes that if the primal notion of practice refers to our ongoing and immediate involvement in our everyday world, then the relationship between practice and thought is complex. The opportunity for reflective practice is an essential component of education, although Van Manen (1990) states that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful. The reflective practice in teaching is required for identifying both success and improvement required in learning and teaching, and for enhancing practice (Drew & Klopper, 2014). The process of delivering feedback to the HAT within the appraisal process has practical elements of teaching and learning, yet there are underlying perspectives that relate to this practice which is also part of the everyday experience (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the whole experience of theory, practice and reflection are intertwined in how the
HATs reflect on their own feedback experiences and their current practices. According to Moustakas (1994) the benefit of phenomenology is that my research has encouraged personal reflection on the perceptions about feedback received within the performance appraisal process critical to understanding the highly accomplished teachers experience with the phenomenon.

There are some issues associated with the selection of a phenomenological approach. For example, many recognise the inherent subjectivity of this approach (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Van Manen, 2007; Wobst, 1978). Nevertheless, there are ways that this can be managed. Existing phenomenology is where the observer cannot separate themselves from the world (Castree et al, 2013). However, the immersion of a researcher reveals the intricacies of relationship of people and their locality (Wobst, 1978); this means there is benefit to making a personal connection and understanding other’s experiences. In my research, I needed to understand the personal perspectives and immerse myself into the HATs’ experiences they had with feedback within the appraisal process. I aimed to ensure that, through my research, the voices of the HATs are at the forefront and have been analysed objectively.

I have used a phenomenological approach to elicit responses about HATs’ experiences in order to understand, as much as is possible by an external evaluator, their experiences with the feedback process.

**Research Methods**

**Research participants**

The cross-sectional research design was implemented to provide a representation of HATs within the school. I am employed by the school as the Dean of Year 9 and teaching
within the Science Faculty, for the purpose of this study I consider myself as a neutral bystander having working for a period of 12 months with the HATs. This meant that I had already established a rapport, giving me better access to their perspectives about the phenomenon.

The research participants were selected using positive sampling. According to Tranter (2010), positive sampling allows the selection of participants based on what is already known about the target population and the purpose of the study. Participants in the current study included five males and three females who had identified as highly accomplished teachers.

In the current study all teachers were asked prior to interview to complete the AITSL online self-assessment tool to confirm via self-assessment that they were working at the level of highly accomplished. The Teacher-Assessment Tool (the Teacher SAT) is an online questionnaire enabling teachers at all career stages, and in a range of contexts, to reflect upon their practice in accordance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012).

Every participant was provided with an information sheet and consent form. At the beginning of the study, initial contact was made with each participant via email to disclose the purpose of the study and to brief the potential participants on the process of collecting data and the general nature of the research. If the potential candidates agreed to participate in the research, they were provided with an informed consent package describing the nature of the study in further detail. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could exit the study at any point in time without penalty. The information package also emphasised that their personal information and contribution to data was held as private and confidential. All participants’ names are decoded when presented in written
reports. The transcriptions are stored on a password protected computer as per Griffith guidelines. The study achieved a 100% retention rate for participants.

**Design of the interview questions**

The interview questions were generated to answer the research questions (see Chapter ii), which aim to identify how HATs experience feedback within the appraisal process. The themes that have emerged from the literature helped to inform the development of the interview questions. The questions focused on HATs’ perceptions about feedback received within the appraisal process. The interview questions were designed to elicit responses that confirmed findings in the literature or that, conversely, might challenge recent wisdom about feedback provided within the appraisal process. The interview questions were mapped under the overarching research questions. This was achieved by checking that the proposed interview questions aligned with the research questions that underpin my understanding of the feedback’s place within the performance appraisal process. The interview questions were designed to elicit responses that could be collaborated by the literature or, conversely, might challenge received wisdom about current feedback practices.

**Interview procedure**

Data collection was based on Moustakas’ (1994) process of phenomenological inquiry. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends data be collected from 5-15 participants who have experienced the similar phenomenon. Data was collected from a total of eight HATs who have experienced the phenomenon. Participants were reflecting on a number of appraisals. Participants were interviewed four weeks after their appraisal. Data was obtained via a one off, thirty minute, face to face, in-depth interview with each participant.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. Interview guides were provided to the participant 48 hours prior to the interview. The goal of
the semi-structured interviews was to all allow the participants to delve deeper into their experiences in order to provide a richer more accurate description of the phenomena. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for later thematic analysis. In total, eight interview guides were used. Participants were asked open-ended questions to gather data leading to an understanding of how they have experienced the assessment provided during their annual performance review.

The interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient time and the choice of location was selected by each participant; all preferred to be interviewed in their school department office. This meant the participants was more at ease in a familiar setting, which, according to Travers (2010), helps make the participant more comfortable to discuss the phenomenon because they are at ease an in their own comfort zone.

Some of the constraints with interviews are the time required to conduct the interviews (Gillham, 2000), and the time involved in the transcription and analysis of the information collected (Gillham, 2000; Walters, 2000). Additional criticisms of in-depth interviews are that they only capture experiences from a small group of people (Carless, 2014) and with prompting or additional questioning the interviewer could introduce bias to lead the interviewee to discuss particular issues, thus shaping the response (Travers, 2010). However, for a small research project, semi-structured interviews is an appropriate means of investigating how HATs experience performance feedback.

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) discussed below explains how potential bias was minimised in the data analysis. Specifically, this occurred through the coding of emergent themes.
Data Analysis

IPA offers a method of data analysis that focuses on the participants’ perception of their experiences and also their communication of factors that contributed to their successes or presented barriers they encountered during the performance appraisal (Moustakas, 1994). Each of the participant’s interviews was analysed separately using procedures consistent with interpret IPA. Moustakas (1994) states that a phenomenological approach involves assembling textural descriptions obtained in the data collection. Creswell (2013) adds that this process involves building on the data from the first and second research questions. The semi-structured interview format was selected due to the recommendation of Bruce (1994) who suggests that one or two key questions should be prepared. These questions should lead the interviewee to discussion of how they see, experience or understand the selected phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The questions should be sufficiently open ended to allow interviewees to structure their own response, thus tapping their lived experience (Bruce, 1994). It is also the contention of Marton (1997) that open-ended questions are preferable as they enable the participant to choose the dimensions of the question they wish to answer. In utilising this open-ended style, both Bruce and Marton promote the use of ‘what’ questions to elicit the desired description of the relation between research participant and phenomenon. For this reason, the following interview questions was selected to facilitate the discussion; ‘What are your general feelings about feedback? What do you think is the purpose of providing feedback? What do you feel you have learned from receiving feedback? and What do you like most about feedback?

Initial analysis of phenomenological data occurs through a series of steps as outlined below:

1. Transcriptions were read and reread until I felt that he had a clear understanding of what each was saying.
Understanding how highly accomplished teachers experience performance feedback

2. During the third or fourth read, the research used coloured pens to highlight ‘slabs’ of text with a similar theme.

3. Highlighted sections were then cut and pasted to separate documents, representing each emerging conception.

4. These new documents were then read in their entirety so that the research could get a ‘feel’ for the shared understandings that were documented by the H.A.T. During this combination of processes of sorting and analysing, I sought characteristics that clarified conceptions of the phenomenon and also the ‘structurally significant differences’ that would allow relationships among the categories to be specified (Bruce, 1994).

5. Once I felt satisfied that he was being as faithful as possible to the experiences of the research participants, he allocated an appropriate label to each document. These labels became the recognised conceptions, and the associated text the provided quotations that represented each conception.

6. From this stage forward, individual transcriptions were no longer a part of the analytical process. Instead, the new documents containing data representing each pattern/theme were used as points of reference, thus creating the ‘pool’ of data that is the cornerstone of phenomenological research.

To minimise the influence of preconceived ideas, Tufford and Newman (2010) recommend that I engaged in the self-reflective process of ‘bracketing’ to surface any preconceptions. Methods of bracketing in the current study included a beginning reflective journal during project conceptualisation to be maintained throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013). According to Tufford and Newman (2010) researchers who reflect on their own experiences may discover helpful insights during project conceptualisation that may enable deeper engagement with the participant and the data.
Coding process

Interview transcripts were organised into tables, which included comments noting the emerging codes, categories and themes as multiple participants experienced feedback during the performance appraisal process. “Significant statements”, sentences or quotes that provide understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon are highlighted and used to form initial in vivo codes (Creswell, 2013). In vivo coding is the practice of assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using a word or a short phase taken from that section of the data (Creswell, 2013). A methodology of reduction and analysis of specific statements was used to identify emerging and overarching codes. Moustakas (1994) refers to this step as horizontalisation. After going through this process, the researcher is able to develop clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes (Creswell, 2013).

The significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of participants’ experiences. The statements are constructed to describe what Moustakas (1994) refers to as the essence of the phenomenon in one or two long paragraphs. The idea is to leave the reader feeling as though they have a better understanding of what it is like to experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This process assumes that all participants have experienced feedback during the performance appraisal process and it means that all experiences have an underlying structure (Creswell, 2013).

Labels or tiles are used for themes or categories initially using In Vivo coding, using phrasing in the exact words of the participants and then descriptive coding (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding was then used to group initial codes into summaries providing a more meaningful and succinct unit of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Examples of Initial Coding and Pattern Coding are presented in Table 7.
Table 5 Examples of Participants Statements and Corresponding Initial, Descriptive and Pattern Codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcribed Statement</th>
<th>In Vivo code</th>
<th>Initial Code</th>
<th>Pattern/Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To enhance the value of feedback an established rapport between parties is recommended.</td>
<td>Enhance the value of the feedback process</td>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Using feedback for improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once I felt confident that that corresponding initial, descriptive and pattern codes had been established, I complemented the manual coding process with a digital analysis using NVivo software. This generated a word cloud (see Figure 1) from the terms most commonly found in the transcripts. This word cloud allowed for the identification of key words to come out of the interviews to be cross checked against my manual coding techniques.
The larger sized words are the words that were most commonly referred to by HATs during the interviews. These include: teaching, performance, think, review, professional appraisal and improvement. Words that were referred to less often are situated towards the outside of the word cloud, examples include: principal, enhanced, systematically provided and helpful. These terms were then identified in the transcripts to highlight what the HATs were referring to more and less frequently. Five key themes to emerge from this process were the characteristics of the HATs group; feedback for improvement; feedback processes; professional discourse; relational dimension and self-awareness. Each theme was recorded in the margin of the text and grouped into a separate word document to gather all similar themes together for analysis.

Limitations

The scope of this research project is part of a Masters by Research, which was conducted part time over a two-year period. The number of interviews conducted was limited by the amount
of time available and may only represent a sample of approximately half the HATs teaching within one school. The major limitation in this research is that I have drawn on feedback provided to the HATs on one occasion during the year. To overcome this, HATs reflected on a number of instances on when they have received feedback about their performance. Despite the limitations, it is hoped that further research can be conducted beyond the scope of this initial study to provide greater insight into some of the key factors associated with how HATs performance feedback.

Summary

In sum, the phenomenological methodology used here has provided an opportunity for the participants to describe their experiences with feedback received during their annual performance appraisal process. The semi-structured interview questions prompted participants to express their views about particular aspects of feedback practices and discourses of the review process and provide broader descriptions of their personal experiences. The use of IPA with coding of emergent themes has allowed interviewees’ responses to drive data, highlighting what they identified as critical components of feedback required within the performance appraisal process. The research methodology and methods enabled me to identify how some key themes that were common to HATs experiences during their annual performance review.
Chapter IV Results

The findings reported in this chapter are based on qualitative data gathered from interviews with eight HATs who are my colleagues at a State High School. This chapter presents the findings that fulfil the primary aim of this study which is to examine how HATs perceive the feedback they are provided during their annual performance appraisal/review.

The primary research question for the current study investigates how HATs experience the assessment provided during their annual performance review?

The results are presented with reference to this research question. The most significant themes generated by the data analysis are integrated and presented in order to directly answer this research question.

Preliminary Analysis of the Respondents

The demographical information of the participants are summarised in Table 9 and Table 10. Comparison of participants by gender, a greater proportion occupied by male participants; (n = 5) of males and (n = 3) were female.
Table 6 Characteristics of the participants who completed the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Grad Dip or Cert)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Teaching Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5 years</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 +</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current study included teachers holding undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, the sample consisted of (n=6) holding a Bachelor Degree, (n=2) of a Master’s Degree. The length of teaching experience ranged from less than 10 years to over twenty years; 5-10 years (n = 1), 10-20 years (n = 4), 20 + years (n = 3).
Table 7 Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teacher Rating</th>
<th>Teaching Experience (years)</th>
<th>Faculty within the School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAT 1</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 3</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science Degree in Physics &amp; Mathematics</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Mathematics / Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 4</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 5</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Health and Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 6</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 7</td>
<td>Masters of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Mathematics / Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT 8</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Highly Accomplished</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HAT 1, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education, majoring in English Literature. He began working at the school in January 2016. He is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their literacy skills. He has further aspirations of completing a Masters of Education degree in the near future. He is currently employed in the English Faculty as the Head of Department.
HAT 2, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education. She began working at the school in January 2016. She is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their literacy skills. She has completed a Masters of Education degree and is considering doctoral studies in the near future. She is currently employed as a Dean of Students and teachers in the English Faculty.

HAT 3, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Science, majoring in Physics and Mathematics. He began working at the school in January 2003. He is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their numeracy skills. He is currently employed in the Math and Science Faculty additionally responsible for assisting grade 6 primary aged students to engage in Science, Technology, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) programs.

HAT 4, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education, majoring in Modern History. He began working at the school in January 2010. He is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their literacy skills. He does not hold any further aspirations of completing a Masters of Education degree etc. He is currently employed in the Social Science Faculty additionally responsible for coordinating the year 7, 8, 9 subjects.

HAT 5, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education. She began working at the school in January 2012. She is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their health literacy and physical fitness. She is currently additionally responsible for coordinating the annual student ski trip to New Zealand.

HAT 6, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education. She began working at the school in January 2011. She is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular
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helping them to improve their literacy skills. She is looking forward to retirement at the end of 2016 academic year. She is currently employed as a literacy coach assisting teachers of year 7 – 12 improve their ability to teach literacy in the classroom.

HAT 7, had completed a Master’s degree in Education, majoring in Mathematics. He began working at the school in January 2012. He is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their numeracy skills. He is currently employed in the Math and Science Faculty additionally responsible for coordinating the year 7, 8, 9 subjects.

HAT 8, had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Education and is registered to teach the International Baccalaureate. He began working at the school in January 2016. He is passionate about teaching high school students, in particular helping them to improve their knowledge in the social sciences area. He is currently employed in the Social Science Faculty additionally responsible for assisting the school to improve its communication with parents.

This study is noteworthy in that it provides qualitative data about how HATs have experienced feedback within the performance appraisal process.
Findings of Qualitative Data

The interview data generated rich information about the Hats’ experiences with their respective performance reviews. The coding process and thematic analysis revealed five themes that were common across all participants. The following table summarises codes and themes identified from each interview.

Table 8 A summary of themes and sample statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback for continued improvement</td>
<td>Feedback helped me to identify my areas of strength and areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish an agreed vision of what effective teaching is within the school</td>
<td>Feedback received helped me to understand what good teaching looked like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness of Specific Needs</td>
<td>Feedback should be tailored to specific needs and encouraging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Dimension</td>
<td>I like feedback to be non-threatening and come from someone that I trust and respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish regular mechanisms to offer feedback.</td>
<td>I like to receive feedback on a regular ongoing basis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first theme identified from the data is feedback for continued improvement. This theme draws together HATs’ experiences with feedback received within the appraisal process that enabled continued improvement in their professional practice. This theme captures the three main characteristics of effective feedback. First, feedback is most effective when it focuses the HATs’ attention on their progress of mastering the task at hand. Secondly, feedback should take place when it is still clearly relevant. Finally, feedback should be
specific and related to need. The comments to follow provide essential insights from the field into what constitutes continual improvement from the HATs’ perspective.

HAT 1 describes their most recent experiences with feedback within the performance appraisal process. It is important to note that HAT 1 is currently the Head of Department of English and because of this it was explained that his review was conducted by the Head of Teaching and Learning.

*Feedback gleaned from this review suggested that I needed to provide students with more thinking time as the complexity of the questioning increased. I have subsequently been allowing more thinking as part of this techniques and can see improvement in student responses to my questions. I now feel far more in tune into asking questions of my year 12 English class. This overall experience has helped me to take more ownership of my learning.*

Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 1 felt that the feedback they received focused their attention on their progress of mastering the task at hand (questioning techniques). The feedback provided to them was specific to this goal demonstrating an effective use of feedback within the appraisal process.

HAT 2 outlines their most recent experience with feedback, believing that it has brought about improvement in their practice:

*When I received the feedback it was presented to me verbally by my head of department and supported with written notes. Because I received this information shortly after the event I could easily identify with the areas required for improvement and celebrate the things that went well. I have acted on the feedback provided and feel that my professional practice has improved.*
Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 2 felt that the feedback received has had an impact on their professional practice. The feedback provided to them was school specific (being tied to the AIP) and clearly relevant as it was presented to them within 24 hours of the event. This demonstrates effective use of feedback within the appraisal process.

HAT 4 provided insights into their recent experience with feedback, believing that it has brought about improvement in their practice:

> My most recent experience with feedback within the appraisal process was linked to my development goal. My goal is to ask questions that stretched out student responses. I self-identified questioning as an area of need, it also links to our school’s AIP so I feel like I have had a lot of support in this space. This experience triggered me to reflect on my teaching to date, and from this process I can see that I have considerably improved. I believe that feedback was specific to my need as the feedback provided to me was pertinent to my questioning techniques.

Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 4 felt that the feedback provided to them helped them to improve their professional practice. The feedback provided to them was specific to their development goal a self-identified area of need also supported as key initiative as outlined in the school AIP.

The above results make up (n=3) of total sample size. This sample reveal that they have experienced feedback for continued improvement within their most recent performance review.

The second theme developed from the qualitative data analysis was that HATs felt that it was vitally important to establish an agreed vision of what effective teaching is within the school. This theme can be broken down into three main components. First, feedback
must provide clear expectations about HATs’ learning and performance. Secondly, feedback must be based on specific criteria to judge HATs’ achievement. Finally, feedback should also be based on pertinent information about HATs’ progress. The comments to follow provide essential insights from the field.

HAT 2 provided insights into their recent experience with feedback, believing that recent feedback provided generated an agreed vision of what effective teaching looked like in the school:

*Feedback received within my most recent appraisal was based on one lesson observation and was tied into the school’s Annual Improvement Plan. I found that the feedback helped me better understand the school’s vision for what great teaching looked like in the school as it was linked to the school strategic plan. I also felt that my teaching improved as I knew what I needed to demonstrate to my head of department during the lesson observation. As a result of this process I believe that I have improved evidence by strong student outcomes.*

Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 2 felt that the feedback provided them with enough information to clarify expectations of performance helping assisting them to contextualise what effective teaching looked like in the school environment.

HAT 6 provided insights into their recent experience with feedback, believing that recent feedback provided generated an agreed vision of what effective teaching looked like in the school:

*The feedback I received was focused solely on my ability to develop and explain a challenging learning goal to the class. I enjoyed receiving this level of targeted*
feedback that aligned with our broader professional expectations as outlined in AITSL helping me to understand what great teaching looks like.

Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 6 felt that the feedback they had recently received helped them to improve their professional practice. HAT 6 attributes this improvement to feedback that was directly linked to specific criteria providing measurement of achievement.

HAT 8 provided insights into their recent experience with feedback, believing that recent feedback provided generated an agreed vision of what effective teaching looked like in the school:

My most recent experience with feedback in the performance appraisal process was called instructional rounds. School wide and personal goals were discussed prior to administration coming into the lesson, and the key thing was that there was absolutely no value judgement. At the end of the process, the feedback I received helped me to better understand the expectations of the school and wilfully worked toward the next goal.

Based on the above results, it would appear that HAT 8 felt that the feedback provided to them helped them to improve their teaching. HAT 8 attributes this improvement to the data fed back on conclusion of the observation allowing for future goals to be set to inform future observations.

The above results make up (n=3) of total sample size. This sample reveals that they have experienced elements of best practice when receiving feedback within their most recent performance review. Best practice can be distinguished by feedback enabling a level of
reflection about school and teacher objectives that build on what each school defines as effective teaching and learning in their school.

The third theme to arise from the research results was that feedback should inform HATs’ self-awareness of specific needs. This theme can be broken down into two parts. First, feedback should be tailored to specific needs and encouraging. Secondly, feedback comments should be kept as impersonal as possible and focusing on the behaviour. The comments to follow provide essential insights from the field.

HAT 1 provided insights into their experiences in receiving effective feedback.

In my recent performance review my head of department and I met to discuss what I considered to be my current teaching strengths and to identify areas for improvement and feedback within the review. The feedback presented to me did outline that I don’t walk around the room as other teachers in the school. I felt ok about this feedback as it was supported by two positive comments one about my calming tone of voice and one about the class climate that appear to be very positive.

Based on the above results, HAT 1 indicates that recent feedback received was specific to their needs and encouraging.

HAT 5 provided insights into their experiences with receiving feedback.

My subject area is physical education. I had an ART HOD team leader review my teaching performance, they made me feel good about what they saw, although they technically did not help me to improve in a subject specific manner, in that they were unable to provide me with subject specific teaching strategies to help me to improve. I found that it was nice to feel good, as I received positive comments, although I would like to have had some constructive (subject specific) advise to help me to improve.
Based on the above results, HAT 5 indicates that they would prefer to receive feedback from their relevant head of department. This recommendation was made because they felt that their relevant head of department is better able to make feedback more meaningful and relevant by tailoring it to the subject area.

HAT 8 provided insights into their experiences with receiving feedback.

*Strive to create a culture whereby feedback is provided by a 'critical friend.'* This means that you are divorcing the person from the equation and providing comment on the performance. My critical friend recently told me that I talk too fast. I took this feedback on board and have since tried to slow myself down. I also really enjoy receiving feedback specific to my behaviour and classroom management, whilst I am experienced in this area I welcome refinement of practice – it is a big part of being highly accomplished.

Based on the above results, HAT 8 indicates that they find a ‘critical’ friend as an effective means of providing feedback to the HAT about their performance. This recommendation was made because they felt that their critical friend was well placed to keep comments as impersonal as possible and focusing on the behavioural change required.

The above results make up (n=3) of total sample size. This sample revealed that they have experienced elements of best practice when receiving feedback within their most recent performance review. Best practice can be distinguished by feedback enabling a level of reflection about school and teacher objectives that build on what each school defines as effective teaching and learning in their school.

The forth theme to arise from the research results was that feedback gleaned information of the importance of the relational dimension between the HAT and the provider.
of feedback. HATs account their personal experience of receiving feedback by making comment on the essential components for its effective delivery, specifically the importance of reducing the inherent threat and negative reaction that may be associated with evaluation of performance. HATs accounts are as follows;

HAT 2 provided insights into two separate experiences with receiving feedback.

*I have previously had a negative experience with feedback. Whereby the feedback seemed to be more about ticking off competencies of key performance indicators for my position, rather than assisting me to improve my teaching practice and setting professional goals. It felt like the schools was more focused on trying to catch me out not doing your job well, rather than providing feedback that could help me to improve.*

*I was provided with feedback that did not link to any sort of matrix, and it was poorly worded, delivered to me via email. I remember feeling quite upset, very uncomfortable and quite angry at the end of the process. I viewed the feedback provided as meaningless. I did not act on the feedback provided.*

Based on the above results, HAT 2 describes a negative experience in receiving feedback. It would appear that a pre and post face to face meeting are vitally important to discuss the key elements of the feedback to be provided. HAT 2 did not act on the feedback provided within this review.

HAT 7 provided insights into their experiences with receiving feedback.

*I have recently had a positive experience with feedback. The feedback was delivered to me as face to face feedback, which I thought was very beneficial and very real, very much a human form. It wasn’t digitised, it wasn’t over an email or anything like that*
it was just nice to speak face to face and be candid about the topics. I think that the personal touch has huge value. I felt emotionally connected to this level of feedback, which had an all-round motivational effect strengthening my professional relationship with my supervisor.

Based on the above results, HAT 7 describes a positive experience in receiving feedback. It would appear that the face to face meeting added meaning to the feedback and strengthened the professional relationship better enabling HAT 7 to learn from this experience. HAT 7 also suggested that it was beneficial to receive feedback some days later allowing for self-reflection on performance to occur.

HAT 8 spoke of the importance of trust when providing a colleague with feedback. Comments as follows:

I have previously delivered feedback to a teacher about their teaching performance. I felt that trust was critical to the delivery of effective feedback. I build trust with this teacher by showing them that I was not the be all and end all that I have areas that I are working on. I achieved this by having them observe my lessons prior to me going to review their performance. This allowed me to be open to them providing feedback to me. I also encouraged a lot of talk out loud – this builds trust.

Based on the above results, HAT 8 describes their experience in delivering feedback suggesting that building a culture of trust is a critical component to delivering feedback effectively.

Based on personal experiences HAT 6 provided comments on the effective provision of feedback. Comments as follows:
My most recent experience with feedback was not overly positive. It felt like a very formal procedure, feedback was provided against a (matrix) that I had never seen before - it felt quite threatening. It felt more like an evaluative process, holding quite a negative tone. I wanted the reviewer to see certain things, however she did not stay for the full duration of the lesson, and therefore did not get to see all of my activities, and I didn’t feel like she got to see all the things that I wanted her to see.

Based on the above results, HAT 6 felt threatened by the feedback process possibly attributing this feeling to being provided with feedback against a matrix that they had not seen before. HAT 6 also felt pressured by the experience as they were on contract – wondering what might happen if the lesson did not go to plan. HAT 6 would have liked the reviewer to capture the full lesson rather than a small segment.

The above results make up (n=4) of total sample size. This sample reveals that they have experienced effective and ineffective elements required to effectively provide feedback to the HAT about their teaching performance. It would appear that meeting face to face prior to and after receiving feedback reduces the inherent threat and negative reaction associated with evaluation of performance.

The fifth and final theme draws together HATs’ experiences with feedback received within the appraisal process that groups HATs’ collective thoughts on how the feedback evaluation process may be improved. This theme looks focuses on praising teacher performance and achievement. The comments to follow provide essential insights from the field.

HAT 1 felt that feedback could be improved by including multiple perspectives, suggesting that:
I really enjoy receiving feedback from my colleagues, students and my up lines – it would be nice to pull this feedback together to help me improve my practice.”

HAT 1 went on to say that in order to enhance the meaning and effectiveness of feedback provided within the appraisal process it should be delivered as a two-way process:

“I think that the feedback process should be two-way, meaning that the teacher and the supervisor review each other’s teaching performance, this would make the feedback more real as you both seeing first hand ‘words in action’. I think that the major problem in our school is that there is not enough two-way feedback, it is mostly one way.

Based on the above results, HAT 1 indicated that multiple perspectives would add meaning to the process.

HAT 2 felt that feedback could be improved by including goal setting into the process, suggesting that:

I attribute the times that I have found feedback the most beneficial is when goal setting between myself and the supervisor took place. I believe that goal setting needs to be linked to helping the teacher improve their teaching. This can be achieved at a school level by taking the time throughout the year to develop a systematic approach (a common language) across the school towards the feedback and the evaluation process.

HAT 2 went on to say that in order to enhance the meaning and effectiveness of feedback provided within the appraisal process it should be delivered be targeted and measurable:
I believe that feedback housed within the evaluation process needs to be sharp and have narrow framework specific to our schools AIP. This will help to make sure that the feedback is measurable – so that you can actually see improvement. From here you can look at how the feedback can be tailored towards the individual’s needs based on the goals that they have set. I would also like to receive feedback informally and in small manageable chunks. I feel that it better allows me to reflect on my practice and to adjust my practice as appropriate.

Based on the above results, HAT 2 indicated that feedback needs to be targeted and measurable add meaning to the process.

HAT 3 felt that feedback could be improved by adding a component of public recognition to the progress, suggesting that:

I have recently enjoyed receiving public recognition of my work, it made me feel good about what I do in a way motivating me to continue on teaching. The recognition of my work was published in an all staff emailing outlining my recent successful class results. I had a number of staff write back to me, or catch me in the play-ground to say congratulations. It made me feel good, motivating me in some way to keep going in my work.

HAT 3 went on to say that in order to enhance the meaning and effectiveness of feedback provided within the appraisal process it should also include feedback from their students, suggesting that:

I have always valued student feedback about my performance as one of the strongest indicators of how well I am doing at my job. I have never formally included student feedback into my review, however I wonder if there would be away to incorporate this
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type of feedback into the process. Results could be collected in a simple survey form to tell me how they feel in my lessons, do they feel heard, do they feel confident to ask a question if unsure of the topic being covered, etc.

Based on the above results, HAT 3 indicated that feedback needs to incorporate an aspect of recognition about one’s work performance and include student feedback to add meaning to the process.

HAT 4 felt that feedback could be improved by adding more observational time to the process, suggesting that:

In my recent appraisal I was really disappointed in that the feedback was provided on a 10-minute walk through of my lesson. I fail to see how anyone can make a sound judgement about my teaching based on nothing more than a glimpse of the classroom.

Based on the above results, HAT 4 indicates that feedback needs to be based on a lengthy observational period or if this is not possible a number of smaller observations that can be collated and fed back to the HAT about their performance.

HAT 5 felt that feedback could be improved by adding more linking feedback to ongoing professional development, suggesting that:

Probably the thing that I crave the most is feedback that goes somewhere. For example, I have previously encountered feedback that encouraged me to incorporate more technology into my lessons. This was a terrific idea, but what the feedback failed to do was to help me to understand how I would go about enhancing the use of technology in my lessons. It would have perhaps been nice to have received feedback that perhaps linked me in with professional development or other peers who could
assist me to improve in this one area of performance. I think we are getting better at this, though I still feel that this is an area for further enhancement.

Based on the above results, HAT 5 indicates that feedback could extend into professional learning, better assisting the HAT to act on feedback provided adding meaning to the experience.

HAT 6 felt that feedback could be improved by adding a number of observations by different people into the evaluation process, suggesting that:

The one off nature of lesson observations needs to be address, as you cannot get an accurate gauge of how someone is doing based on this model of feedback. This would assist with the teacher to reflect on their teaching practice, becoming better at the job impacting positively on individual student outcomes.

HAT 6 felt that feedback could be improved by having multiple perspectives, suggesting that:

I believe it might be beneficial to ask students, peers, senior teachers and perhaps even parents for feedback about performance. By incorporating many view points, and collecting feedback on several occasions I feel that I would be better informed about my practice rather than essentially waiting until the end of the year to receive a rating about performance and feedback that is virtually in actable as there is little time left in the term to act on the advice given.

Based on the above results, HAT 6 indicates that feedback may be more effective if it came from a range of sources, preferably more than once per year thereby not only making the advice more-timely but also to providing more opportunity to act on the feedback provided.
HAT 7 felt that feedback needs to facilitate self-reflection fostering a desire to engage in life-long learning, suggesting that:

*I feel that the current feedback process should strive to imbue in the HAT the desire to reflect on their practice, ever encouraging them to engage in further learning opportunities. By doing this the HAT is role modelling to the other staff, students and to the wider community the core underlying value of what it means to be a HAT. One way that this could be achieved is to ensure that whoever is providing you with the feedback is skilled at observing and providing the feedback – perhaps there could be some training at state level here to assist with this?*

Based on the above results, HAT 7 indicates that feedback may be more effective if it is delivered by a trained professional better enabling the HAT to self-reflect on their practice and act on the feedback provided.

HAT 8 felt that feedback needs to facilitate self-reflection, fostering a desire to engage in life-long learning, suggesting that:

*The most valuable feedback to me comes from my students each and every lesson. At the conclusion of every lesson I ask my students to verbalise to me what aspects of the lesson they have enjoyed or found useful and why, and what aspects of the lesson they did not enjoy or did not find useful and why. By doing this I am constantly able to modify my teaching to best suit the class, and then don’t have to wait for formal evaluations that may take place as late as term four.*

Based on the above results, HAT 8 indicates that feedback may be more effective if it is student driven / focused.
The above results make up (n=8) of total sample size. This sample revealed that there are a number of mechanisms to be considered that may enhance the quality / volume of feedback provided to the HATs about their work performance.

**Synthesis**

The purpose of this chapter was to answer the research question: How do HATs experience the assessment provided during their annual performance review?

HATs explained that there were aspects of best practice evident within the current evaluation process. When feedback was goal-referenced and aligned to the school vision; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalised); timely; ongoing, HATs believed consistent best practice was modelled. It would appear that feedback needs to be systematically provided to HATs to fully engage them within the process of teaching and learning.

HATs drew on the years of experience in receiving feedback to explain that when feedback was delivered well it helped them to self-reflect which was highly effective in helping them to improve as a teacher. However, when feedback lacked meaning they were less inclined to engage in the process of self-reflection inhibiting future performance. It seems apparent that feedback on that is more meaningful and may lead to successful teaching and learning as well as to personal satisfaction.

HATs felt that it would be beneficial for exemplary practice to be recognised and shared amongst the schooling community on a regular basis. Explaining that the role modelling of exemplary practice would benefit all teachers ultimately lifting the quality of education across the school. HATs explained that recognition and acknowledgment of their
school based accomplishments may assist with their overall motivation and satisfaction levels.
HATs play a crucial role in schools both at the classroom and leadership level. They regularly model effective teaching strategies across the school to less experienced staff as well as coordinating additional educational programs for both staff and students to engage in (ATISL, 2012). Their role is complex and demanding, requiring high level teaching and communication skills (AITSL, 2012). Generally speaking, a HAT has many years of teaching experience to draw upon, which often results in them acting as an interface between administration and general teaching staff (AITSL, 2012). It is therefore vitally important that HATs are provided with feedback specific to their learning goals keeping them motivated within their role. This research sought to make sense of how HATs experience performance feedback. Given that feedback is a key component in fostering the motivation to learn and improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), this research examines aspects of current teacher appraisal processes that may be improved to better enable Highly Accomplished teachers to continue to teach well, advance in their career, and increase their job satisfaction levels. Thus, it was the aim of this study to examine the experiences of HATs with the feedback process, as told in their own voice, in order to understand the factors that enable them to achieve successful feedback outcomes from the performance appraisal process.

Three specific research questions were used to guide data collection and analysis:

1. How do HATs experience the assessment provided during their annual performance review?
2. How does the feedback provided to HATs reflect best practice?
3. What social practices associated with the review process could be improved to enhance the experience for HATs
In this chapter, a discussion of the findings will be presented in order to address the three research questions, as well as to examine how the findings of this study align with current literature on the experiences and needs of HATs within the research school environment. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study followed by discussion of implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

Findings of this study for research questions 1 and 2 will be discussed together due to the inherent synergy of the experience of individuals (question 1) and the enablers of best (question 2). This will include a discussion of how HATs experienced the phenomenon compared to the literature reviewed. The following section discusses how the feedback provided to HATs reflects best practice.

Understanding how HATs describe their experiences with the annual performance review has provided valuable insights into their preferences for how feedback is delivered and what feedback they find effective. The results suggested that effective feedback should be goal-referenced and aligned to the school vision; user-friendly (specific and personalised); timely and ongoing in nature. HATs felt that actionable feedback is a critical component of the feedback process helping them to identify and understand what they specifically should do more or less of next time to improve inclusive of specific steps they need to take in order to achieve that goal.

HATs explained that when feedback was delivered well it helped them to self-reflect which was highly effective in helping them to improve as a teacher. These findings support earlier literature (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Perkins and Unger, 1999) suggesting that targeted feedback is a highly effective method of adding “meaning” to feedback improving future performance. HATs suggested that when reflective questions were asked of them such as ‘what am I asked to do here?’ or ‘do I understand this?’ or ‘How else could I have gone
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about this task?’ they took more personal control of, and responsibility for, their learning. Furthermore, these reflective questions also promote critical thinking in the HAT, encouraging a deeper level of understanding.

In the next section of the discussion looks at the social practices associated with the review process that could be improved to enhance the experience for HATs that will be presented to the school leadership team for consideration. The research findings suggest that on occasion HATs have been dissatisfied with the feedback they receive, in terms of lacking specific advice to improve, being difficult to interpret or having a potentially negative impact on their self-perception and confidence.

HATs felt that the current review process could be improved by providing feedback that enhanced their understanding of their teaching methods and teaching practices. HATs felt that the feedback currently provided about their work did not effectively assist them to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas requiring further development pertaining to this area. To improve the effectiveness of feedback it is recommended to the research school leadership team that effective feedback needs to draw a direct line to effective teaching and learning and incorporating continuous feedback for teachers into the appraisal of their work.

HATs believed that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development will lead to an improvement in their performance. It is recommended to the research school that the teacher appraisal and feedback processes needs to be linked to improved student performance. HATs explained that by doing this the review process becomes vitally important both as a way of assessing teachers’ performance in order to identify any particular strengths and areas for develop they may have and for gaining useful information which can inform school wide improvement more generally.
HATs explained that currently feedback about their work is provided to them by one person. HATs suggested that it may be beneficial to receive feedback from multiple perspectives about the work that they do in the school. To achieve this, it is recommended to the research school that they adopt the 360-degree feedback model. This model is recommended as it provides feedback from a range of sources: the school principal; senior teachers; peers; students and parents. This model would satisfy HATs’ needs as it has the capacity to provide commentary about the HATs’ work from multiple perspectives. A preliminary inquiry into the cost of integrating a 360 feedback model into the teacher appraisal and feedback system reveals that it is relatively inexpensive to implement and run. On this basis it is recommended to the research school that a 360 feedback model be considered for future reviews of HATs work.

HATs explained that setting a climate of trust and mutual respect was also a necessary ingredient for providing feedback within the performance review. To achieve this HATs, recommend to the research school that they have a say in who provides them with feedback about their performance. HATs expressed a desire to receive information about their performance from an effective teacher(s) who are capable of modelling best practice to the HAT. Additional traits mentioned by the HATs include being supportive, approachable, trustworthy, positive and possess good listening skills. HATs thought that the development of an in-school coaching program might be a practical way of building a climate of trust and mutual respect into the current feedback process.
Conclusions

The findings show confusion about the purpose of feedback and what it can achieve. HATs expressed a belief in the longer term benefits of feedback, but reported practice seems to focus on fulfilling an administrative role. This was highlighted by the ‘one-off’ nature of feedback, benchmarked against the APST reinforcing HATs views that feedback currently received within the appraisal process is more or less a tick the box exercise. It would seem that HATs who were unsure about the purpose of feedback within the appraisal process had limited expectations around the feedback they were receiving. Limiting feedback reinforced the belief amongst HATs that the feedback received lacked meaning. Such limitations on feedback are usually blamed on HATs rather than the practice of the supervisor.

Findings conclude that HATs, even when they did see the longer term benefits of feedback, they took a more short-term view in which they could apply the feedback. The consequence of this was that HATs often considered feedback from supervisors to be difficult to interpret and ambiguous because they could not immediately apply it to their current work situation. Instead, HATs were often looking for a justified and well explained set of instructions about how to do better next time, and much feedback that HATs had received did not conform to this wish. The difference between the intentions of the supervisor providing the feedback and the HATs understanding of feedback makes miscommunication and dissatisfaction almost inevitable. This resulting confusion devalues the feedback process.

It would appear that effective feedback consists of three key characteristics. First, feedback is more effective when it focuses the HATs attention on their progress in mastering the task at hand. Such emphasis on personal progress enhances self-efficacy, encourages effort attributions, and reduces attention to social comparison (Kohn, 1999). Second, feedback should take place when it is clearly relevant. Timely feedback usually means that it
should be given during the task, or soon after the task is completed, with an opportunity also provided for the HAT to demonstrate learning from feedback. Thirdly, feedback should be specific and related to need.

There was a broad spectrum of views about how HATs experience performance feedback, however there was near consequences about when feedback is useful, that is when it can be applied. HATs want more meaningful feedback so that they may apply it to subsequent work. The problem arises because of varying interpretations of ‘meaningful’. Clear, unambiguous, instructional and directive feedback is generally welcomed by HATs; whereby they know how to interpret the feedback provided and how they can apply it.

HATs suggest that the teacher appraisal process can be improved by implementing multiple methods of assessment to recognise and provide HATs with feedback on their teaching. HATs want more meaningful feedback within the appraisal process that is strongly linked to school wide goals and individual professional development.

HATs believed that adopting a wider lens was necessary when providing feedback to the teacher during the appraisal process, encouraging their school leaders to ensure that the person providing the feedback are well trained in appraisal procedures and understand that individual teacher goals need to be aligned with the school’s goals. The outcomes of the performance appraisal process, including development goals, must also be clearly communicated in a timely and meaningful manner to assist the HATs to move forward in a professionally enriching way.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

As the prevalence of teacher accreditation and performance based pay continue to increase, finding ways to effectively provide feedback to HATs can enable these teachers’ to
achieve professionally. In order to address the needs of HATs, the personal perspectives of the HATs themselves must be continued to be considered in future research.

In further research it would be beneficial to examine and compare experiences of HATs who were successful in engaging with feedback provided to those who experienced unsuccessful outcomes (a HAT who did not fulfil the requirements) to identify the specific factors or differences that contributed to HAT success. As well it would be beneficial to examine and compare support programs that are specifically designed for supporting HATs in secondary education performance review process. Future research also needs to consider the perspectives of other HATs to investigate strategies that contribute to successful outcomes for HATs within the appraisal process. It would be beneficial to understand the amount and type of professional development offered to HATs in secondary education schools and comparative studies of available feedback models.

**Study Limitations**

The selection criteria for participants in the current study included a self-selection of Highly Accomplished and willingness to self-disclose as being rated as Highly Accomplished. It is likely that there were many teachers working in the secondary school who were rated as Highly Accomplished who were not comfortable with disclosure and thus their perspectives were not included in the study. Potential bias may have resulted from this selection process. De-identification of participants was highlighted to potential candidates as attempted to control this bias. Participants represented only a small sample of eight participants. Hence findings may not be transferable to other Highly Accomplished Teachers working at other secondary schools. These issues presented limitations as they restrict the possibility for making theoretical generalisations. To increase the generalisability of study results, a varied selection of participant profiles took place; gender, ages and experience. As
well, the current study only investigated the perspectives of the HATs themselves. It would be beneficial to obtain the perspectives of supervisors in future studies as well to gain a broader perspective of nature of feedback being offered within the appraisal process and to obtain an indication of the level of awareness of supervisors about their feedback provided to the HAT within the appraisal process.
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