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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF STUDENT-
GENERATED FEEDBACK IN FORMATIVE ESSAY WRITING IN THE
ENGLISH CLASSROOM

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Education

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2016

Abstract

Student-generated feedback is an Assessment for Learning practice which, when used well, can lead to strong student engagement and self-regulation. In the New Zealand context high value is placed on the principles of Assessment for Learning, yet teachers struggle to implement strategies successfully. In order to evaluate the impact of the use of student-generated feedback practices in essay writing in the English classroom student perceptions have been sought. This practitioner research has used a mixed methods approach to gather students' perceptions by means of a Likert scale questionnaire, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, a teacher diary and feedback artefacts.

The results show that students perceived student-generated feedback practices to be beneficial for themselves and their learning. There is evidence that these practices led to significant student engagement, as well as the development of student self-regulation. When seen from a social constructivist perspective, student-generated feedback practices created new identities for students and the teacher in the classroom, impacting on power dynamics and classroom culture. While the teacher continued to be a valuable guide and contributor to learning, students saw themselves as agents of their own learning, in an apprentice-like relationship with their teacher.

The findings of this study are relevant to teachers who want to improve their practice by using student-generated feedback as part of a broader picture of partnership with students. This is becoming increasingly important for all teachers as our education system moves away from a traditional top-down, teacher-led style of teaching and learning towards a student–teacher collaborative approach.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Frances Edwards, for her generous support during this research project. Her quick and helpful feedback has been much appreciated.

I dedicate this thesis to my family: Chris, Grace, Lucy and Benjamin. While I've been working on this over the past year much has happened in our family. I'm thankful for each one of you.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This chapter introduces my research question, presents the rationale behind this research and shows that it has value as new research in an under-researched field. It also introduces the philosophy which underpins my interpretation of the findings: social constructivism. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the remaining chapters in this thesis.

Research question and context

Creating lifelong learners is seen by many as the goal of education. Terms such as *engagement* and *self-regulation* are used by educationalists to capture a sense of successful learner attributes that are indicative of the development of lifelong learners. Current educational philosophy recognises that engagement and self-regulation are developed when students are actively involved in their learning, viewing themselves not as the recipients of an education but as co-constructors. Assessment is an important component of education systems and an area in which students need to be allowed access if they are to be responsible, competent participants in their education. Assessment for Learning (AFL) is an educational movement which has long promoted the vital importance of involving students in assessment processes. One of its core principles is involving students in feedback processes (Butler & Winnie, 1995; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Earl, 2013).

This thesis is based on practitioner research I conducted in my 2015 Year 13 English class over a ten-week period. I investigated students' perceptions of the AFL practices involved in developing students' abilities to evaluate and give feedback on formative essay writing. My study involved a two-period skills development phase in which students learnt to analyse a success criteria rubric and then practised marking essay exemplars. This was followed by three opportunities to write feedback on three practice 'response to text' essays. The writing classroom context is a

particularly appropriate yet challenging one in which to increase students' ability to engage with assessment. This is because of the unavoidably subjective and necessarily holistic manner in which writing must be marked.

My research question was:

What are students' perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback practices in formative essay writing in the English classroom?

This study responds to challenges made by educational experts about the imperative to include students in assessment. Shepard (2000b), for example, states that, "If instructional goals include developing students' metacognitive abilities, fostering important dispositions, and socializing students into the discourse and practices of academic disciplines, then it is essential that classroom routines and corresponding assessment reflect these goals as well" (p. 43). Similarly, Sadler (2009) challenges that, "Learning environments are self-limiting to the extent that they fail to make appropriate provision for students to make, and be accountable for, serious appraisals" (p. 49).

Below is a rationale for basing this research on feedback and also why I have focused on garnering students' perceptions of its impact. I argue that this study provides new insights into this field because it has sought student voice and also because it is teacher practitioner research.

Rationale

Often the focus of feedback has been on the movement of information between student and teacher (Sadler, 2010), with the teacher as a mediator between students and knowledge being acquired. A student's performance in a piece of work might provide the teacher with information as to where that student is currently at and guide the teacher towards presenting her with further learning opportunities. A teacher might give feedback to a student (during or when she has completed work) to help that student move to the next level of attainment in present or future work. This might also be done at a whole class level. However, AFL experts

insist that effective feedback processes must include students taking on, “the responsibility of self assessing and self correcting” (Earl, 2013, p. 99). In other words, there must be a feedback system that includes feedback streams which flow out of the student back to the student, and out of one student into another. In my study I have termed this *student-generated feedback*, when feedback is created by students, either for their own work or for a peer’s work. I have deliberately avoided using the word ‘assessment’, although it is a common term in the literature and therefore appears in quotations at times, as in ‘self-assessment’ or ‘peer-assessment’. This is because students’ involvement in the actual marking of work has been shown to be problematic (Brown & Harris, 2014). Instead, student-generated feedback practices are about students coming to understand the quality of work, both theirs and others, by engaging with a success criteria rubric and writing feedback comments. Students become the source of their own feedback, which leads them to shape their next steps, initially supported by a teacher. Here the student is an important player in the development of knowledge and skill, a partner with their teacher in their learning. Black and Wiliam (1998) insist that this form of feedback, “is not an interesting option or luxury; it has to be seen as essential” (pp. 54–55).

The ability of students to interact with success criteria is the crucial foundation on which students can engage with feedback processes (Sadler, 1998; 2009; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). This involves students becoming apprentices in judgment.

Providing guided but direct and authentic evaluative experience for students enables them to develop *their* evaluative knowledge, thereby bringing them within the guild of people who are able to determine quality using multiple criteria. It also enables transfer of some of the responsibility for making decisions from teacher to learner. ...They become insiders rather than consumers. (Sadler, 1989, p. 135)

This research aims to explore the use of student-generated feedback practices by inviting students into a traditional teacher stronghold of

assessment. By learning how to judge an essay against a marking rubric as a teacher does, students become insiders in the assessment process. In doing so, they gain cognitive, metacognitive and affective benefits. My practitioner research study offers a model for introducing and using this core AFL tool which is easily replicable and fosters student engagement and self-regulation.

Students' perceptions are highly relevant in the use of feedback because it is students who are at the centre of the learning experience. Students' perceptions are relevant as the desired outcomes of AFL focus on the personal skills and attitudes of students as well as their results. Are students self-motivated? Do they engage with their learning? Have they developed practices that are self-regulating? Yet student perceptions have been largely neglected in research (Cowie, 2005; Weaver 2006). Marshall and Drummond (2006) note that most AFL research works from intervention directly to results, missing student voice. More recently, Hargreaves (2013) suggests that despite all the research and mega-studies into feedback, we still lack understanding of how feedback helps students learn partly because student voice is often not captured. "Without the learner's perspective, the crucially important affective and interactional aspects of learners' responses to feedback are likely to be missing" (Hargreaves, 2013, p. 230). It can be argued that research into students' perceptions of these practices will generate new knowledge.

Added to this is the fact that this study is teacher practitioner research. Much of the existing research has been conducted by research professionals, and successful studies into the implementation of AFL strategies have often involved high levels of intervention and support on the part of researchers to teachers with whom they have partnered (James & Pedder, 2006). In some cases the replicability of such findings has been questioned (McDonald & Boud, 2003). Other studies have occurred in experimental, non-classroom contexts with questionable transferability (Panadero, Alonso-Tapia & Huertas, 2012). Thus, not only is this study directed towards the under-researched area of student voice, but it has done so in a less common but more relevant manner. Given the emphasis

of the New Zealand curriculum on Assessment for Learning and the empowerment of the learner, this research is both timely and necessary.

Philosophical lens: social constructivism

As a learner and a teacher, I participate in, facilitate, and observe learning. To me, there is no doubt that learning occurs on several levels, both within the learner, and in concert with others. In other words, learning has both cognitive and social dimensions. While AFL has often been associated with constructivist understandings of learning, more recently socio-cultural theory has gained influence (Marshall & Drummond, 2006). Social constructivism is a natural coming together of these two philosophical branches because it acknowledges the social, contextual medium in which learning occurs, as well as the cognitive and metacognitive processes that are developed during learning (Gipps, 1999; Shepard, 2000a; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Black, McCormick, James & Pedder, 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008; Earl, 2013). This provides me with a theory rich enough to see learning in its fullness. In the literature review I explore social constructivism and its implications in more detail.

Outline of chapters

The remaining chapters of this thesis follow a typical format.

Chapter Two outlines the literature on key aspects of the study from its grounding in social constructivist philosophy, to the power of feedback as a core principle of Assessment for Learning and the particular outcomes of engagement and self-regulation.

Chapter Three explains the research method taken, based on a mixed methods research paradigm grounded in pragmatic philosophy. The participants and setting are introduced and the ten-week project process is detailed. This chapter also outlines the research tools used: a questionnaire with Likert scale responses, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, a teacher diary and essay feedback artefacts. Trustworthiness

in relation to this practitioner mixed methods study is discussed as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four outlines the research findings which include students' overall perceptions of student-generated feedback practices, a breakdown of student perceptions of the main components of the process used, as well as findings of major themes found in the data. These themes include the positive impact on learning, student confidence, expressions of student agency, as well as others.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in terms of the key practices used, moving on to discuss the evidence for student engagement and self-regulation. The outcomes of this study are explained through a social constructivist perspective of the dynamics of identity positioning in the classroom.

Finally, Chapter Six, brings a discussion of the implications for teachers and students, and the contribution this study makes to both theory and practice. The limitations of this study are also acknowledged.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review I first establish a social constructivist understanding of learning as the framework through which the impact of student-generated feedback practices is theorised in this study. Secondly, the New Zealand context where this research took place is briefly introduced, followed by an outline of the Assessment for Learning movement in which feedback is a central pillar. Next, understandings of feedback are unpacked, including the recommendations given to create effective feedback. Problematizing feedback as communication between individuals is also recognised here, as well as the impact of students' beliefs. Narrowing the focus to student-generated feedback, I move on to discuss research into its impact. The importance of creating an effective process to develop student competency is addressed, as well as the particular challenges presented by the writing classroom. This literature review leads on to outline the positive learner outcomes of engagement and self-regulation, both of which are associated with student-generated feedback practices.

A social constructivist understanding of learning

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and the 21st century revitalisation of his theories have had a profound impact on recent thinking in education (Rogoff, 1995; Gipps, 1999; Shepard, 2000b; Woodward & Munns, 2003; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Munns, Zammit & Woodward, 2008; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008; 2010; Timperley & Parr, 2009). Vygotsky's social constructivism sees learning as occurring on two planes – firstly on a social one between people, and secondly on a cognitive one within the individual (Shepard, 2000b). Vygotsky's *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) and *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) are two key elements used to explain the way children learn in a sociocultural context. The MKO may be an adult, a peer, or any tool that can be observed or interacted with by a learner. The ZPD, "is the distance between the actual developmental level

as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Shepard, 2000b, p. 19). Vygotsky’s model of supported learning was initially conceived to describe how one learns to think. Now, “the ideas of social mediation have been applied equally to the development of intelligence, expertise in academic disciplines, and metacognitive skills, and to the formation of identity” (Shepard, 2000b, p. 66). Many current theorists have used Vygotsky’s thinking as a basis for their own views, some applying it to learning contexts beyond the classroom (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995), while others have applied it to learning and assessment within the classroom (Shepard, 2000b; Pryor & Crossouard, 2010). Vygotsky saw cognitive constructivism and sociocultural theory of learning as working together (Gipps, 1999). The following section will unpack key thinking from these approaches that contribute to a social constructivist perspective of learning.

At the heart of the constructivist paradigm is the idea that all human knowledge is constructed. “According to constructivist theory, knowledge is neither passively received nor mechanically reinforced; instead learning occurs by an active process of sense-making” (Shepard, 2000b, p. 16). Gipps (1999) suggests that constructivist psychology shows learning to be, “an organic process of reorganizing and restructuring as the student learns, suggesting that learning is a process of knowledge construction” (p. 19) and that learning takes place as the interpretation of information, rather than the recording of it. This understanding has significant implications for the involvement of students in assessment. In constructivist theory new learning is shaped by prior knowledge and is a kind of, “active engagement between the knowing subject and what is known” (Gill, 1993, as cited in Pryor & Crossouard, 2010, p. 265). Teaching and learning should be seen not as a transfer of knowledge but as a constructive process of meaning-making. Learning also occurs at the metacognitive level through self-monitoring (Shepard, 2000b). In other words, self-regulatory metacognitive skills can be learned and improved rather than being set.

The sociocultural paradigm of learning has at its heart an understanding that humans are deeply affected by the social and cultural factors of context. Social factors refer to the differential and dynamic interactions between people, while cultural factors are the, “deeply rooted, but dynamic, shared beliefs and patterns of behavior... a complex set of woven-together assumptions and meanings about what is important to do and to be” (Shepard, 2012, p. xix). Therefore, a sociocultural understanding of learning asserts the primacy of the human and relational dimensions to learning by acknowledging that learning does not occur in a void but is a social and culturally situated activity. Pryor and Crossouard (2010) describe the deep-rooted ontological implications of a sociocultural understanding of learning that reshape views on knowledge. Knowledge is not understood as purely information to be transmitted from teacher to student but as an ontological practice where knowledge is understood more in terms of developing competencies that are brought into being in a social context (Cowie, 2005; Pryor & Crossouard, 2010). Knowledge can be brought into being from multiple sources (student, peer, teacher, text, etc.). This has the potential to change students’ ontological views of how a classroom works and the role of each player in that ‘world’ (Pryor & Crossouard, 2010).

Sociocultural apprenticeship models also provide a powerful explanation of how learners learn from experts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995). Learning is a transformative process which occurs during participation. It is dynamic, evolving and active to the extent that, “The process is the product” (Wertsch & Stone, 1979, as cited in Rogoff, 1995, p. 151). Rogoff (1995) describes apprenticeship as, “a process of becoming, rather than acquisition” (p. 142). Through observation and increasingly ‘hands-on’ participation, in collaboration with social partners, a newcomer grows in their skills and understanding of a particular activity until they reach a point of expertise. This model is useful in considering the role of students and teachers in the classroom culture.

Sociocultural theory also emphasises the issues of participation and identity formation in social groups (Wenger, 1998; Cowie, 2005; Pryor &

Crossouard, 2008; 2010). Identity is understood to be socially formed, sustained and transformed (Gipps, 1999). Both Rogoff's (1995), and Lave and Wenger's (1991) models of apprenticeship support this notion of identity formation through activity within a community of practice. This understanding sees a person's sense of identity as likely to vary in different social contexts, able to be shaped by external forces. This has significant implications for the classroom. If a student takes on an identity as a capable, confident learner, who is willing to take risks and is in control of their learning, they are in a much better position than a student who has taken on an identity as incapable, reliant on the teacher and helpless to change their situation in that context. Pryor and Crossouard (2008) emphasis that the teacher and students can move into different identity positions within the classroom space. The teacher could be teacher, assessor, subject expert and learner: "The educator therefore teaches different definitions of themselves to the students and develops different relations with the students through them" (p. 10). Students, likewise, can move into other positions: learner, self-assessor, peer-assessor, apprentice, expert.

The identity performances of teachers and students shape the learning culture in the classroom (Shepard, 2000a). Classroom practices, including assessment, are the ground on which these identities are formed and transformed. Assessment should be viewed as both a social process and a social product, influenced by that classroom culture. Cowie (2005) describes methods of assessment as, "simply practices which develop patterns of participation that subsequently contribute to pupils' identities as learners and knowers" (p. 137). From this perspective, Assessment for Learning strategies are practices that can allow students to develop an identity as an insider in the assessment process, with students and teachers more as partners in learning (Hawe & Dixon, 2014). The inclusion of students in assessment decisions through student-generated feedback practices has the potential to empower students and to shift the locus of control in the classroom towards students (Gipps, 1999).

By drawing from both constructivist and sociocultural understandings of learning, social constructivism recognises the internal and external factors present in a learning context. Learning becomes, "a process of both self-organization and a process of enculturation that occurs while participating in cultural practices, frequently while interacting with others" (Cobb, 1994, as cited in Gipps, 1999, p. 386). Shepard (2000b) envisages a social constructivist perspective of the classroom where, "teachers' close assessment of students' understandings, feedback from peers, and student self-assessment are a part of the social processes that mediate the development of intellectual abilities, construction of knowledge, and formation of students' identities" (p. 3). This perspective has implications for the use of student-generated feedback practices, suggesting that they could have an impact on the learner, on relationship dynamics in the classroom and on the classroom culture.

New Zealand context

The New Zealand education system's stated aim is to create people who will be, "lifelong learners and active contributors to New Zealand's social, cultural, economic, and environmental well-being" (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, & Reid, 2009, p. 6). AFL is the dominant educational framework and has shaped our curriculum and implementation of assessment (Ministry of Education, 2010). This is summarised in the following statement by the Ministry of Education: "What is important is that all assessment is used, at some level of the system or other, to improve student learning. If it isn't, it is not worth doing. If it is, then it is *assessment for learning*" (p. 20). The guiding foci of assessment are that it must benefit and involve students, support teaching and learning goals, be planned and communicated, be suited to the purpose, and be valid and fair (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 40). At the senior secondary school level our national qualifications system, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a flexible, standards-based system which has the ability to allow schools and teachers to shape individual programmes designed for their students' needs and interests. These programmes usually include a mix of internal and external assessments. Grades are determined on a

standards-based scale of Not Achieved, Achieved, Merit and Excellence. It is normal practice for examination-based assessments, such as 'response to text' essay writing on literature in English, to be prepared for during the year through a number of formative assessment opportunities. In the case of English this takes the form of practice essays.

Student-generated feedback practices are explicitly recommended by the Ministry of Education, with a core understanding that assessment is not something that should be done *to* students by others, but something that they should be involved in at every level.

All young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning. Students who have well developed assessment capabilities are able and motivated to access, interpret, and use information from quality assessment in ways that affirm or further their learning. (Absolum et al., 2009, p. 5)

Despite this solid foundation, research indicates that student-generated feedback practices often are not implemented in ways that effectively enhance student learning (Harris & Brown, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014) and that still the most common form of feedback is from teacher to student, without the student being involved in the assessment process at all. The ideals of the New Zealand curriculum are yet to be fully realised.

Assessment for Learning

As mentioned above, Assessment for Learning, otherwise termed formative assessment, is based on the understanding that learning can and should occur *through* assessment, rather than that assessment is merely the end-point summative evaluation of a student's work (Pryor & Crossouard, 2010). This sees learning as a central purpose of assessment not just grading, reporting and certification. Marshall and Drummond (2006) suggest that much of the work on AFL has come out of what might broadly be called cognitive constructivist theories of learning. More recently sociocultural theory, used widely in human development and culture studies, has come to the fore as a framework in which to view

learning in educational theory. As discussed above, the combination of both cognitive constructivist theories and sociocultural theories has enabled a richer appreciation of how learning occurs so that the implementation of AFL is understood as both a cognitive and social process (Gipps, 1999; Shepard, 2000a; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Black et al., 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008; Earl, 2013).

The ideals of Assessment for Learning see that, “the learner is a partner in learning, not a passive recipient – and this means that . . . they have a stake in and a responsibility for their own learning” (Clarke, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, increasing student assessment capability (Absolum et al., 2009), that is, their understanding around the purpose, process, and expected results of assessment, is crucial. AFL focuses on student-centred formative assessment strategies such as: questioning and reviewing strategies that promote quality thinking; the creation and monitoring of goals; sharing criteria and expected performance models with learners; and the generation of feedback regarding current and desired performance, especially through student self and peer assessment (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003; James & Pedder, 2006; Hawe & Parr, 2014). These activities occur within a social context, where students have relationships with their teacher and peers and where the learning culture of the classroom affects learning outcomes.

The aims of AFL are expressed variously but centre on the ideal of creating lifelong learners through the development of desirable self-regulation attitudes and skills (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Marshall & Drummond, 2006). Increasing student engagement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Munns & Woodward, 2006) and changing classroom culture by increasing student agency (James & Pedder, 2006) are other powerful benefits of AFL. However, it is also acknowledged that the implementation of these strategies is crucial to their impact and that none of the above benefits may be created if implementation is poor (James & Pedder, 2006; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Earl, 2013; Hawe & Parr, 2014).

Feedback

Feedback is what happens second, is one of the most powerful influences on learning, too rarely occurs, and needs to be more fully researched by qualitatively and quantitatively investigating how feedback works in the classroom and learning process. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 204)

Feedback is a central pillar of AFL (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Black et al., 2003; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Earl, 2013). In my study, feedback refers, in practical terms, to the written feedback (possibly supported verbally) students and teachers apply to a completed piece of written work on current performance and the next steps needed for improved performance. For this reason, feedback is chiefly conceptualised in this study as information. Butler and Winnie's (1995) definition is a good starting point: feedback is, "information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies" (p. 275). I would add to Butler and Winnie's definition from a social constructivist perspective that, *feedback is information developed in a socially mediated context, through working with a product against a standard, which gives opportunities to respond cognitively, affectively and/or by taking action*. Further elaboration of the importance of the social context is below.

Feedback has been established as one of the most critical influences on student learning (Butler & Winnie, 1995; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Black et al., 2003; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, researchers have been troubled by the highly variable and inconsistent findings of meta-studies which show that getting feedback right is not easy. Reports of meta-analyses have shown that feedback can produce positive or negative effects depending on its quality (Timperley & Parr, 2009). For example, Timperley and Parr (2009) reported that about one third of the total studies reviewed in two landmark

meta-analyses – Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991 and Kluger & DeNisi, 1996 – showed negative effects of feedback on learning. However, Shepard (2000a) points out that much of these studies were based on behaviourist theories of learning, with narrow indicators of achievement and limited means of feedback consisting of the reporting on right/wrong answers.

Shepard (2000b) promotes a Vygotskian approach to feedback, seeing it as operating in the *zone of proximal development*, building bridges between current performance and improved performance. Feedback operates on Vygotsky's two planes of learning – through the social context in which feedback occurs and within the cognitive processes of the individual. The social dimension to learning is highly significant (Sadler, 1998; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2001) and could affect the learner in multiple ways. In particular, learners need to develop skills to interpret feedback so as to make it accessible (Sadler, 1998). How and in what social context this development process occurs is crucial. Also for feedback to promote learning it needs to be received *mindfully*, not *mindlessly* (Shute, 2008), therefore the context in which the learner receives and interacts with feedback is of vital importance. Finally, the feedback process should lead to action (Cowie, 2005), therefore, time and space need to be given for the assimilation of feedback information and for the opportunity to act on it.

An appreciation of the difficulty of clear communication is vital to understanding the challenge behind feedback from another person. The social dimension of feedback, embedded in social relationships must be considered when designing feedback processes (Sadler, 1998; Higgins et al., 2001). Indeed, when feedback is viewed as, “an essentially *problematic* form of communication involving particular social relationships, we may begin to understand how external conditions interplay, mediate (and are mediated by) patterns of power, authority, emotion and identity” (Higgins et al., p. 273). Research shows that successful feedback can be limited by the quality of communication produced by the teacher (Weaver, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008) or by the ability of the student to receive and utilise teacher

feedback (Wojtas, 1998; Weaver, 2006). An understanding that language is inherently ambiguous or 'slippery', with meaning under continual negotiation, is at the root of communication difficulties between feedback giver and receiver (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). On the side of the teacher it may be vagueness or a lack of clear guidance that limits the effectiveness of their communication. On the student side, misinterpretation, emotional responses to the language used in feedback, and a lack of ability to understand the tacit as well as explicit messages of feedback may limit their ability to respond to feedback. For example, Weaver (2006), studying student perceptions of tutor feedback at a university, reported that:

There may be some truth to the claim by some academics that students do not 'bother with' feedback, but in light of these findings, this may be because either the feedback does not contain enough to guide or motivate students, or they have insufficient understanding of academic discourse to interpret comments accurately. (Weaver, 2006, p. 390)

In the primary school setting Hargreaves (2013) also found that nine and ten year-old students struggled to appreciate teacher feedback, some found it too directive, while others found it too vague. Effective communication, within social relationships, must be at the heart of feedback processes.

Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006) promote the conceptualisation of feedback as a dialogue between student and teacher. This means that initial feedback operates more as a discussion opener than as a completed one-off transaction.

On the second Vygotskian plane, feedback triggers cognitive processes which can encourage the verification or adjustment of understanding, point to filling in gaps and indicate alternative strategies (Sadler, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, feedback also interacts with students' motivations and beliefs (Butler & Winnie, 1995; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Millar & Lavin, 2007; Wingate, 2010). Butler and Winnie (1995)

assert that students have, “reasonably stable and relatively potent systems of belief concerning subject areas, learning process and the products of learning” (Butler & Winnie, 1995, p. 254). In particular, epistemological beliefs about learning such as: how quickly learning is acquired; the extent to which effort is required; and the certainty of knowledge (whether ambiguity is allowable), all affect student motivation and effort (Schommer, 1990). Learners’ beliefs impact how they filter and interpret feedback (Butler & Winnie, 1995) and whether they are motivated to engage with self assessment (Tan, Teo & Ng, 2011). Wingate (2010) also found that student enjoyment and perceptions of competency in a given area can affect student motivation. If students’ beliefs are narrow, limited or negatively geared, it may discourage students from interacting with feedback or taking action. It is also important to note that the same can be said of teachers. When their tacit beliefs about learning and roles in the classroom are incongruous with AFL principles, the implementation of feedback strategies may have limited success (Dixon, Hawe & Parr, 2011).

This research suggests that within Vygotsky’s two learning planes the learner has opportunities to overcome their initial beliefs. Firstly, the social context in which a learner operates could be powerful enough to challenge and overcome a learner’s beliefs. Through their interactions with others the learner may take on feedback in the social plane which enables them to process it in the cognitive plane. Secondly, if cognitive processes could be applied that are successful in building a learner’s ability to interact with feedback, they may be powerful enough to change a learner’s beliefs.

While many educationalists have sought to categorise feedback according to positive or negative traits, all with their own terminology, Sadler (2010) focuses on describing desirable feedback by its *functions*. Firstly, feedback should function to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current performance of a learner, with a rationale for those judgments. Secondly, feedback should function to provide advice on how to improve the work. This ‘feed-forward’ (Timperley & Parr, 2009) should have an orientation general enough to be of use for future work (Sadler, 2010). It is

also useful to consider specific factors identified as affecting the quality of feedback. These factors include: the length, complexity and specificity of comments; the timeliness of receiving feedback; the perceived personal or objective nature of that feedback; and the relationship of comments to the task objectives and to the prior knowledge of the learner (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008; Timperley & Parr, 2009; Earl, 2013). Shute (2008) advises to: focus feedback on the task not the student; provide elaborated feedback in manageable units; be specific and clear; be unbiased and objective; keep it as simple as possible but no simpler; promote learning goal orientation; be cautious about providing an overall grade; use praise sparingly if at all; promote transference of learning and consider using delayed feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) give a similarly useful overview:

To be effective, feedback needs to be clear, purposeful, meaningful, and compatible with students' prior knowledge and to provide logical connections. It also needs to prompt active information processing on the part of learners, have low task complexity, relate to specific and clear goals, and provide little threat to the person at the self level. (p. 104)

It is also noted that where there is a total lack of understanding feedback will not be effective. Here further teaching is required (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The feedback source: student-generated feedback

Student self and peer assessment (called student-generated feedback in this study) is the evaluation of a student's own work processes and product by themselves or a peer (Brown & Harris, 2014). The focus in this study is primarily on student self-generated feedback, although an opportunity for peer feedback was offered and taken up by some of the students.

Student-generated feedback is seen by many to be a more effective feedback practice than traditional teacher-only feedback (Sadler, 1989;

Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Earl, 2013; Harris, Brown & Harnett, 2015). It has been linked to powerful increases in student engagement, positive changes in the learning culture of classrooms (Woodward & Munns, 2003), and increased student self-regulation (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 2009; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013). Additionally, it can also have a positive impact on results (McDonald & Boud, 2003).

Sadler (1989) describes student-generated feedback as bringing students into the 'guild knowledge' of assessment through first-hand, proactive experience, rather than as passive recipients of teacher feedback. This description aligns with apprenticeship models of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995) as discussed above. Shepard (2000b) describes the ideal of self-generated feedback as serving multiple purposes: to motivate students through increased responsibility in their learning; to develop cognitive performance and metacognitive skills; and to change the power dynamic in the classroom. "Engaging students in debates about standards and in reflecting on their own work can increase students' responsibility for their own learning and redistribute power, making the relationship between teacher and students more collaborative" (Shepard, 2000b, p. 61).

Self-generated feedback has the particular advantage of developing the student's intimate knowledge of their own work. While peer feedback has the advantage of developing skills and knowledge through somebody else's work where there is less at stake emotionally than with their own (William, 2014). William (2014) notes that the quality of the feedback-giver's own work increases through peer feedback because they have come to understand the task requirements better. The use of self and peer feedback is a key vehicle through which students' assessment capabilities can be enhanced. Yet, it is still being under-utilised (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Student-generated feedback can cause contention when it is viewed as an assessment tool. While some research shows that students are generally, "honest and reliable in assessing both themselves and one another" (Black & William, 1998, p. 143), other studies suggest that student-generated feedback fails the validity and reliability requirements of robust

assessment on which reporting, grading or making changes to classroom practice should be made (Harris & Brown, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). Other issues around actual assessment are that students can feel strongly opposed to having the responsibility for grading their own or a peer's work (Liu & Carless, 2006). When the orientation of student-generated feedback is to promote learning rather than to generate assessment results these difficulties are no longer relevant (Brown & Harris, 2014).

The importance of the process

“In order to understand how to progress, pupils need to acquire the guild subject knowledge of their teachers by being apprenticed into the same community of interpreters” (Marshall, 2004, p. 101).

As introduced above, there are significant issues with the successful implementation of AFL principles, including student-generated feedback practices. If implemented badly it does not produce benefits (Torrance, 2007; Earl, 2013). Harris and Brown (2013) note the ad hoc fashion in which AFL is often implemented, while Pryor and Crossouard (2008) comment on overly simplistic implementation. Research consistently suggests that teachers need to carefully and explicitly teach feedback strategies and practices to enable students to produce useful feedback (Sadler, 1998; Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Smith, Worsfold, Davies, Fisher, & McPhail, 2011; Panadero & Alonso, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). Even when teachers express strong pedagogical affiliation with AFL principles and describe strategies to build student capability there may be a gap in their ability to successfully lead students into effective practices (James & Pedder, 2006; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Earl, 2013; Dixon, Hawe & Parr, 2011; Hawe & Parr, 2014; Hawe & Dixon, 2014). For example, Hawe and Parr (2014) observed the practice of eighteen New Zealand middle school teachers over a year of work on writing and found that they followed the letter rather than the spirit of AFL, limiting its effectiveness. “Even when teachers believe in and are committed to student independence and autonomy, they have found related strategies such as peer feedback and self-monitoring difficult to implement” (Hawe & Parr,

2014, p. 230). Harris and Brown (2013), in three New Zealand classrooms, found that the teachers and students needed greater understanding of how to use student-generated feedback for improvement and self-regulation purposes rather than focusing on issues of student accuracy and managing social interactions. Interestingly, Brown and Harris (2014) have recently suggested that, in fact, the use of AFL strategies should be integrated into the curriculum. They see benefit to be gained from developing skills in a systematic manner and suggest that AFL strategies sit on a continuum of complexity and should be viewed as competencies of self-regulation that need to be taught.

Furthermore, Sadler (1998; 2009) makes a powerful argument that students must be inducted into the process of making reasoned qualitative evaluative judgments with access to the same resources available to a teacher. As discussed above, both theory and research support an apprenticeship model, where students are developing expertise alongside a *more knowledgeable other*, in a community of practice, in order to develop skills that are increasingly comparable to that of the teacher. The desired outcome is that students become increasingly responsible participants in that community of practice. In this case, given a good process, students are given the opportunity to become increasingly proficient evaluators of assessment work and skilled at giving feedback.

There are three key elements that should be cultivated in a successful skills development process:

1. Clarification or deconstruction of the success criteria (Torrance & Pryor, 2001; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008), including skill development in the use of a rubric if one is being used. This is because the act of making qualitative evaluative judgments across multiple criteria is a complex skill that must be cultivated (Sadler, 2009; Smith et al., 2011; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013).
2. Access to carefully selected exemplars that show the full range of quality. Without relevant examples students have little ability to

interpret abstract terminology and descriptions with any certainty (Sadler, 2009).

3. Ability to practice these evaluative skills to develop expertise. As Sadler (2009) comments, “no amount of telling, showing or discussing is a substitute for one’s own experience” (p. 49).

The use of a rubric tool

Many experts emphasise the importance of making judgments against stable criteria (Sadler, 1989) and that clarity of goals is created through ‘success criteria’ such as that provided in a rubric (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Students need to be able to see the gap between current and desired performance in order to be motivated to try to close it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Since the mid-1990s rubrics have become popular with teachers (Sadler, 2009; Andrade & Du, 2005; Johnson & Gelfand, 2013). Positive outcomes of the use of rubrics include assertions that rubrics can be used to support learning and encourage sophisticated thinking skills (Andrade & Du, 2005). Panadero and Jonsson (2013) found that rubrics can be used to validly assess multidimensional performance, and are at least moderately reliable in measuring complex performances. They suggest that rubrics can aid improved student performance through reducing anxiety, increasing transparency, aiding the feedback process, improving student self-efficacy and supporting self-regulation. However, there are varied understandings of rubrics and how to use them (Sadler, 2009). A survey of 21 studies on the use of rubrics suggests that there is a lack of consistency in approaching the development of students’ skills in using a rubric, and mixed results. Some studies use exemplars, some don’t offer exemplars, some give time to develop skills, some present the rubric mid-task (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). The most successful studies indicate that, with a clear and purposeful process, rubrics can have positive effects. That process should include the use of a rubric in combination with exemplars (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). One example of a successful process is Johnson and Gelfand (2013) in a Year 2 classroom, working on developing writing. They first provided students

with ample quality exemplars (for one month), then co-created a rubric, followed by student self-assessment and teacher conferencing for teacher assessment. They found positive attitude changes in students towards themselves as writers and positive attitudes towards the use of a rubric.

The writing classroom context

The writing classroom context is a particularly difficult one for assessment as there is no defined body of content and performance is based on a combination of qualities that lead to an assessable whole but are often not reducible (Marshall, 2004). Quality performance is usually about originality of thinking and expression and therefore defies a formulaic approach. Consequently, writing is most appropriately described as an art (Marshall, 2004; Hawe & Dixon, 2014). Expressions of good writing can involve a complexity and diversity of features. Sadler (2009) describes the necessity of selecting the most salient, describable features used by assessors in a success criteria, such as a rubric, as the 'manifest criteria.' Manifest criteria often tends to over-emphasise the structural or more easily identifiable features of good writing, while not expressing the 'latent', harder to define features of an individual's work (Sadler, 2009; Hawe & Dixon, 2014). Moreover, while writing is an essential skill, students often feel that they are not effective writers and lack a clear sense of how to improve their writing skills, which can create negative accompanying feelings (Johnson & Gelfand, 2013).

Evaluating writing is therefore particularly challenging for novice students. Aspects that help build students' assessment capabilities in writing include: developing an understanding of writing features through the analysis and discussion of carefully selected exemplars (Hawe & Dixon, 2014); and the actual experience of assessing work (Sadler, 2009). Therefore, students must be given the opportunity to develop these skills so that their understanding of quality is more closely aligned with that of their experienced teacher (Sadler, 2009). Research suggests that this level of assessment capability development has yet to be realised in the writing classroom context with many teachers continuing a traditional,

teacher-led style of assessment (Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Hawe & Parr, 2014).

The link to student engagement and self-regulation

Research suggests that student-generated feedback offers the possibility of developing attitudes and behaviours that will benefit student learning in both an immediate context and in the longer term. I have chosen to use the term *student engagement* to cover the sense of immediate impact on students' attitudes and behaviours, and the term *student self-regulation*, as a more far-reaching impact on students' cognitive processes and behaviours. From a social constructivist perspective both engagement and self-regulation occur across Vygotsky's two planes of learning – social and cognitive.

Student engagement

Engagement is a term often used by educationalists to mean students' engagement with school and their schooling, as a way of countering school dropout rates and improving outcomes for at risk or low achieving students (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Sheppard, 2011; Christenson, Reschly & Wylie, 2012). In this study engagement is used in a narrower, more limited manner, as classroom teachers generally do, as enthusiastic participation by students in classroom experiences and activities where they show interest and care in their work (e.g., "This unit has really engaged my students." "In today's lesson the students were engaged with the material.") Munns and Woodward (2006) provide an appropriate definition: Student engagement is a, "*substantive* sense of satisfaction with, and a psychological investment in, the classroom work being undertaken" (p. 194). It is more than just being 'on task' but involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment by students. Using Fredricks et al.'s (2004) 'multidimensional construct' model, but still in this limited classroom-based sense, student engagement is when students are simultaneously:

- reflectively involved in deep understanding and expertise (high cognition)
- genuinely valuing what they are doing (high emotion)
- actively participating in school and classroom activities (high behaviour)” (Munns & Woodward, 2006, p. 193)

Or, put even more simply, engagement is when, “students are thinking hard, feeling good and working well” (Munns et al., 2008, p. 160).

Student-generated feedback practices are linked to the creation of substantial student engagement (Woodward & Munns, 2003; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Earl, 2013). They do this by enabling students to become insiders in the learning community of the classroom (Woodward & Munns, 2003; Munns & Woodward, 2006) rather than passive bystanders.

Student self-regulation

Self-regulated learning with a social constructivist emphasis is, “an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment” (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002, p. 64). This definition reflects the key principle of students taking responsibility for their learning (Zimmerman, 2008). It also acknowledges the cognitive, affective and behavioural processes involved in self-regulation while recognising that contextual features, including things such as the conditions of assessment, and the social context of the learning, play a part in the ability of a learner to self-regulate. Significantly, experts assert that self-regulatory skills can be taught and learnt (Andrade, 2010; Hargreaves, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). In this study student self-regulation is viewed as a ‘next layer up’ from student engagement. It has a sense of continuation beyond the immediate content and activities of the classroom, impacting on students’ thinking, beliefs and behaviour in a more far-reaching manner.

Research supports the idea that self-regulatory thinking processes, attitudes and behaviours can be developed through the use of student-generated feedback practices (Shepard, 2000b; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Andrade, 2010; Earl, 2013; Hargreaves, 2013; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). The development of cognitive routines and the use of metacognitive monitoring are signs of self-regulated learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Practical action taken in response to feedback or to enhance learning is another aspect of self-regulation (Wingate, 2010). Wingate (2010) describes actions taken by undergraduate students responding to feedback on a writing task which included: seeking resources to assist in filling in competency gaps (e.g., getting a book on academic writing from the library); seeking help from the tutor to develop a coherent structure; and bringing additional proofreading strategies into play.

When understood from a social constructivist perspective as something that can be developed in a supportive social context, self-regulated learning is seen as a goal of the learning context, not an innate set of abilities. Timperley and Parr (2009) describe this as a Vygotskian understanding of self-regulation. The *zone of proximal development* allows students to move towards independence as initial scaffolding and support is reduced as student capacity increases (Gipps, 1999; Timperley & Parr, 2009). This is the case for aspects of self-regulation such as monitoring of progress, which can initially be done by another (most likely the teacher) and can gradually be replaced by self-monitoring. Thus, “for every individual at any point in time, there will be a mix of other regulation, self-regulation and other automatised processes” (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, as cited in Timperley & Parr, 2009, p. 44).

By situating feedback within a model of self-regulating learning, student-generated feedback processes can help students take control of their own learning (Butler & Winnie, 1995; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Earl, 2013).

Effective feedback forms the core of assessment for self-regulation because learners are encouraged to articulate their existing motives, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and knowledgeable skills and make this tacit knowledge that is hidden within the learner transparent, explicit, and available. When feedback allows students to see the gap between their actual production and some reference point that makes sense to them, they are both motivated and able to work with their conceptions and make adjustments. (Earl, 2013, p. 115)

However, other research suggests that it may be naive to expect that all students will be interested in being empowered in assessment and that all students are equally ready to use self-assessment opportunities to exercise self-regulation. Tan, Teo and Ng's (2011) phenomenographic study based on an 'ego test' and interviews, identified three 'types' of students: compliant, reliant and defiant. They found a link between student confidence/ego and their ability to engage with self-assessment. Only 'defiant' students were able to engage in independent thought to, "go beyond understanding the teacher's interpretation of standards and criteria by contemplating what these should mean for themselves when self-assessing" (p. 6). Leach, Neutze & Zepke (2001), on interviewing students, found a range of opinions about the desirability of student independence and self-regulation. Some students wanted to engage in assessment as a partner with the teacher, while others wanted to be assessed externally without any input. They, seemingly, didn't want to take a leading role in their learning but were more comfortable in a subordinate role. It is worth noting that this variation may align with cultural differences in teaching – learning styles, as well as personality differences. These are complex issues, largely beyond the scope of this study, that suggest some students are likely to more easily embrace the opportunity of student-generated feedback than others. It also suggests that the process, including the training elements, will be critical in developing students' interest and capabilities.

Conclusion

This literature review has placed my research in the context of a social constructivist view of learning. Research on student-generated feedback as a core principle of Assessment for Learning has been presented, showing the challenges to its successful implementation and the importance of creating an effective process. The writing classroom context has been explored, suggesting that it is an appropriate and useful medium for student-generated feedback practices. Finally, this literature review has explored the research on the positive learner outcomes of student engagement and student self-regulation, both of which are associated with student-generated feedback practices and are indicative of a lifelong learner.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter begins by establishing my research as practitioner research and discussing the research design and paradigm chosen in the light of this. Next, I introduce the participants and setting of the study, along with an outline of the research process. The four research instruments chosen for this study are then outlined. Issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research are next addressed, including the approach taken to the analysis of the data. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study are discussed.

Research design and paradigm

My research is practitioner research. A mixed methods paradigm was chosen because of this to address issues of trustworthiness in the study. The mixed methods approach is supported by pragmatic philosophy, a common and natural pairing (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, (2004). These choices work in harmony with the social constructivist view of learning which is the overarching philosophical underpinning of this study.

Practitioner research

Practitioner research is the intentional and systematic study of an aspect of a practitioner's own practice in their own professional context, where outcomes are shared with other practitioners (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011). Practitioner research is directed "towards studying, reframing, and reconstructing practices that are by their very nature social" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 381). Acknowledging this social dynamic leads to an understanding that the practitioner-researcher is ideally positioned to conduct research as they are part of the naturally occurring social situation of the learner. This works harmoniously with the social constructivist view of learning that underpins this study. Practitioner research is a unique research position, providing the researcher with the ability to move between insider-teacher and outsider-researcher perspectives. While this positioning may be criticised for lacking

objectivity, the blurring of boundaries between research and practice creates unique opportunities for research to actually result in change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007). Indeed, to study practice is to be changed, as the power of the experience of researching itself is transformational (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Menter et al., 2011). Menter et al. (2011) note that transformational change occurs at all levels, from epistemological perspectives, through to conceptual understandings of classroom practice. The clear link between theory and practice makes practitioner research a powerful form of research, as well as an important part of the reflective nature of teaching. While teachers are continually reflecting on and changing practice to better meet student needs, this does not often amount to systematic research. By following a careful research process, the findings of my study are more than anecdotal and can contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the impact of AFL.

Mixed methods paradigm

A paradigm is a set of beliefs of ontology (the nature of reality), axiology (ethics), epistemology (the nature of knowledge) and methodology (the nature of inquiry) that guides practice. Like Mertens (2010), I reject an a-paradigmatic position which suggests that responding to situational demands is all that is needed in a research design. Not engaging with a philosophical paradigm does not create neutrality, but reflects unexamined assumptions (Mertens, 2010), and a naïve approach to research.

Mixed methods research is seen as a third methodological paradigm, a middle ground, both philosophically and methodologically, between the quantitative and qualitative paradigmatic approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It has been described as, “an orientation toward social inquiry that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued” (Greene, 2008, as cited in Evans, Coon & Ume, 2011, p. 277). Mixed methods allows for the distinctive mixing of qualitative and quantitative practices (Evans et al., 2011), breaking down an arguably

false qualitative–quantitative dichotomy (Gorard, 2001; Ercikan & Roth, 2006). It is underpinned by a theoretical emphasis on creating a research design that responds to the research question. This means that as an, “explicitly value-oriented approach to research” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17) I have been able to choose a range of simple methods based on their value in this context, rather than because they exist within a certain tradition. By combining the rich data of human interaction and language, with the ability to look at simple statistical evidence (Perry, 2009) I have created a more robust product (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism

Pragmatic philosophy underpins the thinking of many proponents of the mixed methods approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Perry, 2009; Mertens, 2010). Pragmatism posits, “that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected” (McDermid, n.d.). Evans et al. (2011) suggest that pragmatism, with its emphasis on action and reflection, is well suited to an understanding that research is a craft, where epistemologies are not clear-cut and where methods must be flexible with a given context. Thus, pragmatism rejects rigid adherence to a particular methodological orthodoxy (Evans et al., 2011). Pragmatism offers this study an approach that is, “abductive, in which reasoning moves back and forth between induction/deduction and subjectivity/objectivity, just as practicing researchers actually do” (Evan et al., 2011, p. 277). This dynamic movement mirrors the reflexivity found in teaching, creating consistency between philosophical orientation, methodology and practitioner context.

Participants and the setting

This research has taken place in my 2015 Year 13 English class. Eleven out of the seventeen students responded to the invitation to participate. The school context is a decile 10 equivalent private school with a mixed demographic of boarding and day students, some from rural New Zealand,

some from the local city and others from overseas. While there is a mix of cultures in the class, the cultural mix of my eleven volunteers was majority white New Zealanders (like myself), with one Continental European (Russian). This mix of volunteers was less varied than the overall school demographic.

As it was my Year 13 class, where students are in their final year of school and English is an option subject, it can be surmised that the students were reasonably motivated to achieve. Added to this was that at the school there were two English programmes on offer, a literature-based programme and a visual-verbal programme. My class was a literature-based course and it may be argued that slightly more academically focused students chose it. The volunteer students still represented a mix of abilities working across the full range of achievement levels in all aspects of the Level 3 NCEA course, from Not Achieved, Achieved, and Merit, through to gaining Excellence results.

The project process

The following table outlines the process that the participants experienced over the ten-week period.

Table 1: The project process

Stage	Description	Time
Skills development phase	Step one: unpack the success criteria Step two: observe a teacher-marked essay Step three: mark two exemplars	Two one-hour periods
<i>Students write a formative assessment 'response to text' essay</i>		
First feedback	Write self-feedback	30 minutes (needed more)
	Read and reflect on follow-on teacher feedback	15 minutes
<i>Further teaching and learning on text content Brief recap on success criteria levels</i>		
<i>Students write a second formative assessment 'response to text' essay</i>		
Second feedback	Peer or self-feedback	A one-hour period
	Read and reflect on follow-on teacher feedback	15 minutes
<i>Further teaching and learning: unpacking essay questions</i>		
<i>Students write a third formative assessment 'response to text' essay in the school trial examinations</i>		
Third feedback	Write self-feedback, then immediately look at teacher feedback which had been written beforehand because of the examination marking requirements	A one-hour period

Over this period of time I kept a diary to record my observations and thoughts of the process (see Appendix C). At the beginning of the next term students filled out a questionnaire which contained Likert scale questions and places to write reasons for their answers. This was followed by individual, semi-structured interviews.

Detailed description of the process

The purpose of using student-generated feedback is to engage students in the active process of judging an essay, from a marker's point of view, and giving feedback on next steps needed. This is in order to lead students into greater learning than what may be achieved by being a passive receiver of traditional teacher-only feedback. The research-based emphasis on the need for full and careful development of students' skills (Sadler, 1998; Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013) led me to create a process which spanned a ten-week term. It involved a carefully thought-out two-period skills development phase, followed by students creating three practice essays and creating in self or peer feedback from those essays across the term. The goal of the skills development phase was to "bring learners at least partly into the guild of professionals who are able to make valid and reliable appraisals of complex works using all the tools at their disposal" (Sadler, 2009, p. 56). The student-generated feedback opportunities were a recognition that "no amount of telling, showing or discussing is a substitute for one's own experience" (Sadler, 2009, p. 49).

Mindful of expert advice (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008; Sadler, 2009) the two-period skills development phase had three steps which focused on bringing students to as clear as possible an understanding of the success criteria. Step one: unpacking the success criteria in the form of a rubric (see Appendix F). I made a number of choices related to the use of a rubric. Firstly, I chose to use a rubric as an appropriate assessment tool to outline multi-dimensional criteria, with descriptions of performance across increasing levels of sophistication or difficulty. The implicit goal was to move across the levels of the rubric towards increasing mastery and sophistication of the task. I created this rubric based on Level 3 NCEA Achievement Standard 91472: Respond Critically to Written Text criteria and advice found in an August 2014 English curriculum newsletter. I tried to use little jargoned language and to make meaning clear.

Secondly, while some researchers have shown benefits to involving students in the creation of rubrics (Andrade, 2000), I chose not to. In terms

of novice vs expert knowledge, students are at the beginning of the journey, prior to being initiated into the assessment 'guild' and a rubric takes very careful development. To my mind my students were not yet ready to partner in the creation of such a delicate resource. Instead, I worked hard to help them understand the wording and meaning of the rubric and to help them learn how to apply it.

Thirdly, I chose to use pre-set criteria, rather than Sadler's (2009) suggestion of only a basic 'manifest' criteria and a developing list of 'latent criteria'. This is because, in my judgment, Sadler's critique of a pre-set multi-criteria rubric is largely managed by considering the rubric from a flexible 'best fit', holistic angle and that it is unnecessarily confusing for students to be wondering what other 'latent' criteria a work may or may not have. In terms of giving feedback, it creates too much uncertainty. In the unpacking of the rubric I tried to make explicit the limitations of rubrics if they are used too rigidly (Sadler, 2009). I encouraged students to ask questions of the terminology and meaning, going around later to ask if there were questions (one student asked for clarification of one descriptor).

Step two: each student was given a copy of a teacher-marked essay (Low Merit: see Appendix G) which had annotation throughout and written feedback given. I took students through this exemplar, making explicit the thinking behind comments, relating back to the rubric. In particular, I had in mind the importance of showing that writing as more of an art (Marshall, 2004), that making qualitative judgments requires balancing general global impressions with identifiable specific features (Sadler, 2009), and that it takes practice to become confident, with subjective differences still possible even between experienced markers.

Step three: students were given, one at a time, three different exemplars of varying levels, deliberating not in an ascending or descending order (Low Achieved, High Merit, High Achieved) to mark. This involved annotating the essay, ticking the rubric in places where descriptors seemed to fit best and assigning an overall grade. Students then had to write two-step feedback – 'What is going well?' (a feedback question that

confirms what is working well) and 'What areas could be a focus for further learning?' (a feed-forward question designed to target weaknesses and to advise on areas that would build into a better answer). This was a variation on Hattie and Timperley's (2007) three-fold question model for effective feedback: "Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)" (p. 86) which has become widely accepted.

In providing examples of feedback I was again mindful of expert advice on desirable qualities of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). The feedback modelled and wanted of students largely functioned as Sadler (2010) advised. It identified the strengths and weaknesses of the essay and provided advice on how to improve the work. In particular, this included comments about how the essay was constructed and the elements it contained or was missing, and the strategies that make up essay writing. For example: good use of topic sentences; you maintain a clear line of argument from your thesis; more beyond the text connection is needed; more text detailing and quotation is needed etc. The feedback given on one essay was therefore able to help students write subsequent essays, on different essay questions, because much of the feedback worked at the level of how to write and what elements were needed rather than specific details. I was also mindful that students often struggle with writing and lack confidence in their ability to change their writing, with potentially negative accompanying feelings (Johnson & Gelfand, 2013). I therefore sought to show how writing could be improved through specific focused efforts relating to rubric criteria.

After the skills development phase, students had three separate opportunities to create self or peer feedback staggered through the ten weeks. It should be noted that in this study student-generated feedback did not replace teacher feedback, but was created prior to teacher feedback. Follow-on teacher feedback was then used to confirm or correct student feedback, with the goal of enhancing student learning. This is in line with Sadler's (2009) understanding that 'guild knowledge' takes time

to develop and that a teacher has marking expertise and experience that cannot quickly be equalled.

On the first occasion I only offered self-generated feedback, followed by teacher feedback. This led to further teaching and learning on text knowledge of the literature being written about as a gap was evident from the quality of their essay writing. A second practice essay followed and, as there had been a gap of time since we had discussed the success criteria, I briefly overviewed the levels for students before beginning. This time the option of peer feedback was available. Seven students chose this, while four preferred to do self-generated feedback again. I chose to not make peer feedback compulsory because of my understanding of the importance of creating a safe, non-threatening learning environment. Again teacher feedback followed their feedback. This led to further teaching and learning on how to unpack essay questions as it was evident that despite improved text knowledge, students needed help on how to answer an essay question. The third essay was written in the school trial examination. I marked it as required to do, and had those marks moderated by a colleague, but on a separate paper to their exam booklet. I then asked students to apply their own self-generated feedback to their essay before being given my mark.

Research tools

In keeping with the mixed methods approach, this study used four means of data collection. This allows for: “triangulation of data, the development of richer analysis and the illustration of findings” (Kara, 2005, p. 111). The first two methods used I consider to be fundamental, while the second two operate in a lesser, supporting role.

- A Likert scale questionnaire, with accompanying written explanatory comments
- Individual semi-structured interviews
- A teacher observational diary written during the process
- Basic analysis of the students’ feedback from the three essays written

Students completed the questionnaire and participated in an interview following the ten-week project. The quantitative data obtainable from the Likert scale question answers generated concrete, clear responses to questions and the ability to readily look at the group as a whole, while the richer qualitative data has allowed individual experience to be explored. The teacher observational diary was written during the research process, at key moments, to record my thoughts and reflections as both teacher and as researcher. It was useful in the shaping of my thoughts throughout the process and now provides interesting insights that support the other findings. Further to this, I analysed the quality of the student feedback from their essays, with a focus on the final essay marking and feedback comments. These methods have been practicable, used successfully by others in similar studies (Johnson & Gelfand, 2013) and are appropriate within the practitioner research context for generating evidence that addresses my research question. Below I will address understandings of these research instruments and considerations of their use.

Likert scale questionnaire with explanatory comments

There were 11 questions posed in this questionnaire, most using a Likert scale of sliding responses for students to choose from. A few questions were not Likert scale but listed various descriptors for students to choose a response. Most questions also had a follow-on space for students to give an explanatory comment as to why they had given that answer. The Likert scale responses have allowed the study to contain some basic countable quantitative data while the explanatory comments have provided additional qualitative material to support the interview data. This has allowed me to easily assess common ground between the eleven student participants, highlighting common sentiments or areas where students have distinct perspectives.

Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used tools in educational research, with both advantages and disadvantages (Menter, et al., 2011). Gorard (2010) comments that no research method has been so abused and advises that questionnaires are best used as part of a larger study involving other methods. Advantages include their flexibility, relative ease

of administration, ability to apply statistical techniques to the data produced and ability to keep a tight focus rather than take tangential pathways (Menter et al., 2011). Considerations for the effective use of Likert scale questionnaires include: thinking carefully about the clarity of questions, with simple, untechnical language used which is appropriate to your audience; the order in which questions are asked; and how to avoid leading questions (Gorard, 2010). Menter et al. (2011) also warn against wasting participants time by asking unneeded questions, asking only one question at a time and using neutral language to avoid drawing respondents to a particular outcome. Getting respondents to complete the questions themselves reduces the interviewer bias (Gorard, 2010). When using a Likert scale, Menter et al. (2011) warn against incorrect scaling. In this study I chose to use words, rather than numbers in the Likert scale, in an effort to reduce ambiguity of meaning through the translation of what a number is meant to stand for.

There are a number of ways to administer the questionnaire (by post, online, in person with the interviewer recording the answers (Menter et al., 2011)). In this case, as an accompanying tool to the semi-structured interview, an online format was chosen for its ready accessibility for students to answer the questions and for myself as the researcher to be able to correlate results.

Refer to Appendix A for the questionnaire questions.

Semi-structured interview

The interview is a complex research method experts describe as a craft (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and an art (Josselson, 2013), terms that imply one can grow from novice to master through study and experience. Semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews are conceptualised in varying ways according to one's epistemological stance: the role of the interviewer as neutral or participatory; an understanding of the interviewee as the object of study or as a co-constructor; the purpose of the form – to test hypotheses and gather data or to hear stories; and the concept of the interview as a scientific procedure or essentially a conversation.

Differences such as these dictate how all aspects of the interview are conducted from the preparation, to the interview interaction itself, through to analysis and reporting. My understanding of the interview has been informed by those who see interviews in relational, active, social, contextualised terms, as an interpersonal process, a conversation with structure and purpose, where meaning is negotiated and knowledge is the product of co-constructive efforts in relation to research questions asked (Bishop, 1997; Gillham, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Fontana & Prokos, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Josselson, 2013). This fits well with the social constructivist understanding which underpins this project.

The semi-structured interview is well suited to research questions that relate to people's perceptions, understanding and meaning-making about aspects of their lives and experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Menter et al., 2011; Qu & Dumay, 2011). It is therefore an appropriate choice for my study into student perceptions. The researcher is able to go beyond numbers and broad strokes descriptions to explore why/why not and how questions, to make statistical data come alive (Gillham, 2005). The method allows interviewees to use their own language (Menter et al., 2011) and to have language rephrased for better understanding. This made it a suitable choice for working with teenagers where I wanted to capture their thoughts as naturally as possible.

Qualitative interviews have few standard methodological conventions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011) however, key features usually involve: structure and purpose on the part of the interviewer; open questions asked or topics raised; a responsive, interactive relationship between interviewer and interviewee, allowing for adjustment, clarification and exploration of understanding (Gillham, 2005). My approach to the preparation of these semi-structured interviews was to create a basic list of questions to cover with each participant but to be guided by the conversation as to the order in which they were covered and what other content might be included. I primarily viewed the interview as a conversation between myself and my student. I was alert to the potentially intimidating 'interview' context so wanted to put students at their ease.

However, I also didn't want to underplay the significance of my research as this may have led students to misunderstand the intention. Therefore, I aimed for a friendly but direct approach.

While the semi-structured interview is a highly flexible, accessible method, it has numerous potential disadvantages and criticisms. Interviewing is time consuming and potentially expensive (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Analysis of qualitative data can be onerous, and if insufficient resources are available, the quality of analysis could suffer. In this study these stated disadvantages such as time, expense and insufficient resources were not problems due to its limited size.

Refer to Appendix B for the interview questions used.

Teacher diary

Observation, as a research instrument, uses aural and visual information to describe a context of research and the participants in it. It can be adapted to either a quantitative or qualitative approach (Menter et al., 2011). Menter et al. (2011) argue that research observation is more than just watching, that it needs to be "systematic and open to scrutiny" (p. 164) and that it needs to have a clear objective. Smith and Bowers-Brown (2010) add that practitioner researchers may keep a research diary but that it should not be seen as a means of data collection.

While being aware of the above conditions I felt justified in this mixed methods study to include the insights gained through a teacher diary, while recognising that it only operates in a support role to the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. I argue that this teacher diary is able to offer genuine research insights because as a teacher I am a participant in the natural setting and my observations as a teacher are important to the learning context. This is unlike a researcher who enters into a context in order to study it. Thus a teacher diary is more than a researcher diary.

The teacher diary was written as the research unfolded. Its objective was to record descriptions of how the different aspects of the process were

enacted in the classroom and the observable student responses, as well as my reflections of their responses. It has been a useful record to look back on and to compare to student perceptions of the process. It has been able to confirm the impressions I had of student responses to the various aspects of the process. Menter et al. (2011) warn that care should be taken in the credence given to insights gained from observations which are arguably partial, as inferences made about people's outward actions and appearances may not marry up with their inner intentions. This is particularly the case in this instance as the diary is very informal in nature and is by no means exhaustive but rather impressions of the moment. This diary is best seen as a useful complement to other research methods to confirm or question interpretations (Menter et al., 2011).

Refer to Appendix C for the teacher diary.

Evaluation of essay feedback artefacts

Finally, I looked at the self-generated feedback from the three essays written by students to make some comments on the accuracy of student marking against their perceived confidence in marking.

Tables of the students' feedback alongside the teacher feedback for each essay opportunity can be found in the findings chapter.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research

Practitioner research does not begin with the assumption that research purposes are neutral, nor does it assume that the good researcher is studiously agnostic about the questions or outcomes of research. Rather, it is a hallmark of much of practitioner research that the ultimate goal is challenging inequities, raising questions about the status quo, and enhancing the learning and life chances of students. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, as cited in Menter et al., 2011, p. 47)

Quality in research is an important consideration in the research design. One's notions of quality are tied up in epistemological understandings.

Some quantitative researchers view quality in terms of validity, finding that validity is not possible in qualitative research given the inherently subjective nature of the human interactions involved. However, within qualitative research, it is widely accepted that concepts such as trustworthiness and authenticity are appropriate indicators of quality (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; William & Morrow, 2009).

In this study I use the concept of trustworthiness to indicate research quality. William & Morrow (2009), in a pan-paradigmatic approach, suggest that there are three main categories of trustworthiness on which to assess quality in qualitative research: “integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings” (p. 577). They ask the question, “How do you know when you have achieved integrity, balance, and clear communication?” (p. 577). Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) break this down further by asserting that trustworthiness must be judged at every stage of the study from the interview itself, through to its transcription, analysis and presentation. The researcher must seek to reveal this quality through the transparency of their research procedures.

William and Morrow (2009) recommend that integrity of data can be gained through the gathering of diverse perspectives from various participants from whom rich data is likely to be drawn. Triangulating complementary data from quantitative data and/or observation also adds to this integrity (Gillham, 2005; William & Morrow, 2009) and Borko et al. (2011) recommend that a mixed methods approach brings greater dependability to practitioner research. However, Kemmis and McTaggart (2003) note that often “methodological sophistication must be traded off against the timely, pertinent and actionable outcomes of participatory research” (p. 276). My research design, using the four methods of data collection as described above, is practical and simple, yet I believe sophisticated enough to create worthwhile outcomes. The value of the work will ultimately be found through the review and critique of academic peers (Borko et al., 2011), but also of significance is the impact it will have on my own practice.

The quality of the original interview is arguably the most significant aspect of the process as the quality of analysis, verification and reporting all depend on it (Josselson, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Key issues concern the quality of questioning, checking and interpreting, in order to draw out relevant answers and verify their trustworthiness. The extent to which an interview can be understood by an outsider, without extra explanation, is another useful indicator (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Trustworthiness in practitioner research is also sought through the examination and acknowledgement of the practitioner's biases and the effect they may have on data collection and analysis. Of primary challenge to trustworthiness is the intrinsic subjectivity of qualitative interviewing (Gillham, 2005, Josselson, 2013) or 'interviewer bias' (Roulston, 2010). Roulston (2010) recommends reflective practice at each stage of the interview process to bring to light the researcher's subjectivity, for example, writing a subjectivity statement, writing a research journal and being interviewed with the interview questions themselves. I kept a diary and also engaged in reflection after each interview was conducted. As a teacher-researcher I recognised my subjectivity in that I was using practices that I hoped would be efficacious to my students. I was aware that the wording of questions was a key aspect of the interview that could compromise the authenticity of student responses. Consequently, I sought to present my questioning in as neutral a manner as possible, giving space for students to bring negative responses. I did not try to elicit positive comments but nor did I hide my natural interest in their answers. I tried to live in my identity as their teacher wanting to discover whether something we had done in class was worthwhile to my students, not as a researcher wanting to prove the efficacy of a particular intervention.

An under-recognised aspect of the overall quality of the interview process is the quality of transcription. The linguistic perspective is that transcripts are translations from an oral to written language. Loss of context, including tone and body language, is a limitation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Whether to transcribe verbatim or to 'clean up' a text requires consideration. While verbatim transcriptions may appear more faithful to

the original, repetitions, changes of tack and fillers can appear incoherent and even create the impression of low intelligence (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, ironing out the verbatim aspect in a transcript requires interpretative skill. Many judgments must be made, such as where to make clean sentences from the flowing run-on sentences of oral language, and the critical placement of commas, which can drastically change meaning. Many see returning the transcript to the interviewee for comment as an essential part of the co-constructive process designed to minimise misrepresentation (Bishop, 1997). However, even when this process has gone well, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) still warn against reifying the transcript as the primary source of meaning. The researcher should try to remain true to the interview interaction itself because transcripts are only ever representations of that interaction. In my own study I have chosen to clean up fillers in the text such as 'like' and 'kind of' because they interfere with the smooth flow of communication in the written word. I also gave students the opportunity to comment on their scripts. A small number of students responded to this invitation and no-one felt the need to request any alterations.

Data analysis

Trustworthy analysis is crucial to the research process. This section will discuss important aspects of data analysis, particularly in terms of trustworthiness and outline the analytic approach used in my research. The data was divided into the quantitative Likert scale question responses, and the qualitative data created by the written responses to the questionnaire questions and the interview responses. These two aspects of data were further triangulated against teacher observation and some basic evaluation of the student feedback written on the student essay artefacts where appropriate.

Interview analysis has been described as a dialogue between the interviewer and their material (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), implying multiple interactions, each one informing and refining the next. This analytical dialogue actually begins in the interview itself when interviewees find connections in meaning and when the researcher

synthesises and interprets to check for understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The goal of analysis is to gain an understanding of what you have examined through processes of separating, synthesising, interpreting, theorising and meaning-making. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that analysis is complete when you can put together a theory that answers your research question while maintaining the integrity of the interviewees' perspectives. Similarly, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) say analysis is complete when saturation of ideas/themes has occurred with nothing new emerging.

I used a mixed methods approach to analysis in keeping with my mixed methods data collection (Kara, 2015). The smallness of the project meant that analysing the data manually was practicable. My intention was to get a feel for the overall perceptions of students, as well as to get individual responses. Firstly, I used a basic count method to analyse the Likert scale data and also to indicate where a number of students had made a similar response in qualitative data. This means that as a group of eleven students I was easily able to see commonality of experiences and where students differed.

Secondly, I sought to understand the qualitative data by reducing and sorting it through two analytic methods: categorisation and thematic analysis. Categorisation is a form of data coding through a series of increasingly narrow categorisations (Gillham, 2005). In this study, when analysing student responses to the particular aspects of the process, I used two broad categories to begin with of 'positive' or 'negative' responses. These responses were narrowed further into categories to describe the nature of response comments. For example, 'led to greater understanding of the success criteria'. Where responses were similar groupings formed.

Thematic analysis reduces raw data through sorting and coding according to concepts and themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Roulston, 2010). This process was largely inductive, working from what was found rather than

having pre-set themes established. Thematic analysis was applied throughout the responses taking account of notable ideas and opinions, for example, 'expressions of confidence'. Again where similar responses were made they were grouped together under a thematic heading. I then went through the interviews to take account of all other comments made that were peripheral to the common interview questions or that hadn't yet been taken into account. This is because the nature of a semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to follow an interviewee's response into other areas that branched away from the basic set questions. I have sought to account for all comments made by students whether positive or negative. On occasion I omitted a student comment where it was clearly not relevant to this study: for example, at one point a student confused the focus of our interview on formative essay writing process and related a question answer to her feelings about feedback on a creative writing portfolio internal assessment, which is a quite different set-up. This occurred because of being her classroom teacher. Questionnaire comments were worked through in the same way and joined into the interview data.

Once basic analysis of the raw data was completed, patterns and linkages between concepts and themes was looked for (Smith & Davies, 2010), building towards theory, to draw together meaningful interpretations. Here abductive reasoning was applied, working from the observable findings, to theories already established in literature of student engagement and self-regulation within a social constructivist philosophical approach. Finally, I considered the implications of the interpretations in the context of the literature and also what new questions may have been opened up (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Presentation

Presentation of the data analysis was the final step in this research process and one which Smith and Davies (2010) suggest is worthy of due consideration. I was aware in my presentation choices that there is ethical consideration to be applied to the presentation of data in terms of what is revealed and what is concealed (Kara, 2015). I decided to present my

quantitative data in simple, clearly labelled bar graphs (Kara, 2015). This allowed me to visually note the students' responses to the various Likert scale questions. The remaining qualitative data I presented in a narrative style prose. This was done in order to succinctly synthesise responses and for readability.

Triangulation of data

In the development of findings there was a triangulation of data between the questionnaire responses and the interview responses, supported by teacher observation and evaluation of feedback artefacts. Quantitative data from the Likert scale questions provided a useful holistic perspective when most or all students responded in a similar manner. Qualitative written comments in the questionnaire and oral responses in the interview allowed more nuanced personal responses to be drawn out. Studying student feedback in the essay artefacts also brought to light the quality of feedback produced which was useful to balance against student perceptions.

Ethics considerations

Ethics is related to values and defining moral behaviour from the inception to the completion of research, including publication (Smith, 2010). In recent times there has been increased emphasis on ethical research in response to public accountability and individual rights issues. "Openness, transparency and trust have become watchwords for ethical behaviour in our society and the rights of children, parents and indeed teachers are frequent topics of discussion" (Menter et al., 2011, p. 61). In this section I outline the key ethical considerations in this study of informed consent and volunteerism, and issues around researching people and the power dynamics involved.

Volunteerism and informed consent

A key ethical consideration was ensuring that there was no perceived duress put on students when their participation was requested. To guard against this my Head of Faculty was present when I introduced the

research and gave out the information sheet and invitation letter (Appendix D). It was made abundantly clear that student participation was voluntary and would in no way affect their other classroom work.

As my students were all above the age of sixteen their own consent, rather than consent by a guardian, was sought. The letter of invitation clearly outlined the details of the study and what role students were being asked to take, including the estimated time commitment. Students were informed of the inability to guarantee confidentiality beyond ensuring the anonymity of individual student's responses/experiences, through the use of pseudonyms. Bryson and McConville (2014) stress that interviewees must agree that the researcher may collect, process and store the interview data. This agreement was sought and participants were also told that the storage of data would occur on a secure, password-protected personal computer and any hard copy material would be stored securely. In addition, permission to give the copyright of the recording to the interviewer was sought, although the participants would still have moral rights to the recording, which, at minimum, covers the right to protest against poor treatment of the interview and the right to be identified as an author (Bryson & McConville, 2014).

Further to this, the student work chosen was formative practice essays. The final summative assessment occurred at the end of the year through an external examiner in the NCEA examinations. The fact that I was not responsible for any summative assessment of this work significantly minimised any potential for students to feel that participating in the study could jeopardise their results.

People and power dynamics in interviews

Given the potentially personally revealing nature of interviews, ethics must be of primary concern to the interviewer (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviewing is a human interaction with many ethical aspects, chief of which is upholding of interviewees' dignity and protecting them from harm. Key issues concern representation and interpretation (Bryson & McConville, 2014). As little as 5% of all interview material may be represented in the final report. Not using

someone's contribution could lead to feelings of disappointment or having wasted time. Deciding what material to include in the final report creates an ethical question around focusing on the interesting minority rather than the more middle-of-the-road majority. Issues of interpretive rights are no less significant. Interviewees should be informed beforehand if a particular critical lens is being applied (Bryson & McConville, 2014). Given the nature, focus and setting of this study, I did not anticipate any major confidences being bestowed or critical lens of interpretation being applied that would distort interviewee perspectives. Likewise, while I took all due precautions, I did not expect any potential harm to students. This proved to be the case and no issues arose.

It can be difficult to negotiate the effects of gender, age and personality on the power dynamics of an interview space (Menter et al., 2011). Some see it as possible to restore a balance in the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee by creating a symmetrical relationship (Bishop, 2007) while others accept the inequality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), promoting an "asymmetrical reciprocity" (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002, as cited in Fontana & Prokos, 2007, p. 80). While I acknowledge that I was in the power position as the adult, the teacher and the researcher, I sought this 'asymmetrical reciprocity' by living in the identity of a teacher-researcher, with a learner inquiry attitude, who sought to gain better understanding from my students.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered the methodology employed in this study starting with an explanation of the significance of practitioner research. This was followed by a justification of the appropriateness of a mixed methods research approach, underpinned by pragmatism. A description of the participants and setting was presented along with a breakdown of what the ten-week study entailed. The four research tools used, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, were then outlined. A discussion of quality in

qualitative research, understood in terms of trustworthiness, made the point that quality must be looked for in all aspects of the research, from conception, to analysis, to presentation. Finally, the importance of conducting this practitioner research with especial care for the ethical implications was also made.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I outline the key findings of my research based on the qualitative and quantitative data produced by the student questionnaire, the interview data, teacher observation and the artefacts of student feedback on their essays. This is in response to the research question:

What are student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback practices in formative essay writing in the English classroom?

Throughout this chapter I have chosen to give considerable space to student voice, through direct quotation, as I believe the students speak for themselves extremely well. On the whole the findings confirm (often in strong terms) the value of student-generated feedback and affirm the process that we undertook.

The first four sections in this chapter summarise students' perceptions of aspects of the process:

- overall perceptions of the practices
- perceptions of the skills development elements
- perceptions of the use of self-generated feedback and peer feedback
- the value of follow-up teacher feedback

The next sections present themes that emerged across various questions:

- why students might not respond to traditional teacher-only feedback
- positive impact on learning
- more effective learning: a motivational 'wake-up call'
- more hands-on learning
- learning how to learn
- room for reflection
- improved essay writing ability and results
- a few doubts about improvement

- factors that might prevent students making improvements — time, effort, knowledge
- student confidence
- expressions of student agency

The final section of this chapter presents evaluation of the accuracy of student feedback:

- Student competency in feedback

Overall perceptions of the practices

Firstly, it is worth noting that all eleven students expressed a lack of prior experience with any kind of student-generated feedback or indeed in this level of interaction with the success criteria or exemplars; the most one student had done before was to read over fellow students' essays in class, but without giving feedback. Therefore, these activities were new experiences. *"I think this year was the first year that we did this kind of self feedback and even marking other essays and [I had] never really looked at the marking scheme before"* (Steven).

Overall student perceptions of the use of student-generated feedback practices were very positive. Students expressed that the overall process of student-generated feedback was valuable and a better process than simply receiving solo teacher feedback. Five students made comments similar to Chloe, who said: *"Because rather than just writing we got to understand how it was going to be marked and had heaps of preparation."* Seven students expressed perceptions of the beneficial effect of student-generated feedback similar to Charlotte: *"I thought it was really beneficial, knowing what you had to do and the guidelines and looking back on your work and fixing it up and knowing where you went wrong."* There were several expressions of enjoyment in aspects of the process, such as Jeffrey's comments:

I really did like looking at the example essays 'cause that gives me more ideas and going through the criteria for the marking, that also helped. I always skim read it but I never actually went through it in

detail, to see what I actually need to do. No — I really did like...I have to say it really did help going through those two solidly — examples and schedule.

Students were able to articulate purposes for the use of student-generated feedback that showed thoughtful understanding of its benefits. Comments included: learning how to learn; helping the teacher understand what the students knew and what they needed to improve; getting students to look through the eyes of the marker in order to develop understanding of the mark scheme; giving space for reflecting on their own writing; becoming more independent; gaining feedback from sources other than the teacher; and improving essay writing to get a better grade. Peter expressed it as follows:

I think it's just instead of writing an essay, being told what's bad, you're physically learning from your own mistakes and trying to find out, doing it all yourself gets you finding out for yourself and I think that's definitely a better way to learn than being told what to do.

Several students suggested that these processes should be taught earlier and as part of the development of learning to write essays.

A minority expressed a lack of confidence and frustration that improved knowledge didn't necessarily lead to better results. Yet even students who found elements of the process difficult or who expressed a lack of confidence in their own work and/or ability to make accurate judgments expressed that the process was worthwhile and that learning had occurred. Overall, there was a lack of negative feelings attached to student-generated feedback practices, which is noteworthy.

The next sections break down the overall process into its two main components: the skills development phases and the student creation of feedback stage. Then within each component there is discussion of the different activities engaged in by students. This breakdown allows for a more specific look at student perceptions of aspects of the overall process that could potentially be modified in future work.

Perceptions of the skills development phase of the process

Students expressed high value in the skills development phase of the process. This phase included unpacking the success criteria, working through a teacher-marked exemplar and marking several essay exemplars themselves. Each of the three elements was valued by students.

The success criteria rubric

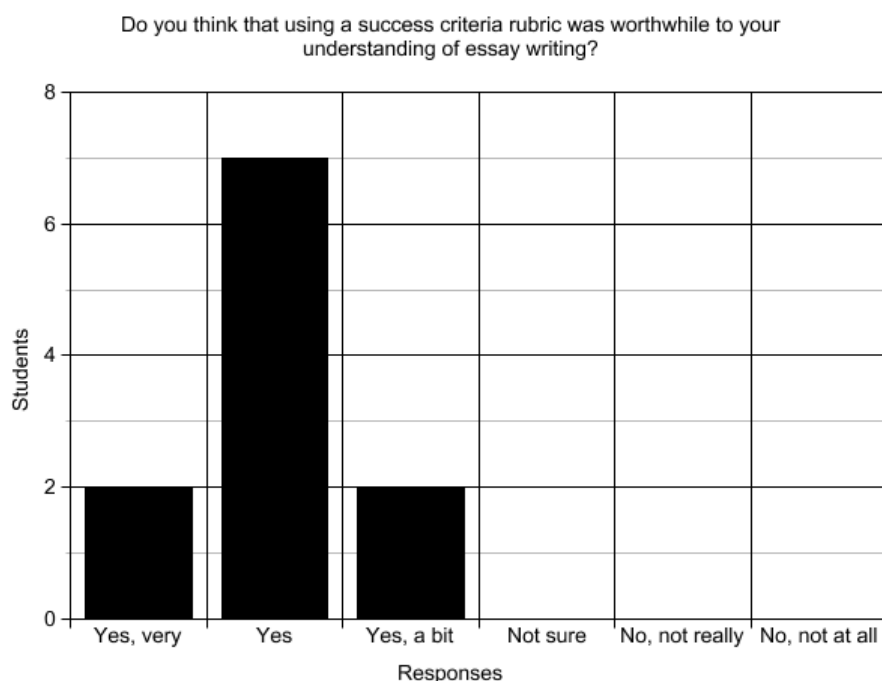


Figure 1: Success criteria rubric

All eleven students thought that the success criteria rubric had been worthwhile. Students largely expressed the benefits of unpacking the success criteria in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of what makes a good essay (10/11), with many linking that knowledge back to their own writing (5/11). Alice expressed a clear link for her: *“I got to see what the markers want and how I could improve.”* Chris indicated that it led to the independent generation of knowledge which previously had not occurred: *“it encouraged us to see where we needed to improve on, rather than having no idea what needed fixing.”* Steven commented on greater understanding of the nuances between the top two categories (Merit and Excellence) and that, *“It allowed me to realise aspects of my essay writing that I was missing. For example, beyond the text thinking.”*

Jamie, a thoughtful, capable student, was very clear that unlocking the success criteria was the key to understanding essay writing quality. He saw his results go from mediocre to Excellence and related this success to understanding the success criteria. When speaking of what essay writing entailed he asserted: *"It's knowing how to express knowledge and without a thorough understanding of the mark scheme and what a marker wants from you, you can't correctly express it."* He presented a clear understanding that the purpose of student-generated feedback is to unlock the success criteria:

I feel like the marking criteria in English is sort of, it's very vague in what it attempts to tell you that you're supposed to do and until you actually sit down and really research it and until you actually mark a paper and watch someone else mark a paper you can't really say that you understand what it wants. (Jamie)

A couple of students commented that every year teachers had gone through the mark scheme but that had not led to real student understanding, while others said they had never gone through the mark scheme before. Jamie was perplexed as to why this process was not standard practice at all levels of education and why it should be that the teacher alone should understand the mark scheme.

A significant finding of this research was that the success criteria rubric was a successful tool of this student-generated feedback process. My teacher observation of students interacting with the rubric shows that students used the tool according to the intention: to enable them to analyse essays in detail and also as a whole. It enabled students to pinpoint areas of weakness and strength in an essay and to focus advice on the next steps for learning. Students' comments, as well as the essay feedback artefacts, show that they gained a strong understanding of what was required in essay writing and the progression towards higher quality work through interacting with the rubric.

The only caveat to student appreciation was with the language of the rubric. Four students felt that the language was vague until explained or

hard to understand in places. This is understandable and, to a certain extent, perhaps unavoidable given the nature of language. Further comments by students indicated that clarity could be found once students grappled with the rubric by marking exemplars. These findings indicate that the rubric tool is an important aspect of this student-generated feedback process, both at the skills development stage and when marking their own work.

Working through a teacher-marked exemplar

As more minor aspect of the skills development process, working through the teacher-marked exemplar (Appendix G) was mentioned less frequently in students' responses however eight students felt that it was particularly beneficial. For example, Alice said: *"A teacher-marked essay with annotations helped me to see the good points and bad points in others' writing which I can relate back to mine to see if I do these mistakes or if I do certain things correctly."*

Marking exemplars

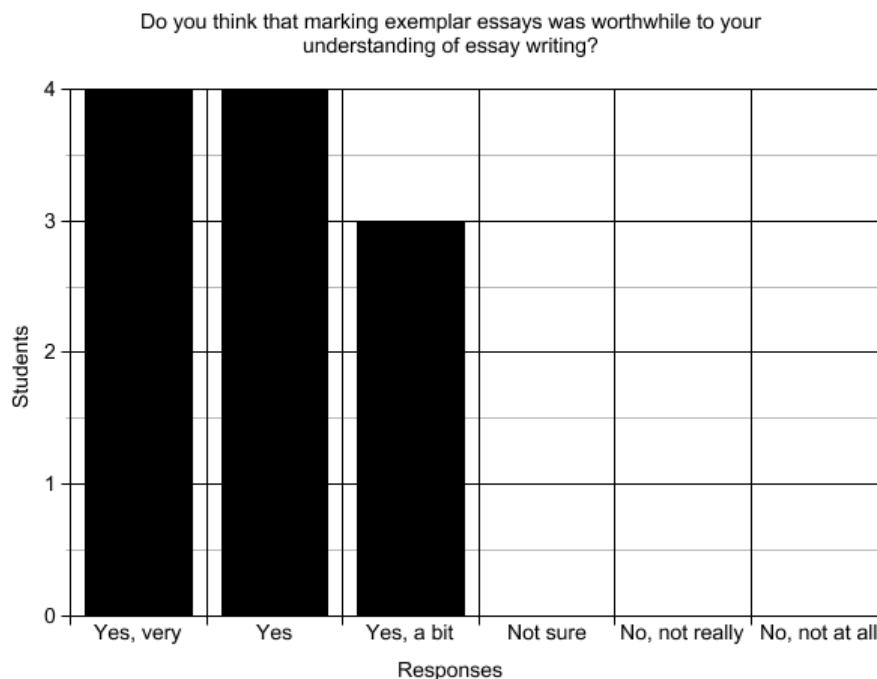


Figure 2: Practice marking exemplar essays

As with the use of the success criteria rubric, all students were positive in their perception of marking exemplar essays, to varying degrees. Similarly,

most students expressed value in the experience in terms of greater understanding of what was involved in essay writing at the different levels (9/11). For example, Jeffrey said: *“This helps with seeing the different levels there are to the essays and what must be put into the essay to help achieve the higher grades.”* Again many found it led them to relate that back to their own writing (6/11): *“It was very good to ... be able to reflect the way you write directly to how you judge others’ writing”* (Lucy). Other positives perceived by students about marking exemplars were that it was good practice and it allowed students to develop competence in marking without the potential for bias with it being their own work.

All three steps

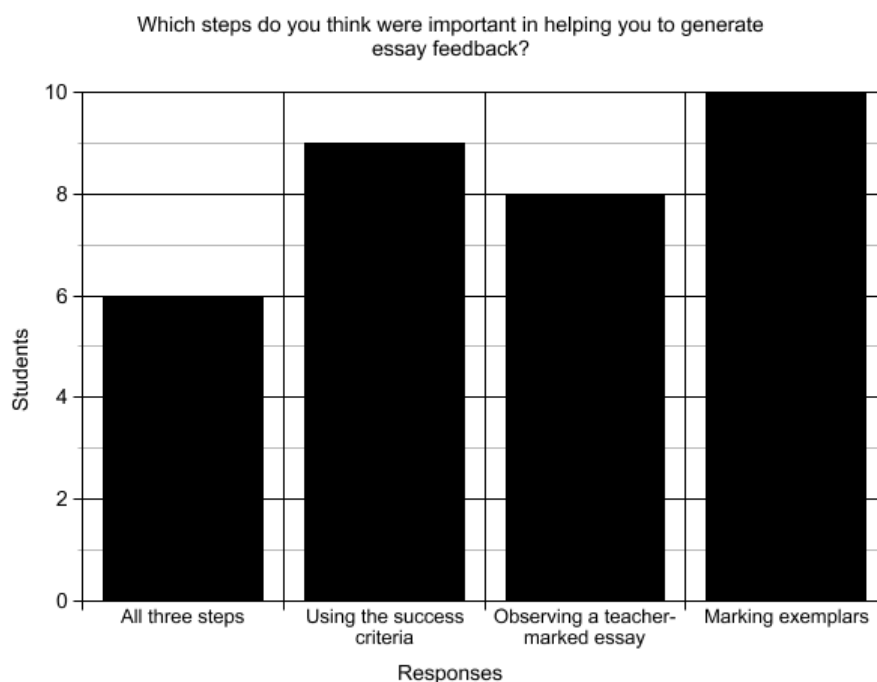


Figure 3: Important steps

When asked to select which aspects of the skills development phase led them to be able to generate essay feedback six students found all three steps important. Jamie used helpful imagery when he expressed that, *“The three marked [indicated items] felt like a logical progression down a path of understanding that helped remove the irritating vagueness of the criteria.”* Overall, most students valued most of the steps with nine selecting the success criteria, ten selecting the marking exemplars and eight selecting working through a teacher-marked essay. Some students

valued the success criteria more and some valued the exemplars more. This indicates that all the steps added something different for different students and all have a place in the skills development phase.

Very few negatives were expressed regarding these steps and only by one or two students. Frustration was evident in the comments that greater knowledge did not necessarily make it easier to write (2/11) or to mark essays (1/11). For example, Emma commented: *“I thought it was good to look at Excellence essays to see what they were built of and how they were crafted but it did not make it any easier for me to write my essays or apply these concepts to my writing.”* Emma’s responses to all the questions are threaded through with this sense of frustration and account for the majority of the few negative comments found throughout the findings. However, she still expressed value in the skills development phase of the process in terms of allowing her to judge essay quality: *“I think the combination of looking at exemplars and seeing what concepts they incorporated but also looking at how teachers marked the essay showed me how to judge my essays.”*

From my perspective as the teacher implementing these strategies I was pleased with the smoothness of the skills development phase and how well students responded to it. On the whole, engagement and even enjoyment were notable. Students visibly showed high interest in the activities. I was surprised by the absolute quiet and attentiveness students displayed as they went about the task of developing expertise in judging essays. Students were keen to compare their judgments with the actual marks, and attentive to agreements and differences.

Perceptions of the use of self-generated feedback and peer feedback

The actual practices of self-generated feedback and peer feedback were more challenging than the skills development phase, creating more reservations in some students. However, the focus and interest displayed by students in the skills development phase was continued each time

students gave feedback on an essay during the term and when they received the follow-on teacher feedback.

Self-generated feedback

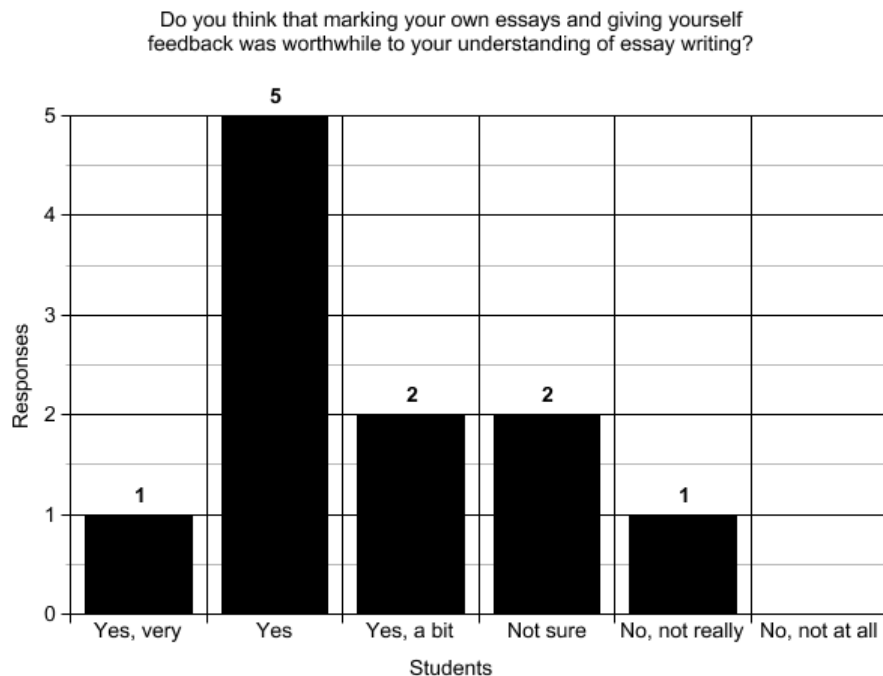


Figure 4: Self feedback

A majority of students found self-generated feedback to be worthwhile (8/11) while two were unsure and one felt ‘not really’. Like the skills development phase, students found the benefits to be increased knowledge of essay writing (5/11) and applying that knowledge to their future work (5/11). Chris’ comment is representative: *“This was great as it allowed us to follow the marking criteria closely and see what areas of our writing were lacking.”*

A small number of negative perceptions of student-generated feedback focused on students’ lack of confidence about accuracy of marking (rather than the worthwhileness of the act itself) and a lack of confidence in their own actual writing which seemed to make it hard to self-evaluate. Leon expressed the inability to overcome a natural bias: *“Unfortunately I cannot prevent the overwhelming self-bias. I genuinely do not know how well I have done a work until it is graded. I do have a rough idea about how well I’ve done, but nothing specific. That’s just me.”* Lucy explained that her

lack of confidence in her own writing affected her ability to judge well: “*I am never happy with my writing and can never be confident giving myself more than an Achieved mark.*” Further on in this chapter, under student confidence in judging essays and giving feedback, there are three tables which record student feedback comments against the teacher feedback comments. Lucy and Leon’s first two evaluations both reflect this lack of confidence in evaluating their own work. Their third evaluations were much more detailed and accurate. Interestingly, both Lucy and Leon indicated that they were reasonably confident in judging Level 3 essays more generally.

Peer-generated feedback

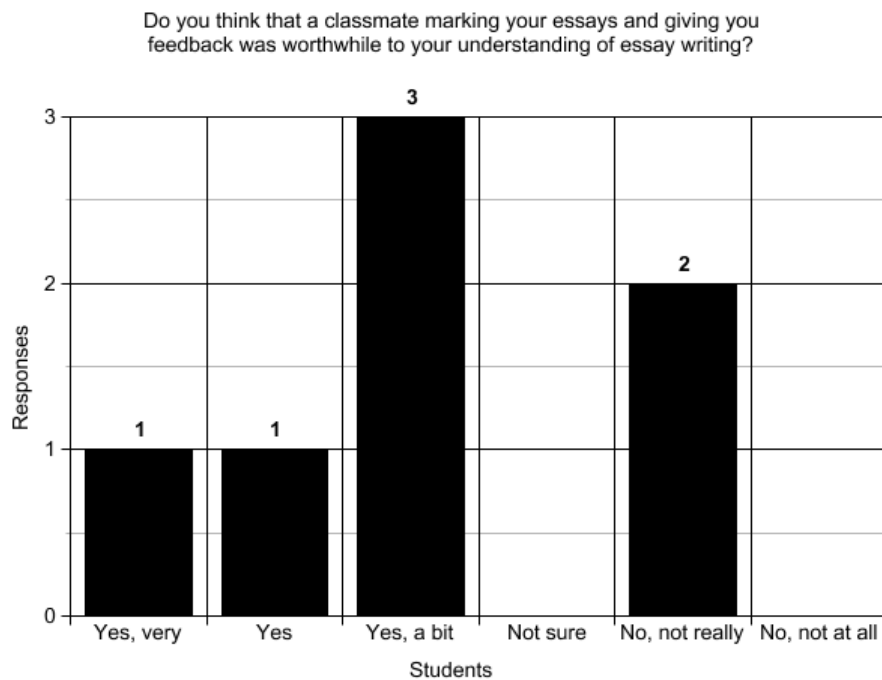


Figure 5: Peer feedback

Peer-generated feedback, was only done once, and then only by those students who wanted to. Four students didn’t participate in peer-generated feedback because of reluctance to do so. One reason given for that reflected low self-esteem in writing: “*I struggle with the idea that other people will read my writing. No, I would never let anyone read my writing. I just hand it to the teacher and that’s it*” (Lucy). From my teacher diary, I note that two other students who declined to do peer feedback commented that they were not confident that other students (namely each

other) would be able to mark with appropriate neutrality. They thought that the marking would be too generous.

For the seven students who engaged with it the majority found peer feedback worthwhile (5/7) while the remaining two said 'not really'. Some students seemed to embrace this opportunity and find benefit in it while others were dubious or did not engage with it.

On the positive side Charlotte commented that it helped her learn better because she could talk about it and also because giving feedback made her reflect more. Others expressed the idea that it was valuable in terms of getting another opinion, with Peter suggesting that students were more, "*brutally honest,*" than the teacher, while Leon suggested that getting help from students who were performing better was helpful. Jamie felt that he took peer marking more seriously than marking exemplars because of the drive to be fair to his classmate. It is worth hearing his voice here:

There was a little bit of bias as obviously if I was marking my friend's work I wanted to be nice, but there was also a drive to be fair for their sake. As opposed to marking an exemplar I feel it was more helpful as it forced me to be more thorough in the marking and look at it and give a fair judgment 'cause it's not just for some random person, it's for someone I know.

On the negative side was the issue of trust. Jamie commented that, "*Having a classmate mark my essay was like having my work marked by someone I didn't really fully trust to know the criteria.*" This shows that students were aware of the difficulty of the task both for themselves and for others. The social dynamic created an added challenge with two students commenting on the need to take the task seriously or it would not be successful (they were each other's partners!) and one felt that their partner did not engage fully with the task and was, "*less personal,*" giving, "*lacklustre,*" feedback (Steven). From my teacher observations, students didn't settle to the task when doing peer feedback as readily as they had done during the other aspects of the project. There seemed to be more to negotiate socially when students engaged in marking each other's work.

Awkwardness needed to be overcome through social interactions — a bit of chat and laughter — and at least one pair struggled to overcome this.

Emergent themes

Below is a breakdown of the key themes of the study’s findings.

The value of follow-on teacher feedback

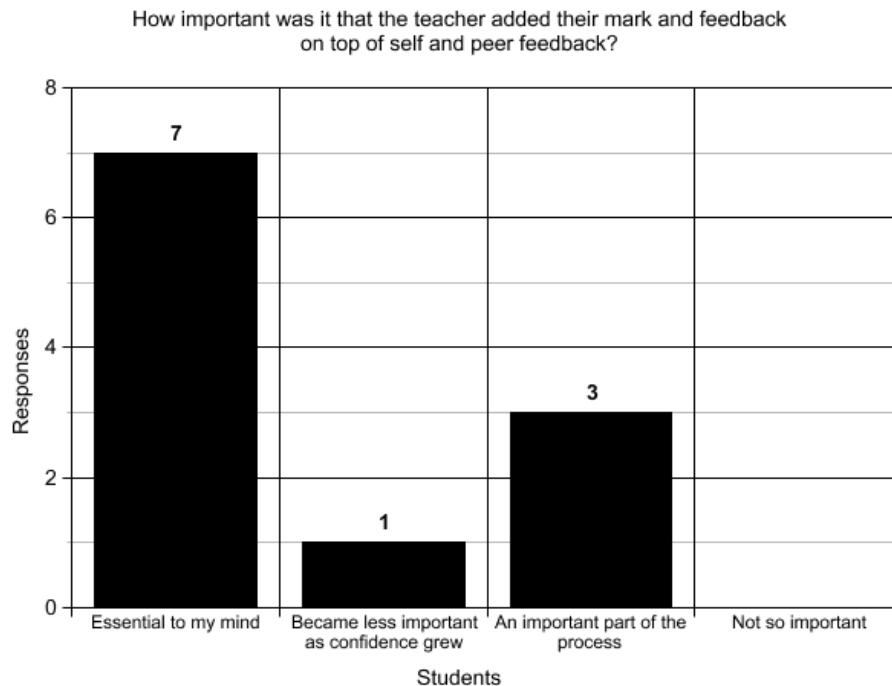


Figure 6: Teacher follow-on feedback

The value of follow-on teacher feedback was expressed by all students. Their reasoning was based in terms such as the teacher’s experience and the desire to have their judgments validated/corrected. *“It helped to validate my thinking. It then helped me to gain confidence to make correct judgment calls,”* said Alice. This was supported by Chris who felt: *“The teacher’s mark was very important as it showed how accurately we had to mark. It would help us to know whether we were being too hard or too lenient with our self/peer feedback.”* Chloe expressed value in the teacher’s feedback because of the teacher’s knowledge of their students: *“It is helpful having someone who knows your work and style to say how you can improve.”*

Some found it was important because of their own lack of confidence: *“Without the teacher’s mark I would never know where I stood and would be unable to rely on my mark alone”* (Lucy). Others expressed appreciation of the different perspectives gained: *“I think with getting your [the teacher’s] feedback, as well as looking at other’s, as well as my own you get different perspectives of what makes a good essay”* (Chloe). One student, Steven, felt greater confidence in his abilities which lessened his need for teacher feedback, however in the interview, he expressed that it was still important.

This process, from the teacher’s perspective, was far superior to traditional teacher-only feedback and worked very smoothly. It allowed me to keep in tune with student progress and to dialogue with students about their work. It was also easier to write than traditional teacher-only feedback as I was writing in addition to what I could see students already understood. In many cases I could write, “I agree,” to their section of feedback and then, if I had further suggestions, I could add those. As they had already articulated their understanding of the quality of their essay — its strengths and limitations — I was able to be more concise and focused in my feedback, just picking up on things they had not noticed or affirming their understanding. It was also a pleasure to see students engage with my feedback comments. This was a change from traditional teacher-only feedback where only a few students ever wanted to dialogue about it.

Why students might not respond to teacher-only feedback

As noted above, it is a common experience for teachers to feel that students do not respond to their feedback. This was confirmed by some students’ comments which implied that they did not previously take much notice of teacher-only feedback. Charlotte was reasonably direct: *“You’re actually learning it yourself instead of just reading it and actually not taking any notice of it.”* Similarly Chloe said: *“I think self learning as well as a teacher there definitely helps ’cause the whole time you’re not being just told by the teacher ’cause it gets ... it makes you not want to do it, but when it’s yourself you realise what you need to do personally.”* Chris indicated that he had limited understanding of where his essay writing was

at when traditional teacher-only feedback was used: *“This self feedback has given me insight of where my writing is by allowing myself to pick out the areas that need to be improved, rather than the teacher marking and me having no idea.”*

While this was not a key part of my study, when led by the conversation, I was able to probe further with a couple of students as to why teacher-only feedback may be disregarded by students. Charlotte made an interesting comment about the lack of time given in class to process traditional teacher-only feedback: *“I think we just jump to something else, so it’s not actually focused on that. You’re continuously moving on from one thing to the next.”* This comment suggests that a key advantage of the experience was that students were given the time to interact with feedback.

Positive impact on learning

As shown in the graph below, a key outcome of this research is that most students (8/11) perceived that their *learning* of essay writing had gone better this year.

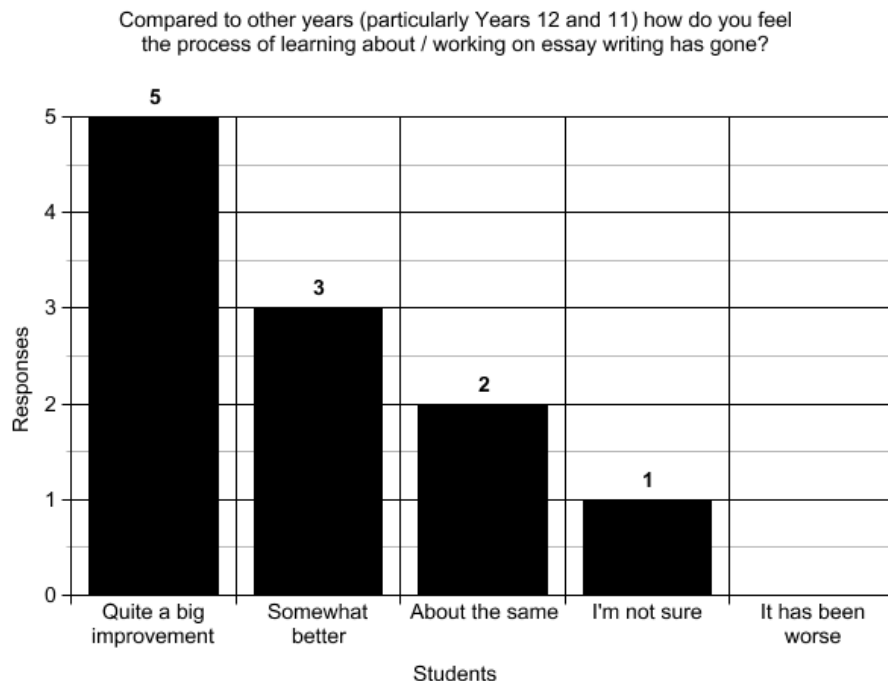


Figure 7: The process of learning

Also, as shown in the following graphs, most students perceived that they understood where they were currently at with essay writing and that they understood how they could improve their writing.

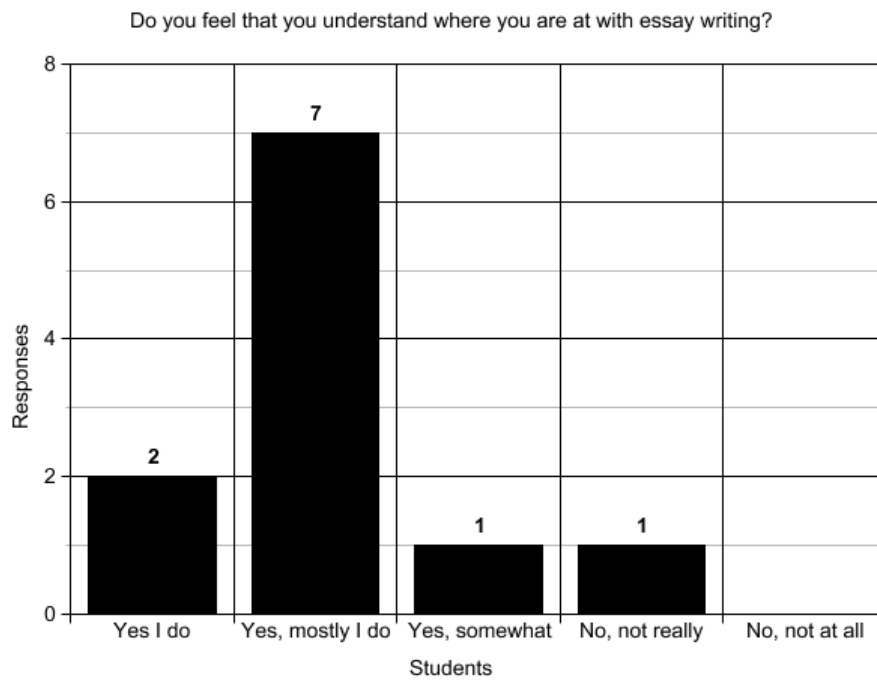


Figure 8: Current understanding of essay writing

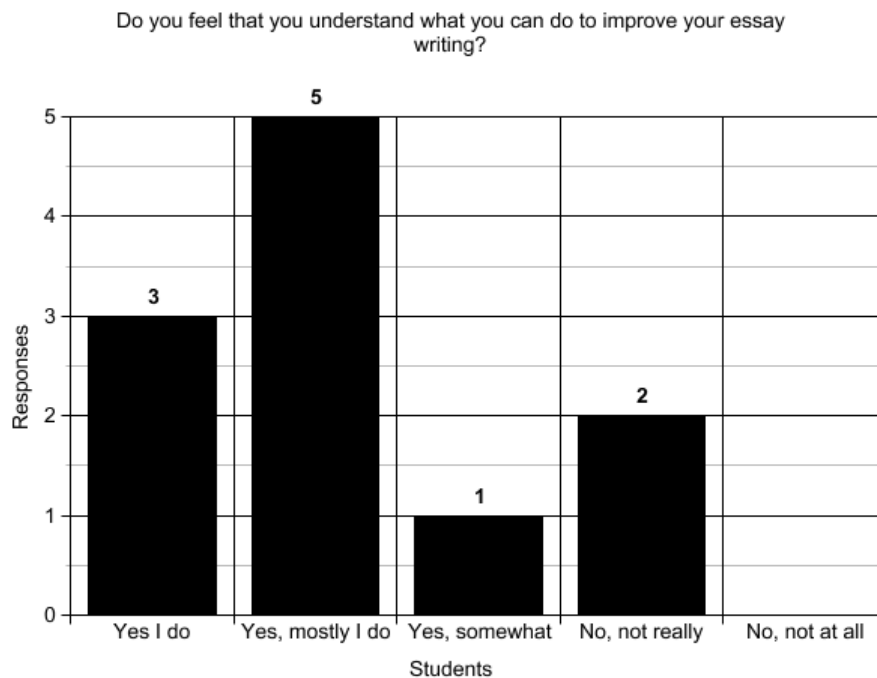


Figure 9: Current understanding of improvements needed

Jamie's comments represent the ideal:

When I'm writing essays now, I know what grade I'm writing at. I can feel the level of my writing's adequacy because after reading and marking exemplars I know the sort of structure that is expected of the different levels.

Other students expressed more quiet confidence: *"I feel that I have a good understanding of essay writing"* (Jeffrey). Significantly, in their general conversation, a number of students incidentally identified understanding of important aspects of essay writing (6/11). Students identified things such as: *"knowing the text properly"* (Charlotte), using, *"topic sentences and trying to get the information on the author's history — why they did that"* (Alice), structure (Jeffrey), use of evidence (Leon), sophisticated 'beyond the text' thinking (Steven). These comments showed their learning implicitly in terms of the knowledge and understanding they had gained.

More effective learning: a motivational "wake-up call"

Student-generated feedback confronted students in a way they couldn't ignore easily. Students were motivated to respond to self-feedback in a way that they previously had not been by traditional teacher-only feedback.

I think it's more of a wake up call when it's actually yourself that realises that you are doing something wrong 'cause, I mean, with every piece there's always going to be teacher feedback to make you better but I think when you actually realise yourself that you're giving someone else feedback but you're not doing it for yourself [responding to the feedback], you realise how much you are missing out. (Chloe)

This suggests that student-generated feedback had an affective impact on students.

More hands-on learning

“I feel like it’s more hands-on; you’re actually learning it yourself instead of just reading it and actually not taking any notice of it” (Charlotte).

One clear message from students was that the activities related to student-generated feedback were valued as more hands-on learning. This was perceived as a superior kind of learning to that possible from traditional teacher-only feedback, where the teacher alone fully understands the success criteria. This is particularly significant in the context of English which is not usually perceived as a hands-on subject. Many students expressed the belief that their learning was improved because they had grappled with marking essays and creating feedback themselves, rather than passively receiving teacher feedback. *“This way we’re all actually doing it and all engaging and learning better” (Charlotte).* Jeffrey felt empowered by the hands-on nature of the process:

When I did the process I found lots of mistakes that I was doing. So when I was going through it that really did help just piecing all the essay together and making it more clear and seeing what I had to build from rather than just reading comments from the teacher.

Steven expressed the idea that more effective learning was possible because of his own engagement: *“Sometimes when it is teacher feedback it doesn’t ingrain as much, like you won’t necessarily take it all in. I think that you learn quicker by doing it. You remember what you’ve learnt a lot better.”*

Learning how to learn

Student-generated feedback practices were also perceived as allowing students to process their learning better. A number of students expressed the perception that they now knew how to approach this style of assessment. Charlotte’s comments are representative here. She suggested that there had been an impact on students learning *how* to learn. Student-generated feedback practices had been about, *“reinforcing it [learning] and learning different ways of learning, ’cause we all learn so*

differently.” She indicated that this learning would go beyond just Level 3 essay writing: *“It will impact everything, even the way that I do other subjects as well, just like looking back on stuff, making sure that I’m looking at the schedule and going over it.”*

Created room for reflection

Other students expressed the belief that learning had been enhanced because it had created space for them to reflect on the quality of their work and the standard required. Leon commented: *“I think the reason why it did help so much is that it helped me to reflect upon it [essay writing] quite a bit more.”* The power of reflection is also evident in comments by students in regards to how they processed their thinking between exemplars, marking schedule and their own work. Jamie’s comments are representative of several others:

After doing a few [marking practice essays] I found what I was doing wrong in marking them and in finding what I was doing wrong in marking them I could identify what the person was doing wrong and then relate that back to what I was doing wrong in my own work. (Jamie)

Improved essay writing ability and results

Many students commented that they thought they had seen an improvement in their essay writing as a direct result of the student-generated feedback process. For example, Leon commented:

It helped me quite a bit I have to say. I can definitely write something that makes much more sense now, something that relies on the evidence and uses the evidence correctly in the first place and something that supports an idea or the topic much better. (Leon)

Alice said, *“I definitely think this has had a part to play [in improved essay writing] ’cause I got to see what was wrong or right.”* From my observations as her teacher I can corroborate this comment. Alice and five

others students (Jamie, Leon, Charlotte, Chloe, Steven) clearly improved their writing based on responding to feedback given in the student-generated feedback process, while five remained at about the same level (Chris, Emma, Lucy, Jeffrey and Peter).

A few doubts about improvement

In Figure 7 above, three students did not indicate that the process of learning about or working on essay writing had been an improvement on previous years. Two said their learning had gone about the same as last year (which had not included these practices) and one was not sure. These students were Chris, Peter and Emma who were among the five students whose essay writing did not markedly improve. A closer examination of the reasons they gave for not seeing improved learning benefits from student-generated feedback show that in answering this question they were thinking about their essay writing performance, rather than their knowledge and understanding of essay writing. Peter said, *"I think I have made alright progress with my essay learning but I can definitely do better."* Chris felt, *"The process of learning has been a lot different to previous years, though I have a better understanding of what is required, the act of writing a quality essay has been a struggle."* Emma felt: *"I think it was good for me to analyse my work closely, however, I don't know if it actually improved my essay writing as such."* It is noteworthy that these answers still contain positive perceptions of the process of learning. The other two students whose essay writing did not show consistent improvement (Lucy and Jeffrey) did see learning benefits.

Further factors which might prevent students making improvements

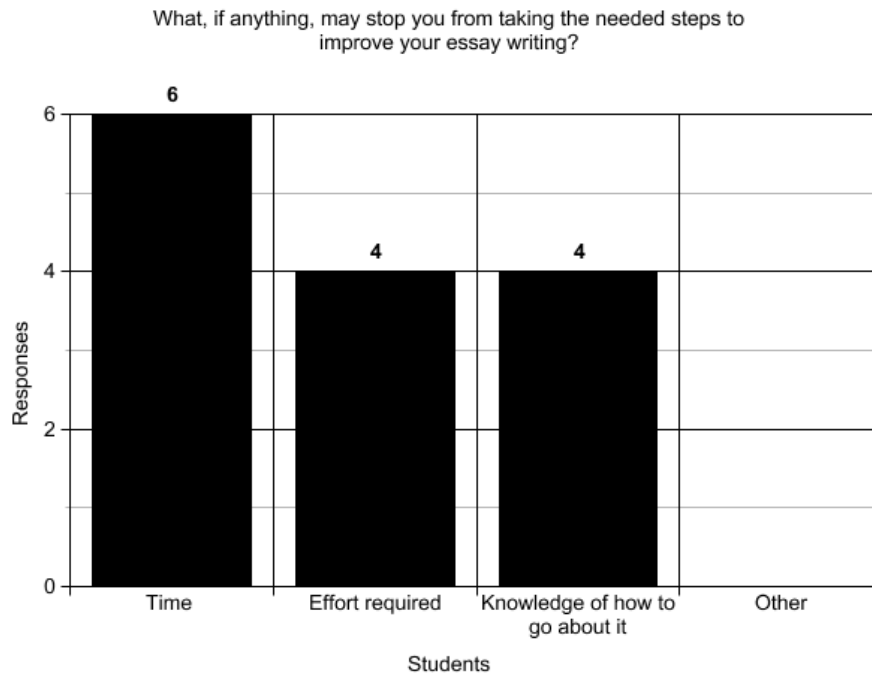


Figure 10: Factors affecting improvement

(Note: students could select more than one answer).

When students were asked what might stop them from taking the needed steps to improve their essay writing, six students focused on factors of time, specifying constraints in the examination or lack of good time management; four noted the effort required to get started on essay writing or to go about taking steps to upskill themselves (“*Sometimes I get too lazy to study for English because I know I can at least pass,*” said Alice). Four expressed a lack of clear knowledge of how to improve their essay writing, which should be balanced against the earlier finding that only two of the eleven students felt that they did not understand what they could do to improve their essay writing (Figure 9).

Expressions of student agency

A clear finding of this study was that a majority of students experienced greater independence and agency in their learning of essay writing. There were one or two who consistently expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities but most expressed a sense of control and empowerment when

discussing their thoughts on the various aspects of the process. Many 'I' statements were used by students. There are numerous examples of this already recorded throughout this findings section which reveal student empowerment through different aspects of the process. Students experienced empowerment through the skills development phase of the process, as they came to understand the success criteria independently and were able to mark exemplars and then apply that learning back to their own work. Alice's comments are representative: *"By marking and reading other people's essays I can now understand what is good and bad and also how to improve. This has only happened in Year 13 because I haven't been able to read/mark others' essays [before]."*

Students expressed a strong sense of agency when they asserted that creating their own feedback was superior to solo teacher feedback. As Chris said: *"I feel it has helped me more than, say you giving me feedback personally of what I need to do to improve, whereas I can do it myself."* Steven expressed this same sense of agency when discussing the purpose of student-generated feedback:

I think that the purpose obviously is long term improving your essay writing and getting a better grade but I think that short term it's picking up on small things yourself and I think that you learn quicker by doing it. So, I think the purpose is to get a better grade and it does it effectively by allowing you to pick up on smaller things by yourself and you remember what you've learnt a lot better.

When students spoke of the reasons why they might not make improvements, the majority touched on areas that they could exert some control over such as time management and effort. Only a few expressed uncertainties about what they could do to improve, and additional practice was seen as a way to increase confidence by students who expressed a lack of confidence.

An important aspect of these findings (and encouraging from my perspective as a teacher) is that student independence was not perceived

as doing away with the value of the teacher. Instead a kind of levelling with the teacher was expressed. Chloe gave a lovely, honest perspective:

I think self learning as well as a teacher there definitely helps 'cause the whole time you're not being just told by the teacher 'cause it makes you not want to do it, but when it's yourself you realise what you need to do personally. You can make your own goals as well as with the teacher helping you.

Student appreciation of follow-on teacher feedback also reflects the value students still found in the teacher but which, on the whole, worked alongside a sense of student capability and empowerment.

Student confidence

There are two aspects to the study where students made comments about their confidence: in essay writing, and in their ability to mark and give feedback.

Confidence in essay writing

A number of students expressed increased confidence in their ability to write essays. This varied from some confidence to clear confidence, with a recognition that they still had a way to go. For example, Leon said: *"I do feel much, much more confident in constructing my body paragraphs and supporting them with provided evidence. This was a huge improvement for me."* Chloe expressed the idea that she could keep on improving: *"Even though I generally feel confident with my writing I know there are always places I can improve on."* Three students related confidence to performance, feeling that it was still hard to put improved understanding of essay writing into practice to actually see improvements. For example, Jeffrey said, *"I feel that I have a good understanding of essay writing but putting it into practice is a lot harder."* Those who lacked confidence were among those discussed above who did not see marked improvement in their essay writing so these responses showed appropriate self-awareness.

Confidence in judging essays and giving feedback

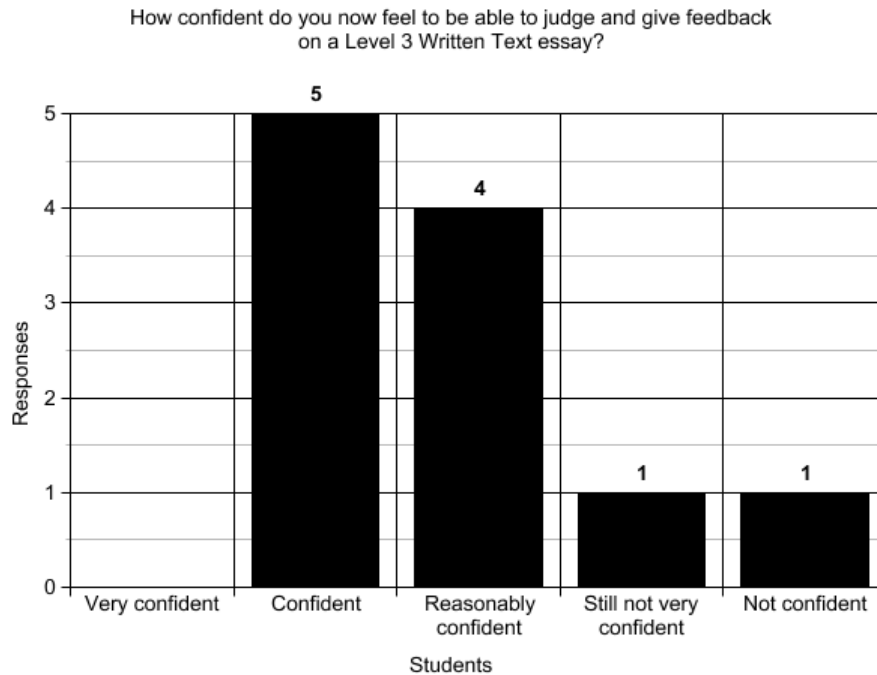


Figure 11: Confidence in evaluating essays and giving feedback

A majority (9/11) expressed confidence in their ability to judge and give feedback on a Level 3 essay. Only two students were either still not very confident (Peter) or not confident (Emma).

Students' perceptions ranged from very confident (*"I think I'm very confident at marking essays"* – Charlotte) to tentative confidence:

I think that by now I could possibly give somewhat good feedback on another essay, although I am never really sure about whether the essay that I am reading is actually good/bad, or I just think that it's good/bad. (Leon)

Those who were less confident expressed the view that their confidence could have been increased by more practice or by using these processes from an earlier stage in their education. For example, in response to questioning along these lines Lucy felt that, *"if we had started in maybe from the junior years ('cause this is our first time doing it), if we had done it since the beginning of essay writing, then it would have helped a lot."*

Below are three tables which record the written feedback comments for the three essays. These comments accompanied the success criteria rubric which had areas ticked or circled to indicate where the essays sat. They show that most students were close to the teacher assessed result and that often the teacher only needed to agree with student feedback.

First feedback

Table 2: First Feedback

Note: NCEA has four levels of proficiency: Not Achieved, Achieved, Merit and Excellence. Each level has a low and high distinction within it creating the notation: N1, N2, A3, A4, M5, M6, E7, E8.

	Self	Teacher
Steven	M6. More evidence woven into argument needed. Expand beyond text connections and in depth development of own ideas. Expand vocab.	Agreed with all comments — M6.
Jamie	M6. Good knowledge and societal links. Good language but could be varied and improved. Structure is understandable but could be more clear. Author's purpose was discussed well but could have been further developed.	M6 agreed. Structure — separate point 2 and 3. Be more generous in your text detailing. Look to analyse language choices within examples.
Chris	No mark given — ticks in A and some M columns. Shows evidence of relating outside the text, although limited. Maintains strong focus on the text question. Understanding key words. More depth needed in paragraphs with more deep understanding of the author's opinions.	A3. Agreed to comments plus: Setting is too broad to be considered an element of style. Key area of development is the knowledge and detailing- far greater description and detailing is needed on which to build an argument (length of paragraphs is short, use TEDEE)

Peter	<i>Essay not completed</i>	
Chloe	A3 — met Achieved requirements, but could have gone deeper. addressed Q, related to modern society	A3 agreed. Good structure and use of topic sentences, good clear writing style. Think about why Mansfield characterises Leila as naive/overcome- how does it fit with her feminist critique of 1920s NZ society? Third point needed to make a more complete essay.
Alice	Did not write a mark but ticked in M and As (for structure and Language). Topic sentences have improved a lot and are well done. Needs to be more in-depth knowledge of Her First Ball. Have good knowledge of Frau Brech. I need to be quicker at writing which will come with practice because I didn't finish it in the time frame. Linking to the question was good and internal paragraph structure could be improved in body.	M6 — agreed with comments. Go deeper with social, cultural time period setting (research) and think more about Mansfield's feminist message. Work on vocab/language choices.
Emma	A3/A4? Struggled to assess own work. Don't really know what to do to improve or what I'm doing wrong.	M6. Done well. Good structure. Other than some spelling, vocab is good. Think more about Vonnegut's purpose and avoid simplifying everyone's view of war. Intro details to the reader more clearly.
Charlotte	N2. Essay goes off topic and is incomplete. Lots of spelling/punctuation errors. Shows some understanding of short stories but not at high level. Focus on too many things.	N2 agreed. Only cover 2 stories. Super analysis work — really top work. Addressing second part of the question is needed.

	<p>Good paragraphing and did well to complete in a short time.</p> <p>Next steps: know text better, improve sentences, punctuation and spelling.</p> <p>Have more time to do it and maintain one focus.</p>	
Jeffrey	<i>Essay not completed.</i>	
Lucy	<p>A4.</p> <p>Intro probably a bit short, not nice flowing paragraphs, need more precise language — greater extensive vocab.</p> <p>Need to link ideas to outside influences — era, feminism.</p>	<p>M6.</p> <p>Agreed to comment on outside links — go deeper in terms of Mansfield's opinions, purposes.</p> <p>Super analysis work. Strong elements of E — just build argument throughout.</p> <p>Work on smoothing/tightening structure.</p>
Leon	<p>Not sure on mark — circled areas in A3 and A4, once in M.</p> <p>Didn't write comments.</p>	<p>M6.</p> <p>Strong address of the question and structure.</p> <p>Overall very good text detailing (except P1).</p> <p>Strong vocab choices.</p> <p>Next steps:</p> <p>Look to analyse language e.g. ironic simple sentence 'so it goes', simile 'mustard gas and roses'</p> <p>Investigate further the context in which Vonnegut was writing to inform you on why he wanted to de-glorify the war.</p>

Second feedback

Table 3: Second feedback

	Self or Peer	Teacher
Steven	(Self) No number given — highlighted M and E areas. Trying to provide own insight and focusing on Q. Related to society well. Could craft the essay better and could develop in text ideas better. Broader vocab would help and more expansion of in-text knowledge needs to be added, give more examples.	M. Tricky Q choice on conciseness. Agreed with comments. More grappling with how your points show a lack of conciseness is needed (roundabout, indirect, multi-layered meaning). What about thinking about the message that human life has value (humanist) which he brings in a roundabout manner?
Jamie	Peer assessed by Jeffrey — E7. Strong intro. Solid link to Vietnam. Deviating from Q of dispassion and starting to look at ethics in war in BP3 and towards the end (otherwise almost E8). Solid conclusion which rounds off the points.	M6. Lovely discussion — incisive, interesting but not well enough built on text detail for E.
Chris	<i>Essay not completed</i>	
Peter	(Self) — no mark and few ticks (in A3) I think my points prove my essay right but need more text evidence to back up points well. Need a stronger conclusion.	N2. Key issue is the need to address the Q: need to discuss the <u>purpose</u> Vonnegut has in creating a dispassionate character and <u>why</u> his dispassion makes him interesting. Structure: Larger paragraphs are needed rather than separate points in small paragraphs.
Chloe	<i>Essay not completed</i>	
Alice	<i>Essay not completed</i>	

Emma	<p>(Self) A4 but has underlined in A4 and M. I think that my relation to society could be stronger. My language is not overly advanced. My structure is not solid. I possibly could have addressed the question in a more sophisticated manner with more insight into author's opinion.</p>	<p>M5. Points are developed but a bit repetitive. Bring in new evidence/material (esp. between Point 1 and 2). Bring in other considerations — PTSD and Tralfamadore? /close reading of the ending?</p>
Charlotte	<p>No mark — ticks in A3 and N2. Sentences run on too long almost creating a recount of the text. Show understanding of text but not to a high level. Answered the question but only subtly.</p>	<p>A3 — agreed with comments. Addressing the question: more focus on how she is passionate and linking that to author's purpose is needed. Good understanding shown of the text — some excellent commentary.</p>
Jeffrey	<p>(Peer) marked by Andre — A4 Response is consistent but could be more convincing with a depth of text knowledge, i.e. deeper unpacking of the quotes. You begin to talk about author's purpose, but never developed it or linked it to society. Good clear conclusion but points could have been clearer in the intro. Your language was well versed but a bit basic and some structures and misspellings hindered your message.</p>	<p>Agreed A4. Good structure on the whole and well developed content with a lot of good text detailing. The key thing to move onto is <u>why</u> is it that his dispassion makes him <u>interesting</u> (this is linked to author's purpose).</p>
Lucy	<p>N2. Didn't finish, incomplete. Incomplete sentences, simple writing. Need to go more in depth. No conclusion.</p>	<p>A3 –likely. Going well — insightful commentary and generous text detailing.</p>

Leon	(Self) (nothing written)	M5. Strong sense of personal voice. Good structure. Further development of beyond the text thinking and linking to author's purpose is needed. More weaving in of text details/evidence. Explore the next step of analysis of text details.
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Third feedback

Here the teacher feedback was not follow-on because it had to be written before the essays were given back to the students as they were from the school trial examinations. Teacher feedback was given to the students after they had written their own feedback.

Table 4: Third feedback

	Self	Teacher
Steven	(Ticks in M and E). Work on the stuff you're not good at, e.g. critical response, not repeating yourself and 'flare'.	M6. Good structure, address of the question and text detailing. Your discussion of author's purpose is vague and lacking depth. You need to do some work around this considering more the Vietnam war context in which he wrote and his self-perception that he was a humanist (and not a nihilist).
Jamie	M6. Good text detailing, but a stronger question focus would enhance the knowledge. Opinions obvious and very well linked to society. Structure and language style could have been clearer and more coherent.	E7. Insightful, philosophical challenging discussion. Strong sense of personal engagement. More text detailing needed – be generous, be analytical. Look for terms to use – free indirect speech, fragmented narrative structure, cognitive dissonance.

Chris	<p>N2. Needs to answer the question in more depth with quotes. More knowledge of the author's purpose is needed. Too brief overall. Don't show and explain my quotes and leave a lot out.</p>	<p>A3. Structure is sound and you keep focused on the question. It is too ambitious to write on three texts – it means you only lightly touch on ideas and give very limited evidence. Your ideas on each text are good but more evidence and discussion is needed. Use two texts at the most and possibly just one.</p>
Peter	<p>Ticks in N and A. Clearer intro needed. Make sure that no detail is left out for the marker to figure out. Show good relation to text. Fully explain my points – 1st, 3rd paragraphs.</p>	<p>N2. Your paragraph on Billy Pilgrim's character is good. This is close to an Achieved but you don't develop enough of an answer to the question of 'effect of defying a traditional text genre'. You need to have more focus on the question: you hint at author's attitude to war but don't actually discuss it. Your paragraph on unreliable narrator doesn't clearly describe the unreliable aspect to the narration or discuss effect.</p>
Chloe	<p>N2-A3. I think I had good ideas but I needed to elaborate by using more examples. My planning helped my writing flow because I planned out what I wanted to write about and quotes. I could have used more examples and analyse what the quotes mean to the story and question. More quotes could have helped support my essay.</p>	<p>A3. Your structure and focus on the question is great. Your language is clear. More text evidence is needed. There is borderline enough actual description of setting to achieve. Instead of one quote/piece of evidence, try to weave in three – this will build a much more convincing argument. You could make much more of the social setting of the 1920s in terms of a woman's place/worth and what Katherine Mansfield's feminist views were.</p>
Alice	<p>(Has ticks in the A/M areas).</p>	<p>A4.</p>

	<p>Good: topic sentences, managed to finish essay with a conclusion, answered question in first sentence in intro, knows the text well.</p> <p>Bad: more quotes needed in P1, don't forget to put the time period of K.M.'s time and in the short story. Need a stronger argument, needs to learn more on K.M.'s purpose for writing about the social problems, focus more on the question.</p>	<p>Good text detailing and knowledge. Solid structure. More interaction with the question is needed. 'Alert readers' implies that you will discuss how a contemporary audience would have responded to the content. You don't even give the time period Mansfield wrote in. More discussion on the context in which Mansfield was writing would also aid your beyond the text links.</p>
Emma	<p>A3/A4. I think that some of my examples to text were relevant, but a large number of my points are not supported with relevant points that were well developed. I think maybe I rambled a bit too.</p>	<p>M5. Structure is straightforward and addresses the question. Your point on Billy Pilgrim's character is clear and developed. In the intro define the terms of the question – in this case 'tradition' – i.e. linear, heroic, relatable. Then describe the basics of the book in contrasting terms- postmodern, offensive, unheroic, nonlinear, mixing genres. Remember to write as if the marker doesn't know the text.</p>
Charlotte	<p>N2-A3. More quotes and knowledge of the text needed. Need to answer the question/argument to higher level. An OK essay, just needs to be crafted better. What I need to focus on for future learning is knowing the quotes better and crafting my work so I show understanding and answer the question.</p>	<p>A4. Good structure Charlotte – your intro and conclusion are clear and you develop a sustained argument focusing on the essay question. Go further in terms of text evidence — be more generous. 'Language' is the focus so you need more quotes. Also keep coming back to your argument — 'subtle language' 'distinctive voice' – in each paragraph. Your third point loses track a bit on the question of language choices. Give us Mansfield's feminist context.</p>

Jeffrey	<p>A3. Standard intro with no originality. Good ideas but no building. Basic understanding of question. No in-depth qualities. More information from the text/novel. Spelling in need, e.g. (sci-fi) Very weak and not one point.</p>	<p>A4. Good essay set up, approach and structure. Further text detailing is needed to make convincing points — be more generous in your descriptions when giving examples and use quotes more. Link to author's purpose and the context in which he is writing for M/E.</p>
Lucy	<p>A3. Don't really focus on the contemporary side. Main paragraphs don't really relate to the question. Not a great conclusion. Simple language. Not much analysing. Social issues??</p>	<p>A4. You know the text and make some contextual links. In places you analyse the text and discuss it in detail. Your question choice is not right as contemporary means recent/present times. I'm not sure what a marker would do in this case. You need to also be more attentive to the question — referring to it and showing that you are building an answer. Work on some spelling accuracy basics — this will help your writing to be more reflective of the quality of your thinking.</p>
Leon	<p>M5. 1st body paragraph doesn't relate to the original question as much as wanted, only last couple of lines, otherwise pretty detailed, although the structure and flow could be improved, looks like a brain-dump, same goes for second body paragraph. Overall I think I could've done better just at sticking to the question and evaluating it more thoroughly.</p>	<p>M5. So interesting and fluent Leon well done. It is mostly clear (especially your set up in the intro). A bit more emphasis on the normalcy of this life — the 'false appearance' is needed in detail to be really attentive to the question. Then just more examples/details of the truth underneath are needed. Also you set the context of WWII in your intro and need to build on this in terms of author's purpose.</p>

Student competency in feedback

A close look at the self-generated feedback given in the third essay gives some sense of how competent students had become by the end of the ten-week period. Most students were able to apply judgments and write useful feedback with varying levels of detail. Feedback comments included things such as identifying positives like the use of a strong, clear structure and that the essay question had been addressed. Next steps feedback included aspects such as: needing to know the text better and to use more quotations; needing to incorporate more contextual information about the author; needing to develop a fuller argument to address the essay question better; and identifying the need to be better able to unpack essay questions. Emma stands out as being too hard on herself, as she had been in every essay feedback opportunity. Leon is also noteworthy as it was the first time he had written feedback for himself and he showed good understanding.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present the range of research findings from students' perceptions of the whole process, down to perceptions of each aspect of the practices used. Students found value in the process as a whole. The responses were positive towards the skills development phase and generally positive about the actual practices of self-generated feedback and peer feedback. Reasons that students gave for the positive impact were grouped into themes that expressed various perceived learning benefits. Doubts about improvement and tangential issues such as students not responding to traditional teacher-only feedback were also acknowledged. Other key themes that emerged from students' responses regarded their confidence in essay writing, as well as in giving feedback, and their feelings of agency. Students' competency in giving feedback was also assessed by looking at their feedback on their third essay.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the implications of my research findings for aspects of the student-feedback process in relation to the literature. The discussion then moves to interpreting these findings in light of claims made in the literature review that student-generated feedback practices can foster student engagement and student self-regulation. Is there evidence that these practices led to student engagement? Likewise, is there evidence that these practices built student self-regulatory attitudes and skills? This study suggests the answer to both questions is yes. It is then posited that these positive outcomes are the result of changed classroom identity dynamics and the fostering of student agency.

The process

This section of the discussion will consider key aspects of the study, linking back to the literature, with practical reflections on how successful aspects of the process proved to be.

Validation of the definition

Using a definition by Butler and Winnie (1995) as a starting point, I gave the following definition of feedback as appropriate for this context:

Feedback is information developed in a socially mediated context, through working with a product against a standard, which gives opportunities to respond cognitively, affectively and/or by taking action.

This study has validated the use of this definition for formative assessment in a standards-based assessment system. It has proven to be useful in its ability to describe the key aspects of the processes undertaken. The significance of social mediation was an important aspect of the definition as students and the teacher worked together with a product against a standard. Peer feedback was one means by which this occurred. Also, the process of self-generated feedback followed by teacher feedback created

a synergy between teacher and students because both were interacting with the same product and standard with the common goal of improving the student's understanding of their essay writing. This study shows that feedback did create opportunities for students and the teacher to respond cognitively, affectively and through taking action. (A further discussion of these responses occurs later in this chapter under student self-regulation).

The nature of the feedback

The type of feedback I encouraged in this study followed Sadler's (1989) functional approach by focusing on identifying strengths and weaknesses in current performance and giving feed-forward information. It developed into a twofold comment on 'What is going well?' and 'What areas could be a focus for further learning?' It focused students on the strategies of essay writing and the next steps needed to make improvements. This worked smoothly, producing increasingly useful feedback and affirms the value of a functional approach. While acknowledging Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Shute's (2008) warnings that feedback can be tricky to get right, this study affirms their advice detailed in the literature review, namely, that feedback needs to be implemented in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. In particular, this study affirms that effective feedback provides little personal threat by being focused on the task (not the person) and has a manageable task complexity. Also, successful feedback comments should be broken into manageable units, be clear and specific, compatible with students' prior knowledge, and make logical connections between the desired next step and how to get there.

The nature of the writing task

This study corroborates expert claims about the complexity of the writing task context which were introduced in the literature review. Writing is an art (Marshall, 2004; Hawe & Dixon, 2014). It is not just about content but about how that content is articulated. Word choice, grammatical accuracy and expression, and the coherence of one's ideas are weighed up alongside an individual's ability to respond to the nuances of an essay question with clear and (for higher marks) perceptive thinking. Four

students in this study fully engaged with the process, yet found it difficult to respond to feedback because their needs were not simply about understanding: they were about their ability to express themselves in writing. Writing skills take time to develop and the process by which improvements could occur is likely to a long one.

This study also supports Johnson and Gelfand's (2013) warning that writing often puts students in a vulnerable position where beliefs about being ineffective writers and a lack of a sense of how to improve can create negative accompanying feelings. Most students did not express feelings of powerlessness or lack of direction. Instead, the tone that most students expressed was one of understanding and empowerment about what was needed to improve their work. This affirms the process used. However, a few students at points expressed these kinds of negative feelings, and one student (Emma) seemed significantly affected by negative feelings that made it difficult for her to evaluate her work clearly or to know how to improve. While this study process was effective and empowering for most, negative feeling associated with writing were still evident.

The skills development phase

The skills development phase in this study was successful. It confirms Sadler's (1989) assertions that students need to have access to the same resources that teachers do, and that it takes time to induct them into the 'guild knowledge' of a particular subject. Students all valued coming to grips with a success criteria rubric and assessing exemplar essays. These student voice findings support Sadler's (1998, 2009) and Pryor & Crossouard's (2008) assertions that unlocking the success criteria through students actually grappling with marking themselves is the key to developing their competency. As noted above, this study adds student voice to the research which consistently suggests that teachers need to carefully and explicitly teach feedback strategies and practices to enable students to produce useful feedback (Sadler, 1998; Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Panadero & Alonso, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). The skills development phase used here was effective and efficient, only involving

two hour-long periods in class. This suggests that it could be used as a regular classroom practice in English and other subjects.

I created a success criteria rubric with the intention to use as little jargoned language as possible, to be as accessible to students as possible. It also needed to be sophisticated enough for the level at which they were working. Students appreciated using this rubric and the findings suggest that they would not have been able to gain the experience and skills necessary to evaluate essays so readily without it. However, the language was still of concern to some students and they needed the practice of working with it while marking exemplars to be able to understand it more clearly. This finding is in line with Pryor and Crossouard's (2008) recognition of the difficulty of language communication.

Self-generated feedback

Students expressed the idea that feedback was more powerful when it came from themselves, rather than solely from the teacher. Some students' comments support the research that suggests that students often don't interact with traditional teacher-only feedback (e.g., Wojtas, 1998; Weaver, 2006; Wingate, 2010). Given that feedback is a difficult form of communication, (Sadler, 1998; Higgins et al., 2001; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008) self-generated feedback 'cuts out the middle man.' Teacher follow-on feedback was able to fulfil a different function of validation/correction, providing an expert or alternative perspective. The interplay between student-generated feedback and teacher feedback created a sense of feedback as dialogue along the lines promoted by Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006). Both feedback products became shared knowledge between students and teacher, often sparking conversation. This study shows, as Sadler (1989; 2009) and Marshall (2006) assert, that given the chance, students can become insiders in the assessment world and that there is real benefit to their learning as a result.

Peer feedback

The mixed findings generated from peer feedback reinforce the assertion that peer feedback is, "an essentially *problematic* form of communication

involving particular social relationships” (Higgins et al, p. 273). Overall, while benefit was found by at least five of the seven students who engaged in it, peer feedback was less straightforward than self-generated feedback. Students found the social dynamic challenging. Significantly, students had different views on the nature of the feedback they would receive from a peer — some thought it would be too easy (and therefore not worth receiving), some thought it would be harsher than teacher feedback. This is in keeping with research which shows that students hold established epistemological beliefs about learning and knowledge that need to be acknowledged and reshaped (Butler & Winnie, 1995). Here, beliefs about whether peers could be a valid learning source were evident. My study did not give space for any training in peer feedback and there was only one opportunity given to it. These findings suggest that peer feedback requires a different set of skills from self-generated feedback — skills related to social engagement with others. Such skills need their own development process.

The goal of student-generated feedback

In the findings I noted the competency of students in their third essay feedback as well as the confidence most students felt in giving feedback. Against this was the concern expressed by some regarding their accuracy in assessing work. This student voice confirms Harris and Brown’s (2013) assertion that students may not be accurate enough to use their grading for purposes other than formative feedback. However, it is worth noting that the issue of whether students graded their essays accurately is not actually the key goal of using these practices. The point of self-generated feedback is to engage students in the process of evaluating quality in essay writing in order to help them learn how to improve their own writing. This engagement was seen. What is more pertinent is that the most of students felt they did understand where their essay writing was at and how to improve their essay writing.

Interpreting the findings

The second half of this chapter will discuss the evidence found for the two key outcomes of the use of student-generated feedback: student engagement and student self-regulation. Why these positive outcomes were fostered is then interpreted in the light of a social constructivist view of learning.

Student engagement

Using Munns and Woodward's (2006) definition of student engagement as a, "*substantive* sense of satisfaction with, and a psychological investment in, the classroom work being undertaken" (p. 194), it is clear that students were significantly engaged through these student-generated feedback practices.

All three aspects of Fredricks et al.'s (2004) multi-dimensional engagement, as proposed by Munns and Woodward (2006), were present during the student-generated feedback process: reflective involvement; genuine valuing, and active participation. As noted in the findings chapter, students visibly showed the first and third conditions of reflective involvement in deep level understanding and active participation when evaluating exemplars and their own work. This was observable in the classroom and also in what students said about aspects of the process. This engagement began immediately with the skills development phase and was continued with the self and peer feedback phase. Genuine valuing was shown through students' warm endorsement of the worthwhileness of student-generated feedback practices. One student was able to articulate the benefits of the process in terms of reflection. Others expressed their engagement in terms of enjoyment. This supports Munns and Woodward's (2006) proposal that there are, "strong theoretical and practical connections between student engagement and student self-assessment" (p. 193).

As teachers' anecdotes suggest and research supports, student engagement with traditional teacher-only feedback is often poor for a

variety of reasons (Weaver, 2006; Wojtas, 1998). Student voice in this study confirmed the idea that some students had previously not interacted fully with teacher-only feedback (“*Actually not taking any notice of it*” – Charlotte). This study suggests that with the use of a few deliberate yet simple practices substantial engagement, as described by Munns and Woodward (2006), can be secured. Why this occurred will be discussed further through a social constructivist lens later in this chapter.

Student self-regulation

This study affirms the research that student-generated feedback practices are linked to increased self-regulation, which is seen as highly desirable for the development of lifelong learners (Munns & Woodward, 2006; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Andrade, 2010; Earl, 2013; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013; Hargreaves, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). Significantly, my findings also support assertions that self-regulatory skills can be taught and learnt (Andrade, 2010; Hargreaves, 2013; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). Students taking responsibility is one clear indicator of self regulation. The development of cognitive routines, metacognitive monitoring and practical action-taking are the outworkings of self-regulated learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). What follows is a discussion of the evidence of these indicators of self-regulation in this study. The interaction of motivation and self-regulation is also discussed further on in this section.

Taking responsibility

Self-regulated learning practices are about students taking responsibility for their learning (Zimmerman, 2008). In this study students’ perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback practices showed that students felt a high degree of responsibility for their learning. Confidence in their understanding of where their essay writing was at, and what they needed to do to improve, support this sense of ownership over their learning.

Indicators of self-regulated learning

The first indicator of student self-regulation, as described by Smith et al., (2011) came in the form of the cognitive routine used to make evaluative

judgments of work against a success criteria and then specifying advice for future work, keeping in mind what a successful end product might look like. This happened with varying degrees of competency but as recorded in the findings chapter most students showed that they were able to make fair and worthwhile evaluative judgments. These findings are also in line with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) assessment that self-regulation is occurring when students can independently apply a process to generate information which could lead them to further action.

This is not to say that this cognitive practice led all students to focus on the most important overall aspects of essay writing: addressing the question, sustaining an argument, and analysing the text. Instead, some focused on less significant mechanical aspects of essay writing — aspects of grammar, spelling, vocabulary (the fine-tuning of these aspects really only comes into play at the highest level where finesse is required). This is a concern noted by Sadler (2009) regarding rubric use. He asserted that rubrics have the potential to lead markers to overvalue the more visible mechanical aspects of a task rather than the deeper level aspects. This is also likely to be a natural consequence of the writing context where the more visible aspects of writing can focus students' attention. This supports Sadler's (1989) assertion that significant experience and reinforcement of how to use success criteria are needed to overcome these natural inclinations. The cognitive routine itself was evidence that self-regulation was occurring, even though the knowledge produced was somewhat limited in nature at that point.

A second indicator of student self-regulation, as presented by Hattie and Timperley (2007), was apparent in the metacognitive self-monitoring of progress from one essay to another as students responded to their feedback. Most students showed some sense of metacognitive monitoring across the three essays in that they were able to articulate particular issues they had with essay writing and what they needed to do to improve their writing. One student, Chloe, showed that it wasn't until the second round of feedback that self-monitoring was activated as she realised that she was not responding to her own feedback and that her second round of

feedback was a repetition of the first. Her “*wake-up call*” was the awakening of her self-monitoring faculties and led to affective and practical responses.

Closely tied to metacognitive self-monitoring is taking action in response to need. This study supports Zimmerman’s (2008) assertion that taking action is at the heart of self-regulated learning. This is where students in this study were most divergent in their response and where the partnership between teacher and student was most needed. Firstly, it seems fair to say that student-generated feedback practices promoted action more effectively than teacher-only feedback did because, as Sadler (2010) describes, students were recognising their own next steps and responding to them.

For some students self-monitoring occurred in the *zone of proximal development* where they needed the monitoring of the teacher to encourage action. This corroborates Timperley and Parr’s (2009) Vygotskian view of how self-regulation is taught. Through teacher-monitoring, action was taken in response to feedback at a class level at points in the process. By providing students with this focus and time in class I enabled students to perform actions which they knew they needed to take. In terms of individual needs, some students did not take the necessary action to improve their work. For example, Steven needed to develop greater finesse in his vocabulary — he had recognised this himself and I had encouraged him to make a vocabulary list but I never saw evidence that this had been done. Some students were not able to independently self-regulate but were learning to do so with the support of a *more knowledgeable other*.

The role of motivation in self-regulation

This study affirms that motivation plays a role in self-regulation (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006). As noted in the findings section, six students indicated that time was a factor stopping them from taking the needed steps in response to feedback, and four students noted the effort required. As Zimmerman (2008) states, “The core issue is whether a learner displays personal initiative, perseverance, and adaptive skill. These

proactive qualities of learners stem from advantageous motivational feeling and beliefs as well as metacognitive strategies” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 167). Students who failed to take action because of time or effort constraints had arguably not reached this level of independent self-regulation. In the case of *time pressure* in the examination, the action needed was practise writing essays in a timed context. For students who indicated ‘time’ in terms of *time management*, and ‘effort’, they needed greater organisation and self-discipline. In the case of ‘lack of knowledge of how to go about it’ these answers indicated that further individualised learning and teaching needed to happen. Some, like Emma, may have benefited from further unpacking of Excellence exemplars as well as going back over her own feedback more thoroughly to see what was being said. Steven needed to make a vocabulary list. If I had provided time in the teaching programme for students to address their particular needs, acknowledging that these students were in the *zone of proximal development* for self-regulation, it is likely students would have done what was needed.

Overall, these findings corroborate the assertion by experts that feedback is among the most important influences in the development of self-regulation (Butler & Winnie, 1995; Black & William, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, the assertion that, “when feedback allows students to see the gap between their actual production and some reference point that makes sense to them, they are both motivated and able to work with their conceptions and make adjustments” (Earl, 2013, p. 115), was less evident for all students within the timeframe of this study. Some students, such as Chloe, saw the gap and did something about it, showing self-regulation. However, other students needed that combination of recognising the gap and having teacher facilitation to enable them to fill it. In addition, there were a couple of students, like Alice, who by choosing not to take the actions needed because of the effort entailed did not yet demonstrate self-regulatory competency in this area.

It is worth surmising here that the nature of our New Zealand standards-based education system, where each unit of work is assessed separately

and does not contribute to a single total, enables students to easily make pragmatic decisions about where to place their time and energy. This is similar to Sadler's (1989) discussion of the pragmatism students exhibit in a continuous assessment situation where any work set that does not contribute to the total is not worth doing. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to suggest what effect the amount of assessment NCEA generates for many students may have on student motivation.

Link to life-long learning

Self-regulation is seen as one feature of a person equipped to be a lifelong learner (Munns & Woodward, 2006; Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Andrade, 2010; Earl, 2013; Hargreaves, 2013; Brown & Harris, 2014). In this study there was an indication that, for some students at least, the self-regulating behaviours and cognitive routines they had learned through this process had become an important part of who they were as a learner. Students' expressions of the belief that these skills should be taught from an earlier age indicate that they saw value in them beyond the immediate task of NCEA Level 3 essay writing. One student's expression that, "*It will impact everything*" (Charlotte), suggests that she had gained the self-regulatory perspective linked to lifelong learning.

Identity and agency: a social constructivist perspective

Above I have explored the favourable engagement and self-regulatory outcomes which students' perceived and the teacher observed through the study. One way of making sense of these findings is through a social constructivist perspective of the dynamics of identity positioning in the classroom. As outlined in the literature review, identity is understood to be socially formed, sustained and transformed (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995; Gipps, 1999). The teacher may move into various identity positions in the classroom which in turn allows students to occupy non-traditional, more empowering identity positions (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). The findings from this study suggest that during the process of student-generated feedback students saw the teacher as something different than usual: I would describe it as expert partner/collaborator. The

flow of the process, with student-generated feedback being supported by follow-on teacher feedback, created this expert partner/collaborator dynamic. Students' descriptions of the benefit of teacher follow-on feedback illuminates their view. The feel of their comments is not one where the teacher is an authoritative figure, but more an expert helper. Through follow-on teacher feedback I was able to be as engaged and knowledgeable about the student's work as the student and my feedback was welcomed to confirm, adjust, or add to their own feedback. Students appreciated this for valid and sensible reasons such as the teacher's greater expertise and experience, as suggested by Sadler (1989). By linking my feedback in a process following their own feedback, it generated much greater interest than had previously been noted with traditional teacher-only feedback. It also appeared that students understood my feedback to a far greater extent and that we were engaged in a meaningful dialogue about their progress. We had a shared discourse.

For some students their lack of confidence in their own judgments meant that follow-on teacher feedback was essential. While others expressed some confidence but still felt that without follow-on teacher feedback, *"It would leave me with that empty feeling of not knowing if I'd done it right"* (Chris). Remembering that oftentimes teacher follow-on feedback confirmed student feedback shows that it was an effective form of Vygotskian support in the ZPD that would eventually not be needed given enough time and practice (Shepard, 2000b). The teacher as expert partner, coming alongside the student, was able to operate effectively in that ZPD because the student was at the centre of the initial generation of feedback.

Student perceptions suggest that student-generated feedback processes do lead students into an apprentice role as Lave and Wenger (1991) and Rogoff (1995) posit. This study adds student voice in support of Marshall's (2004) assertion that, "In order to understand how to progress, pupils need to acquire the guild subject knowledge of their teachers by being apprenticed into the same community of interpreters" (p. 101). The ten-

week study was only able to record the beginning of a movement from novice to expert.

As posited by social constructivists (Gipps, 1999; Shepard, 2000b; Munns & Woodward, 2006), the locus of control in the classroom was changed because of the different roles students and the teacher were able to take on during student-generated feedback practices. This change was visible, as noted above, in terms of how students expressed their agency in their essay writing and in their view of the teacher as a useful support and consultant, rather than the pivot on which their learning turned. When students felt they had gained the ability to unlock the success criteria they felt empowered. As noted by Jamie, why should it only be the teacher who holds this knowledge so vital to understanding what essay writing should entail. By giving student voice primacy in feedback, students were shown to be valued in the classroom space and a valuable contributor to their own success. Students' perceptions of this experience were that the teacher and the student shared the learning space and shared the responsibility to provide feedback and to facilitate responding to the feedback. This reflects Shepard's (2000b) assertions that, "Engaging students in debates about standards and in reflecting on their own work can increase students' responsibility for their own learning and redistribute power, making the relationship between teacher and students more collaborative" (p. 61).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed, in relation to the literature, the implications of the findings of this study on aspects of the student-feedback process. It then discussed the evidence for the creation of student engagement and student self-regulation through student-generated feedback practices. This discussion went on to posit that a way to understand these positive outcomes, from a social constructivist perspective, is by seeing that student-generated feedback practices impact identity positioning in the classroom and create student agency.

Chapter Six: Implications and Conclusions

My research question was:

What are student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback practices in formative essay writing in the English classroom?

Introduction

To conclude, this chapter discusses the implications for students, teachers and schools of the outcomes of this study within the New Zealand context. The contribution that this research makes to theory and teaching practice is considered, as well as the limitations of the study. This thesis finishes with reflection on what future research is suggested by this study and, finally, on the personal impact this research has had on me as a teacher.

Implications for students, teachers and schools

This study has significant implications for those engaged in teaching and learning, as well as those who lead our education system. Students perceived multiple benefits from being welcomed into the world of assessment through student-generated feedback practices. Most students perceived that this had been a more effective way to learn. Many expressed a better understanding of essay writing and increased confidence in writing essays. Some expressed improved motivation to interact with feedback. Through their perceptions, triangulated against teacher observation and their feedback comments, students showed evidence of engagement as well as cognitive, metacognitive and affective self-regulation. The key implication of these outcomes is that students should be given the opportunity to engage with student-generated feedback on a regular, on-going basis. They are robbed of the above benefits when they are not given this opportunity. In particular, students should be introduced to student-generated feedback practices in essay writing much earlier, alongside their learning of essay writing. More broadly, student-generated feedback should be used, where appropriate, in other formative assessment, across subjects.

In this study students expressed a sense of responsibility for their learning and agency through student-generated feedback practices. There is evidence that students became apprentices in judgment rather than passive recipients of feedback and that the teacher was perceived as an expert partner/collaborator. It is incumbent on teachers to actively encourage this level of collaboration through the regular use of student-generated feedback practices. More than this, student-generated feedback practices are just one means of bringing students into the assessment world and just one AFL practice. The engagement and self-regulation stimulated by these practices would seem to be the tip of the iceberg of what is possible when more collaborative teaching and learning methods are used. I believe the onus should be on educational leaders to introduce the systematic use of AFL practices in schools to bring students effectively into the assessment world as partners with teachers.

A further implication of this study is that student voice is important and should be sought regarding classroom practices. In this research students showed that they had views on the practices they engaged with and on their confidence in essay writing. It was only through asking that I was able to engage with this information. Too often teachers go about making decisions for their students without a clear understanding of what students think or understand. There needs to be a culture of seeking student voice in schools with space for learning discussions, feedback and reflection in ordinary classroom practice. Again this should be encouraged at a systemic level, rather than be left to the discretion of individual teachers.

Professional development implications

A specific implication of this study is that teachers need to be skilled and confident in the creation of rubrics to be able to replicate this process. NCEA has moved away from highly descriptive marking schedules, broken into multi-dimensional criteria, to promote, instead, more holistic marking. However, in doing so it has made it harder for an inexperienced marker to appreciate the components that make up the whole. This makes it even more important that teachers are capable of creating these resources for

their students. Also, teachers need to use them well. This study shows that success criteria rubrics must be introduced well and paired with marking practice. Students can not just be shown a rubric or shown exemplars. They must actually engage with evaluative judgments in order to gain a robust understanding of quality.

More generally, the New Zealand curriculum is based on the premise that, “All young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning” (Absolum et al., 2009, p. 5). NCEA, grounded in ongoing formative assessment, needs to have teachers knowledgeable in Assessment for Learning principles to see it work to its potential. For the New Zealand curriculum ideals to be met, professional development on AFL needs to be continuous, ongoing and widespread.

Finally, I have found that being involved in practitioner research has significantly contributed to my own professional development. This study, unsupported by academic researchers, models the kind of quality professional development needed for teachers to genuinely improve their practice. Unfortunately, this level of research is all too rare. There needs to be more encouragement of ongoing teacher practitioner research, primarily through teachers being given time to do it.

Contribution

This practitioner study offers a contribution to both educational theory and teaching practice.

A definition and guidelines for feedback

This study developed a definition of feedback and guidelines as to its nature appropriate to this context of formative assessment in a standards-based assessment system: *Feedback is information developed in a socially mediated context, through working with a product against a standard, which gives opportunities to respond cognitively, affectively and/or by taking action.* This functional approach focused on identifying strengths and weaknesses in current performance and giving feed-forward information. It led to the guideline of using a twofold comment: ‘What is

going well?’ and ‘What areas could be a focus for further learning? Both the definition of feedback and guidelines as to its nature could be widely useful in other similar contexts.

A workable feedback process

This study used a straightforward process to develop student assessment competency. The process is practicable, replicable and involves a manageable investment of time and effort. Brown and Harris (2014) propose that self-assessment be seen as a competency which has levels of development around which a curriculum could be based. They emphasise that skills need to be taught and that students get better with practice. I concur with this recommendation and suggest that my study, with its clear skills development phase and three explicit student-generated feedback opportunities, highlights a possible programme that could be followed in similar formative assessment situations. I also add the further recommendation that teachers need professional development in implementing such a curriculum.

Limitations to the study

A key limitation of this study was the potential for the researcher effect. As a practitioner-researcher my participants were my students. My concern was that students would potentially respond positively in their perceptions of student-generated feedback because they thought it was the expected response. Guiding students to use student-generated feedback strategies would have naturally revealed my belief in their efficacy (or else why would I have done so?). As a practitioner-researcher it was not possible to separate myself from my participants to create neutrality (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Menter et al., 2011). However, this exactly mirrors the dynamic that exists between teacher and students normally in the classroom and, therefore, I argue that my results should authentically reflect the research context *and* the real-life context of the teacher. To mitigate the potential bias in the questionnaire and interviews, I designed the questions (Appendix A and Appendix B) to ensure that their wording did not lead students to a particular response. I followed expert advice by

creating questions that were open and expected students to freely give their opinions (Gillham, 2005; Roulston, 2010; Josselson, 2013).

I brought to this study an understanding that interviews are an interpersonal process, a conversation with structure and purpose, where meaning is negotiated and knowledge is co-constructively produced. I recognise that the interview is a complex research method, described as a craft and an art. Therefore, another limitation of the study is that as an inexperienced interviewer, with inexperienced interviewees, it is possible that the interviews could have been more skilfully managed, drawing out further insights.

I sought to make my findings trustworthy by triangulating complementary data from quantitative and qualitative sources through a mixed methods approach. However, limitations to this study are still present in the data analysis. There was a reasonably large amount of qualitative data available for analysis, with the potential for different interpretations. The categories in which I chose to group students comments may have been different to ones chosen by another researcher. One means to offset this limitation was to provide extensive rich data in the form of direct quotations from students to allow the reader to make interpretations for themselves. Reflexivity was also used at each stage of the research process as recommended by Roulston (2010) to bring to light the researcher's subjectivity and to ensure that participants' words and behaviours were represented as accurately as possible.

Where to next?

Although Assessment for Learning has been the subject of much research over the years and around the world, there is a lack of research in the New Zealand secondary school context. This study suggests that more extensive inquiry into the use of AFL in New Zealand secondary schools is warranted. How to effectively capture student voice in regular classroom practice in secondary schools is also an area that deserves more focused research.

This study raised questions about the implementation of NCEA in New Zealand in terms of the amount of assessment and its impact on motivation. The issue of negative feelings felt by students in writing was also brought to light in this study and is an area worthy of further research, particularly regarding how such feelings interact with student confidence and motivation, and how to minimise them.

Evidence of the development of self-regulated learning was found in this study. However, this study did not focus on goal-setting as an element of self-regulation beyond the implicit goal of becoming increasingly competent in essay writing and so to move across the success criteria rubric towards Excellence. Another study along similar lines but with more focus on the deliberate development of self-regulation is warranted. Such a study could look at explicit goal-setting in conjunction with the elements of monitoring, regulating and controlling cognition, motivation, and behaviour. This would allow for the exploration of the interaction between goal-setting and motivation.

Personal impact

Finally, this study has had a profound impact on me and my teaching practice. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2003) note, the practitioner is the one most changed through researching in one's own context. The quality of feedback processes I had previously experienced and observed was poor. Feedback had been 'top down' from teacher to student and despite my best efforts to be detailed and useful, students had often not interacted with it. The practices undertaken in this study saw feedback create a dialogue between students and myself, with students seriously engaging with what makes a good essay and how to improve their own work. I have become convinced that this collaborative teaching practice led to increased student engagement and self-regulation. In my work I have spent a lot of time developing content for my students. I had not spent enough time developing pedagogical practices. This study is the beginning of a new focus in my teaching practice.

Conclusion

We live in a rapidly changing world. It is becoming increasingly important for education systems to develop people who have the skills and attributes to be able to continue learning throughout their lives. Teachers need to be responsive to these needs and to use more appropriate collaborative practices to engage students and to develop their self-regulatory skills. Through seeking student voice, this practitioner research suggests that student-generated feedback is one effective means to develop the engagement and self-regulatory skills students will need to be successful lifelong learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Student perceptions of student-generated feedback questionnaire

(The following is a basic version of the online document used in the study. Students were able to select answers in the live online version.)

1. Success criteria rubric (the marking criteria sheet)

*Do you think that using a success criteria rubric was worthwhile to your understanding of essay writing?

- yes, very
- yes
- yes, a bit
- not sure
- no, not really
- no, not at all

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

2. Marking exemplars

*Do you think that assessing exemplar essays was worthwhile to your own understanding of essay writing?

- yes, very
- yes
- yes, a bit
- not sure
- no, not really
- no, not at all

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

3. Self-generated feedback

*Do you think that marking your own essays and giving yourself feedback was worthwhile to your understanding of essay writing?

- yes, very
- yes
- yes, a bit
- not sure
- no, not really
- no, not at all

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific,

rather than vague.

4. Peer-generated feedback

*Do you think that a classmate marking your essay and giving your feedback was worthwhile to your understanding of essay writing?

I didn't receive peer feedback

yes, very

yes

yes, a bit

not sure

no, not really

no, not at all

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

5. Teacher follow on feedback

*How important was it that the teacher added their mark and feedback on top of self or peer feedback?

essential to my mind

it became less important as I became more confident

an important part of the process

not so important

Other:

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

6. Student confidence

*How confident do you now feel to be able to judge and give feedback on a Level 3 Written Text essay?

very confident

confident

reasonably confident

still not very confident

not confident

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

7. Student-generated feedback 'training' process

*Which steps do you think were important in helping you to be able to generate essay feedback?

going through the terminology in the success criteria rubric

working through a teacher marked essay

marking exemplars

all of the above

Other

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

8. Do you feel that you understand where you are at with essay writing?

- yes I do
- yes, mostly I do
- yes, somewhat
- no, not really
- no, not at all

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

9. Do you feel that you understand what you can do to improve your essay writing?

- Yes I do
- Yes, mostly I do
- Yes, somewhat
- no, not really
- no, not at all

10. What, if anything, may stop you from taking the needed steps to make improvements to your essay writing? *

- time
- the effort required
- knowledge of how to go about it
- Other:

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

11. Compared to other years (particularly Yr 12 and Yr 11) how do you feel the process of learning about/working on essay writing has gone? *

- quite a big improvement
- somewhat better
- about the same
- I'm not sure
- it has been worse

Can you explain your answer?

Please provide any explanation to your answer above — remember to be specific, rather than vague.

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions

1. Before engaging in the activities we have been doing for student-generated feedback had you had much experience of giving yourself feedback in a proper process like this? If so can you describe them?

2. What is your perspective of the process we went through? (success criteria, exemplars, then own essays) Anything you could suggest to improve on?

3. Looking at this/these essay/s which you have self-assessed and given yourself feedback on, can you discuss your thoughts on the use of student-generated feedback?

4. Do you think there has been any impact on your **understanding** of what makes a good essay/ what is wanted in essay writing? If so what?

5. Do you think that there has been any impact on your **ability** to write essays/ the actual quality of your work? If so what?

6. What was your reaction to getting teacher feedback following the feedback you had given?

7. Why were you reluctant to give/receive peer feedback? (is there anything that would change this view do you think?)

OR 8. Looking at this/these essay/s where you had peer feedback given, can you discuss your thoughts on the use of student-generated feedback?

Overall

What is the purpose, do you think, of student-generated feedback?

-(follow on) Do you think that the work you have been engaged in over these terms has achieved that purpose?

Overall, what is your view of student-generated feedback? ... (prompt if needed) Is it a good thing or not a good thing...?

Appendix C: Sample Teacher diary (first five pages)

May — I got students to write a practice essay on SH5 giving them two periods in class.

The results are as follows:

Steven	M5	Completed it outside of class
Jamie	A4	Completed within the two periods
Chris	N	Completed one inside the class time Reworked a second essay but still wasn't at the standard (not able to respond to the feedback well enough)
Peter	N (incomplete)	Incomplete during class time (was given feedback on what he had done). Handed in an essay with one more paragraph that had not responded to any of the feedback.
Chloe	Not completed	Was away initially, but just hasn't completed it. Lacking confidence
Alice	Not completed	Has never handed it in- won't have completed it
Emma	M5/A4	Completed outside of class
Charlotte	Not completed	Busy. Lacking confidence?
Jeffrey	N	Completed but not to a sufficient standard (I think also not able to respond to the feedback)
Lucy	Not completed	
Leon	N	Completed outside of class time. Feedback given but not responded to.

There was a widespread inability to complete the essay in the two hours given. Only Jamie and Chris did. Many students who then received feedback on what they had done didn't complete an essay to a high standard and didn't show any evidence of having understood or improved their work based on the feedback (Leon, Jeffrey, Peter).

Some just never completed it (Alice, Charlotte, Alice, Lucy)

There is huge need to improve on this format and engagement of the students with the task. The fact that only two students completed the essay in the 2 hour time period is my first concern — there was little effort to go for it in their work to try to meet this deadline.

Friday 12 June: Yesterday I gave students the invitation letter. Three signed up immediately (Caitlin [who later had to pull out because she was away during the project

period] Lucy and Emma). Some students weren't there (Jamie, Leon, Chris and Jeffrey- I hope that they will also sign up). The others gave no indication of their thoughts.

My reflection is that those who signed up are the most pro-active and learning motivated students who were present that day. And all the others who didn't sign up are in majority the very students who perhaps don't see the value in their own feedback, nor do they really grapple with mine. There are some exceptions to that if it is an internal assessment, but when it comes to practice or just a learning task, I think this is true.

Also in my haste to ensure that students didn't feel pressured and also feeling awkward to take up their class time, I don't feel I made the research sound very interesting or worthwhile.

I hope they read the invitation letter and also I'll make it know that they can join the study at any time and hopefully once they realise that it is just wanting their opinion on the things they will have been doing in class more will join.

Monday 15th June: 11 students have signed up — hurray.

Term 2 holidays:

I'm preparing a plan of activities for Term 3:

Day One:

1. Go over the feedback success criteria rubric — Students will work in pairs through the terms- discuss terms/write notes/rewrite as needed. Then they can in small groups bring questions/clarifications. Then we can have an overall conversation in a large group with any final clarifications to discuss.

2. I will give students an annotated exemplar with feedback written to read and discuss — a particular focus on feedback — what is going well and what could be given for next steps. —low Merit- Blue eyes

3. In pairs I will give an exemplar for students to assess and give feedback on. One together that is the same — Pride and Prejudice — high Achieved. (Not so interested in the accurate assessment as in the worthwhileness of the feedback comments).

4. I will have 2 other different essays on offer which students can work on (copies for all students to keep — but I will keep in the class in files I think). Excellence — poem, High Merit — The road, Low Achieved — The Road

Important readings these holidays:

Hargreaves 2013- she says that there is scant research into students' perceptions of the use of feedback. The goal should be student autonomy — feedback should lead to this (I need to keep this as my focus). (Her research was on asking primary school students' their opinions of feedback, but I feel it lacked parameters for students to understand what

they were really doing — just sounded like complaints. If they had been engaged in giving feedback themselves, they may have had a much better understanding of feedback).

Brown and Harris 2014 — PASA should not be seen as an assessment tool but rather as a competency of self-regulation.

Hattie and Timperley 2007 — their insights into feedback

Monday 20th July: Day One of the student generated feedback initiative

Today I gave students an A4 both sides copy of the marking rubric and talked through each area. I tried to be transparent about how a teacher learns to mark and how we mark holistically. I then gave students a few minutes to read it through again and ask questions or make changes to the wording. Most students were happy with the wording. Chris asked about what 'Makes some accurate use of academic writing conventions and style features' meant and I said its about vocab-precise English terms and good vocab, register (explaining that term) and grammar accuracy.

Another student, off their own bat, filled in the feedback portion (What is going well? What areas could be a focus for future learning?) for himself. So I encouraged the rest of the class if they felt they could to do the same. A number of them did. This was really pleasing.

The students appeared fully engaged with the task.

I then handed them out the low Merit annotated exemplar which I had marked and given feedback to. I read it aloud and talked about the comments written, making comments like, 'that's a clear topic sentence, isn't it? ...how about their language choices?... socioeconomic, ... 'pretty good isn't it? To which some students responded with similar comments. I talked through the marking of the rubric and then the feedback that I had offered. There was a general vibe of agreement, engagement with the process.

Finally, in the lesson I gave out the first sample essay for them to mark themselves (the A4 — Pride and Prejudice). We only had time to begin reading it but there were little comments that showed people were making comparative judgments.

Tuesday 21st July: Day Two of the initiative

We got straight into working on the first sample essay. Students naturally fell into silent concentration as they read the essay and annotated it. (I was surprised as I expected more chat between students, but they all seemed to need the silent concentration, which was really pleasing as that is what is needed). I then went around the groups as they were marking/writing feedback and got some verbal responses- all felt it was Achieved, some 3, most 4. Comments from students suggested they understood the quality of the essay very well- could see its low points (lack of topic sentences, poor paragraph

starters/ lack of quotes and real detail) and what was done reasonably well (does answer the question, does have familiarity with the text). I talked with a couple about not being too harsh, by marking too low because of one noticeable flaw, like topic sentences. I stressed the importance of the feedback — what would they write to give practical advice? What I heard suggested that people were encouraging the use of topic sentences, knowing the text better and learning quotes, and developing points further (some students noticed how opportunities to develop points were being missed — Peter, Emma)

Next I gave them the M6 The road exemplar and again students worked quietly initially then did this time have more discussion with next door neighbours. Again as I went around I was impressed to hear students identifying it as Merit and targeting the areas of weakness. Two students struggled a little (Jeffrey struggled to understand the essay's point which made it hard for him to judge it — his explanation was that he was not good at essays and therefore found it hard to understand them. Once we went back to the intro and how the student was addressing the question, he was able to understand it better and we noted that the student could have done a better job of developing their thesis throughout the essay).

Other than those two the others saw it as M and most as high Merit which was spot on. Their feedback comments were about the quality of the discussion of author's purpose (question was setting revealing author's purpose) and the lack of depth of ideas. Also again more text referencing was wanted- noting the lack of analysis (Charlotte in particular immediately made that comment).

Students' work on both of these essays was extremely pleasing. It showed that the rubric was working and that the process to build student knowledge had gone smoothly.

Finally, I gave some students an E exemplar and some an A3 (in hindsight, I think I should have given the same essay as some students commented on the difference). We ran out of time but Emma, Jamie and Steven immediately could see the quality of the E. They didn't bring any criticisms. Steven wanted to give it an E right away because of the high level vocab and asked what polysyllabic and derogatory meant. Again in hindsight I should have made them critique this essay too and pull out exactly what it was that made it an E.

Students' engagement with the activities of the past two days definitely reflected the kind of aspects of genuine engagement Fredrick et al (2004) identify: 'simultaneously:

- Reflectively involved in deep understanding and expertise (high cognition).
 - Genuinely valuing what they are doing (high emotion).
 - Actively participating in school and classroom activities (high behaviour).
- (in Munns and Woodland, 2006, p. 194)

Tomorrow students are meant to plan their own essay.

I will just give them an overview of the NAME and the feedback as a quick pulling together of what they noticed.

Wed 2nd July

I started the period by bringing an overview of the NAME exemplars and the feedback comments typical for each level.

Then I put up the 2013 paper. (In hindsight I should have printed them).

We read through and discussed the questions briefly. This was tough going as the students didn't contribute much (other than Jamie). In hindsight again I would get them to go through the questions in pairs first. I think that this is an area of weakness that also needs to be developed- how to plan essays.

I realised that to tackle any question the students need to refamiliarise themselves with the texts so I've given them next period to do that rather than go straight onto the essay writing.

Thurs 23rd July

Students spent the period working on refamiliarising themselves with the texts. A number of students needed new copies of the short stories which is not good as we had annotated the other copies thoroughly.

I fear that students do understand what a good essay should look like but don't have the text knowledge and skills in answering questions to produce what they know to be good. It will be disappointing if I get the same quality of essays and effort (i.e. lots not finished) as the first round.

Students now have two periods to work on this essay. I fear that they won't put in the necessary effort to write something decent in that time period but I hope I am wrong in my fear. I will do all I can to emphasis that they should work hard to complete it. — mark will go on portal/ students will have to come back at lunch if not completed...

I guess what I'm reflecting is that essay writing requires not just understanding what looks good, but the competency and effort to reproduce it. **I need to do more work on increasing their subject competency to match their assessment competency.**

Appendix D: Participant invitation letter and consent form

Dear student,

As part of my Masters of Education study, through Waikato University, I am conducting research into student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback in my classroom.

My key question is: What are student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback strategies in formative essay writing?

I need some participant students who will help me with this research. Below I have outline exactly what would be needed of you if you agree to be part of my research and how much time it would require.

1. Fill out one questionnaire at the end of the study – 20 minutes
2. Participate in a one-to -one interview with me at the end of the study – 30 minutes length
3. Participate in all classroom based student generated feedback activities - interacting with success criteria rubric, providing sample work in the form of writing formative essays, engaging in self and peer feedback (which you will be doing anyway in our classroom)
4. Be available for further clarification of interview answers if required (estimated time would not be more than 10 minutes)
5. Read transcript, check for accuracy and make amendments if necessary (estimated time to do this would be around 20 minutes). – This would need to be done by email and/or phone call in January 2015

The expected time to participate in research tasks outside of class would be about **one-hour total** over the next two terms and another **20 minutes** in January 2016.

Your words and perspectives may be used in my research. However, to protect your privacy, your name will not be used in any reporting, nor will our school be identified. While I do not anticipate any problems around privacy, especially given the nature of this study, it is not possible to guarantee anonymity.

You will be given the opportunity to read and possibly alter the transcript of the interview data gathered. This is to ensure that your intended meaning has been communicated. You also have the right to withdraw from the research and to withdraw your data up to the point at which you have confirmed your interview data. After this point you will not be able to withdraw your data. The interviews will be recorded as an audio file. All the data collected will be securely held on a password-protected computer for at least 5 years, then it will be destroyed. The thesis will be available to read on the University of Waikato Research Commons database.

I anticipate that the research data collected will be used for my thesis and potentially, papers for publication, and presentations. I may also use the information for teacher professional development materials. It is also possible that the school may publish research findings in school publications. Remember that your name will not be used in any reporting. Your contribution to this research will be valued and will contribute to

a growing understanding of how students perceive student-generated feedback strategies.

My supervisor at the University of Waikato is Frances Edwards. She can be contacted at *francese@waikato.ac.nz* or phone 8562889 ext. 6170. If you have a concern or problem about any aspect of this research that you have not had satisfactorily resolved by me, you can contact Frances.

Please fill out the below section and return to me, if you are willing to participate in this research.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and that there will be no negative outcomes for choosing not to participate!

Thanks!

Participant Consent form

- I have read the information on this sheet and understand the nature of the research and what will be required of me.
- I understand that all reasonable efforts will be made to protect privacy, but that complete anonymity may not be possible.
- I agree to participate in this research as indicated above (the questionnaire, the interview and checking the transcript).
- I give permission for data collected to be used for the purposes of thesis writing, presentations, and other publications. This data includes essays I produce during this study and the feedback I provide for my own work and for other students, as well as interview and questionnaire answers.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time from the research and to withdraw my data up until the time that I have confirmed my interview data. After this point I understand that I cannot withdraw my data.
- I understand that my participation is **voluntary** and that the research tasks (the questionnaire, the interview and checking the transcript) have nothing to do with my Year 13 English course.
- I will be available to check the transcript in January 2016 by email.

Please provide a non-school email address and phone number so I can contact you.
Thanks!

email: _____

Phone number: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Letter to school requesting permission

Dear Mr Robb,

As part of my Masters of Education study, through Waikato University, I would like to conduct practitioner-research in my own classroom at school here. This is a valid form of research as it merges research and practice together so that outcomes are relevant and applicable to the realities of a working classroom, rather than theoretical.

I would like to research student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback in my classroom. Student-generated feedback is a key principle of assessment for learning- an understanding that students' learning can be improved by engaging students with the assessment process. Students' perceptions are highly relevant to the use of student-generated feedback, as students' attitudes to their own learning are recognised to be a crucial aspect of the learning experience.

My research question is, 'What are student perceptions of the impact of student-generated feedback strategies in formative essay writing in the English classroom?'

I would like to ask students in my Year 13 English class to volunteer to participate. Below I have outline exactly what I would be asking them to do and how much time it would require.

1. Fill out one questionnaire at the end of the study – 20 minutes
2. Participate in one interview of no more 30 minutes length at the end of the study
3. Participate in all classroom based student generated feedback activities (which students will be doing anyway as part of their learning in our classroom)
4. Be available for further clarification of interview answers if required (this would not be more than 10 minutes)

5. Check relevant aspects of my interview data for the meaning the student intended to convey (estimated time to do this is 20 minutes). This would occur in January 2016, by email or phone call.

The expected time to participate in research tasks outside of class would be about **one-hour total** over the next two terms and another **20 minutes** in January 2016.

I will also be asking their permission for the data collected to be used for the purposes of thesis writing, presentations, and other publications. This data includes essays they produce during this study and the feedback they provide for their own work and for other students, as well as interview and questionnaire answers.

Students' words and perspectives would be used in my research write up. However, to protect their privacy, students' real names would not be used in any reporting. The data collected would be securely held on a password-protected computer. The school's name would also be anonymous.

I anticipate that the research data collected will be used for my thesis and potentially, papers for publication, and presentations. I may also use the information for teacher professional development materials.

Students' contributions to this research would be valued and would contribute to a growing understanding of how students perceive student-generated feedback strategies. This is a key aspect of Assessment For Learning and one that research shows can create very positive outcomes for student learning. Our New Zealand curriculum is set up to encourage these strategies as it recognises that , 'all young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning' (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, Reid, 2009, p. 5). This is because, "Students who have well-developed assessment capabilities are able and motivated to access, interpret, and use information from quality assessment in ways that affirm or further their learning' (p. 5). Many

teachers and schools are yet to harness the potential of student-generated feedback.

My supervisor at the University of Waikato is Frances Edwards. She can be contacted at *francese@waikato.ac.nz* or by phone on 8562889 ext, 6170

Thank you.

Lee Hill

I have included a copy of the student invitation letter for your approval also.

School Consent Form

I give permission for this research to be conducted.

I understand that the school will not be identified in any scholarly research publications resulting from this research project.

Any comments / provisos

Appendix F: Success criteria rubric

Feedback sheet for NCEA Level 3 – Respond critically to written text

	Not Achieved	Achieved	Merit	Excellence
Answering the question	Has misunderstood the meaning of key words. Shows a narrow understanding of text aspect(s). N1: Does not develop an argument successfully. •N2: Develops a simple argument.	A3: Shows some understanding related to the question. A4: Shows a good understanding related to the question, but may have an inconsistent response. A3: Develops a relevant argument. A4: Develops a relevant, focused argument.	Maintains focus on the question. M5: Shows some convincing understanding related to the question and builds a partially convincing argument (but may be inconsistent) M6: Convincing, and sound understanding of question and creation of argument.	Maintains a singular focus on the chosen question. Develops a sophisticated and insightful and/or original argument relating to the question.
Text knowledge	Shows limited familiarity with the text. •N1: Little direct reference to text is made. Few or no quotations. N2: Includes some text evidence which may be relevant to the discussion.	A3: Shows some evidence of familiarity with the text. A4: Shows familiarity with the text. A3: Begins to support points using appropriate, specific details and/or quotations. A4: Provides solid support.	Shows an in-depth, accurate knowledge and understanding of the text. •Range of relevant, appropriate text evidence. • Evidence is woven into the response.	Generous and insightful detail and evidence that supports and expands the discussion. • In-depth holistic knowledge. Evidence is woven well into the response creating lucidity.
Critical Understanding -author's craft/and purpose -audience response -awareness of text type and its implications -evaluations/ comparisons	Focuses mainly on plot rather than directed response. N1: No evidence of critical response (stance taken/ ideas explored/ understanding of the text type and author's purpose/ sense of evaluation N2: Some evidence of critical response.	A3: Communicates a straightforward critical response eg... point of view/opinion expressed in relation to the question or in response to ideas presented/or some awareness of text type/or some awareness of author's purpose/or sense of evaluation or comparisons made. A4: Critical response is clear, sustained.	M5: presents an informed critical response eg ... point of view/opinion developed in relation to the question or in response to ideas presented/ awareness of text type/ awareness of author's purpose/ evaluation or comparisons made M6: discerning critical response (well-chosen angle/points).	Strong sense of own insightful engagement /clear articulation of personal opinion. Clear understanding of author's craft linked to purpose / audience / text type. Shows maturity and insight in evaluating the text in terms of the question. May adopt a particular philosophical or critical lens to shape response.
Making connections: -to 'the human condition' -to society (past and present) -to psychological, religious and philosophical understanding -to other texts/authors -to history			Begins to relate the text to wider society (past or present). Begins to make connections beyond the text. Presents (some-M5) understanding of ideas/issues/thinking. May make appropriate worthwhile connections with other writers/texts.	Views their text (s) as a vehicle for societal or contextual analysis. Presents a consistent philosophical discussion. Links aspects within the text to beyond the text with consistency. Shows insight and perception about the aspect specified in the essay question: how it relates to other texts; or to other contexts such as human experience, society and the wider world. Perceptive, appropriate connections with other writers, texts or text types. Possible other sources include relevant critical texts and secondary sources.
Structure	Unstructured. Writes with weaknesses in <u>organisation</u> .	Essay is structured satisfactorily , including an introduction and conclusion. It is focused on addressing the question. A3: Possible weaknesses in organisation.	Writes purposefully, with a sense of deliberate crafting. Carefully structured answer. Solid basic essay structure-Intro, body paragraphs and conclusion. Some evidence of internal paragraph cohesion and linkage.	Writes a cohesive, deliberately planned response with scope and focus. Introduction – defining, clear position, relevant. Clear topic sentences. Sustained argument, coherent, cohesive at sentence /paragraph / whole essay levels. Evidence interwoven into own argument. Conclusion – summarising, evaluative – linked to author's craft and purpose, beyond the text, responsive. (Not necessarily formulaic- may be unorthodox to serve the question best).
Language	N1: Writes with weaknesses in style: eg run-on sentences, incomplete sentences, spelling/ punctuation errors. N2: uses simple vocab accurately.	Writes coherently and directly. Has few writing convention concerns.	Solid writing style. Expression is largely clear and readable. Makes some accurate use of academic writing conventions and style features but may include some clumsiness.	Fluent, engaging, lucid writing style Is articulate and shows some originality of expression Analytical, academic, evaluative vocabulary. Accurate use of range of technical terms and academic writing conventions. Varied syntax. Use of connectives to aid coherence. Succinct use of language to make points.

Feedback sheet for NCEA Level 3 – Respond critically to written text

Feedback comment: What is going well? What areas could be a focus for future learning?

Response to feedback: What is going well? What will be your focus for future learning?

Do you have a question you need answered or an area you need help with investigating?

Appendix G: Teacher marked exemplar essay

Question: Appreciating the setting of a text is the key to unlocking the author's purpose.

5

Your essay should be AT LEAST 400 words long, and show accurate use and control of writing conventions.

In your essay, discuss the extent to which you agree with your chosen statement. Respond critically to the statement by making a close analysis of the text(s).

Begin your written text(s) essay here:

Clear thesis statement
To a large extent, appreciating and understanding the setting of a novel is essential to fully unlock the author's purpose. In Toni Morrison's debut novel *The Bluest Eye*, she sets the story in a large ~~american town~~ large town in Ohio, America, and this context helps the reader fully understand Morrison's purpose, which was the ~~tragedy~~ tragedy of a young black girl wanting blue eyes.

Setting clearly described
Solid vocab and literary terms: dysfunctional, socio-economic, protagonist, prologue
The Physical setting of the novel is 1940 Lorain, Ohio in the North of America. Lorain was a rather large town in 1940 and it was split into two sub-communities. The central part of town was home to Lorain's white, wealthy residents, while the blacks tended to live on the outskirts of town in the ^{poor} ghetto. The novel's protagonist, ^{Pecola Breedlove} Pecola, lives in the poor, black part of Lorain with her family in a run down shop front. The run down house the Breedloves live in is not only reflective of their socioeconomic status but of ~~the~~ ^{the} dysfunctional nature of their family. Morrison's purpose, as mentioned in the prologue, was to explore the possible causes or reasons that would result in a young black girl such as Pecola convinced that she needed blue eyes. Her family's low status and poor social standing was one of the reasons Pecola thought she needed blue eyes. She thought that "blue eyes belonged to those who were important" and that if she had different colored eyes, she would not be at the bottom of her community's social hierarchy like the rest of her family who had brown eyes.

Purpose stated- but mono-dimensional

hierarchy like the rest of her family who had brown eyes.

Clear
structuring
indicated
with topic
sentences

The social setting ^{of the novel} is ^{even} more crucial to understanding what would lead to Pecola to desire blue eyes. ~~The~~ ~~to~~ ~~London~~. The residents of Lorain-ban black and white alike - had adapted white ideals of beauty. For example, it was widely accepted in their town that white women such as Greta Garbow and Shirley Temple were held as the standard of beauty. So, the residents of Lorain thought that if they looked and acted like those women, they would be seen as beautiful too. Unfortunately, there were few black women ~~to~~ in the media in the 1940s deemed as beautiful, so Pecola only had Shirley and Greta to aspire to. In the novel, Pecola drinks milk from a cup with Shirley Temple printed on it ~~to~~ in the hopes that Shirley's whiteness would be absorbed by Pecola as she drank the milk. A community obsessed with the unattainable public figures in the media is a familiar one for modern audiences. In today's society, young girls are bombarded with images of white, skinny women and messages convincing them that this is how they should look. ~~Similar~~ Much like Pecola, many young girls believe these messages and eating disorders are more common than ever. The recent documentary, 'Miss Representation' stated that 1 in 5 girls aged between 13 and 16 will suffer from an eating disorder. So, the social context of the ~~the~~ novel is easy for audiences to understand, and easy to understand how it would push Pecola to want something so unattainable such as blue eyes.

Solid text
detailing and
Some
contextual
understanding
given

Link to
modern
society

Only a weak
insight brought

Another aspect of societal setting is the way in which her family raised her, and this contributed ^{Pecola's} to her tragic desire and consequent inability to attain blue eyes. From the day she was born, Pecola's mother, Pauline, saw her as insufficient. Usually, a mother's first reaction to their child is one full of love and care, but

- Perola's mother saw her as insufficient. Usually a mother's first reaction to their child is one of love and care, but

Pauline's first comment when she saw Perola was "Lord she was ugly." Considering the closest relationship a child has, is usually with their mother, it's not surprising that Pauline's lack of tenderness towards Perola because she wasn't black and "ugly" resulted in Perola desiring blue eyes.

This point is undeveloped

Perola believed that if she were to have blue eyes, she would be beautiful and gain her mother's love. Pauline abandoned her own family to be a maid for a white family, the Fishers, and she put all of her time towards becoming "the perfect servant." When Perola dropped a hot pie on herself, burning her leg, Pauline rushed to make sure the young Fisher girl was alright, instead of looking after her own daughter. Perhaps if Pauline had put more of her time and effort into raising Perola, Perola would not have felt the need to acquire blue eyes to be accepted.

In conclusion, the physical and societal setting in Morrison's The Bluest Eye gives context to the main issue at the heart of the novel which is, the combination of forces that lead to a young black girl desperately believing she needs to possess blue eyes. The reader is not as shocked by this tragic desire because of the information we are given about the world Perola lives in, and it would be interesting to see how audiences would feel about her unnatural desire if Morrison had set the novel in a different place or time.

Reference to Morrison's choices but not linked to deeper purposes beyond a character's desire for blue eyes (such as theme/ understanding of human nature).

Feedback comment: What is going well? What are areas to focus on next time?

	Not Achieved	Achieved	Merit	Excellence
Answering the question	Has misunderstood the meaning of key words. Shows a narrow understanding of text aspect(s). N1: Does not develop an argument successfully. •N2: Develops a simple argument.	A3: Shows some understanding related to the question. A4: Shows a good understanding related to the question, but may have an inconsistent response. A3: Develops a relevant argument. A4: Develops a relevant, focused argument.	Maintains focus on the question. M5: Shows some convincing understanding related to the question and builds a partially convincing argument (but may be inconsistent) M6: Convincing, sound understanding of question and creation of argument.	Maintains a singular focus on the chosen question. Develops a sophisticated and insightful and/or original argument relating to the question.
Text knowledge	Shows limited familiarity with the text. •N1: Little direct reference to text is made. Few or no quotations. N2: Some relevant text evidence is included.	A3: Shows some evidence of familiarity with the text . A4: Shows familiarity with the text. A3: Begins to support points using appropriate, specific details and/or quotations. A4: Provides solid support.	Shows an in-depth, accurate knowledge and understanding of the text. •Range of relevant, appropriate text evidence. • Evidence is woven into the response.	Generous and insightful detail and evidence that supports and expands the discussion. • In-depth holistic knowledge. Evidence is woven well into the response creating lucidity.
Critical Understanding -author's craft/and purpose -audience response -awareness of text type and its implications -evaluations/ comparisons	Focuses mainly on plot rather than directed response. N1: No evidence of critical response (stance taken/ ideas explored/ understanding of the text type and author's purpose/ sense of evaluation N2: Some evidence of critical response.	A3: Communicates a straight-forward critical response eg point of view/opinion expressed in relation to the question or in response to ideas presented/or some awareness of text type/or some awareness of author's purpose/or sense of evaluation or comparisons made. A4: Critical response is clear, sustained.	M5: presents an informed critical response eg eg point of view/opinion developed in relation to the question or in response to ideas presented/ awareness of text type/ awareness of author's purpose/ evaluation or comparisons made M6: discerning critical response (well-chosen angle/points).	Strong sense of own insightful engagement /clear articulation of personal opinion. Clear understanding of author's craft linked to purpose / audience / text type. Shows maturity and insight in evaluating the text in terms of the question. May adopt a particular philosophical or critical lens to shape response.
Making connections: -to 'the human condition' -to society (past and present) -to psychological, religious and philosophical understanding -to other texts/authors -to history			Begins to relate the text to wider society (past or present). Begins to make connections beyond the text. Presents (some-M5) understanding of ideas/issues/thinking. May make appropriate worthwhile connections with other writers/texts.	Views their text (s) as a vehicle for societal or contextual analysis. Presents a consistent philosophical discussion. Links aspects within the text to beyond the text with consistency. Shows insight and perception about the aspect specified in the essay question: how it relates to other texts; or to other contexts such as human experience, society and the wider world. Perceptive, appropriate connections with other writers, texts or text types. Possible other sources include relevant critical texts and secondary sources.
Structure	Unstructured. Writes with weaknesses in organisation.	Essay is structured satisfactorily , including an introduction and conclusion. It is focused on addressing the question. A3: Possible weaknesses in organisation.	Writes purposefully, with a sense of deliberate crafting. Carefully structured answer. Solid basic essay structure- Intro, body paragraphs and conclusion. Some evidence of internal paragraph cohesion and linkage.	Writes a cohesive, deliberately planned response with scope and focus. Introduction – defining, clear position, relevant. Clear topic sentences. Sustained argument, coherent, cohesive at sentence /paragraph / whole essay levels. Evidence interwoven into own argument. Conclusion – summarising, evaluative – linked to author's craft and purpose, beyond the text, responsive. (Not necessarily formulaic- may be unorthodox to serve the question best).
Language	N1: Writes with weaknesses in style: eg run-on sentences, incomplete sentences, spelling/ punctuation errors. N2: uses simple vocab accurately.	Writes coherently and directly. Has few writing convention concerns.	Solid writing style. Expression is largely clear and readable. Makes some accurate use of academic writing conventions and style features but may include some clumsiness.	Fluent, engaging, lucid writing style Is articulate and shows some originality of expression Analytical, academic, evaluative vocabulary. Accurate use of range of technical terms and academic writing conventions. Varied syntax. Use of connectives to aid coherence. Succinct use of language to make points.

Feedback comment: what is going well? What areas could be a focus for further learning?

Structure and focus on the question is strong. Language choices are solid. There is good knowledge shown of the text and the beginnings of good beyond the text engagement.

Further learning?

Explore deeper purposes of the author, beyond just the character's desire to have blue eyes- link to theme (exposing racism/ oppression) / bigger picture issues in human nature (go back to the text)

Explore language – vocab- that pushes into 'sophisticated'

Explore how to unpack/analyse author's language choices (the D in TEDEE) to go deeper into the text