

**APPROACH AS AN  
ASPECT OF  
TACTFUL FEEDBACK:**

**IMPLICATION FOR THE MANAGEMENT  
OF TEACHER COMPETENCE**

BY

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*RESEARCH ESSAY*

*Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements*



**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

IN

**EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT  
IN THE  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND NURSING**

AT THE

**RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY**

SUPERVISOR: DR B.R. GROBLER

FEBRUARY 1997

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*“Let education be your  
weapon in the struggle for  
liberation”*

**NELSON MANDELA**

(FEBRUARY 1990)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am indebted to a number of people whose assistance made the implementation of this project possible. The first among them is my supervisor; Dr Bennie Grobler, who showed great concern in assisting me with this test of knowledge. His involvement, guidance and interest in my work taught me a good lesson. His informed criticism is profoundly appreciated. I whole heartedly acknowledge your support, and will not forget the example you set.

Many thanks are due to the energetic typist, Sarina van Renssen, who really did well in deciphering my handwriting with a view to presenting this work in its present form. To Duduzile Dlamini-Boemah who readily gave me assistance with my project, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks.

Lastly to my beloved husband, Galeboe and his encouragement and the children without whose love, patience and understanding in the face of increased absence from home, I would not have completed this project.

Most of all I thank God the almighty for love, strength and health, without which I would not have completed this project.

## SINOPSIS

Hoofstuk 1 van hierdie studie is gewy aan 'n inleidende oriëntering ten opsigte van die navorsingsonderwerp, 'n formulering van die probleemstelling en 'n oorsigtelike bespreking van sommige van die probleme wat tot onbevoegdheid onder onderwysers aanleiding kan gee. Konsepte soos “terugvoering”, “taktvolle terugvoering”, “evaluering” en “onderwyserbevoegdheid” is ook vir hierdie doeleinde omskryf.

In Hoofstuk 2 werp die navorser haar soeklig op 'n literatuurstudie oor **benadering** as een van die aspekte van taktvolle terugvoering. Die definisies van die begrippe “onderwyserbevoegdheid”, “terugvoering” en die benadering wat gevolg behoort te word wanneer taktvolle terugvoering gegee word, is ook bestudeer. In die literatuuroorsig is riglyne aangetoon oor die verskillende wyses waarop taktvolle terugvoering gegee kan word. Die eintlike waarde wat dit egter vir die onderwysbestuurder inhou is die kuns om taktvolle terugvoering te bemeester. Dit lê daarin dat dit hom of haar op sekere belangrike aspekte van die terugvoeringsproses bedag maak, soos byvoorbeeld om behoorlike evalueringsverslae op te stel.

Die ontwerp van die navorsingsprojek word hierna in Hoofstuk 3 uiteengesit, synde 'n empiriese studie wat met behulp van 'n gestruktureerde vraelys bestaande uit 106 oopvrae onderneem is. Ingevolge hierdie vraelys is respondente versoek om aan te dui hoe gereeld 'n onderwysbestuurder sekere gedragslyne openbaar of volg.

Die vraelyste is vervolgens landwyd onder lede van die onderwysersberoep versprei, hoewel die grootste getal vraelyste aan onderwysers in Gauteng en KwaZulu Natal uitgedeel is. 'n Besonder hoë responsiekoers, naamlik 74,4%, is behaal, en die ingevulde vraelyste is na die Statistiese Konsultasiediens van die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit gestuur, waar die data verwerk is.

Die ontleding en interpretasie van die empiries verkreë data is hierna in Hoofstuk 4 van die studie onderneem. In hierdie hoofstuk is die kwessie van die betroubaarheid en

geldigheid van die vraelyste ook aangepak. Vir hierdie doel is 'n vergelyking tussen twee onafhanklike groepe gemaak. Onderzoek is hierbenewens met behulp van 'n variansieontleding (ANOVA) is ondersoek ingestel na die verskille tussen drie of meer onafhanklike groepe se menings ten opsigte van die opvoedkundige bestuurder se bedrewenheid met betrekking tot terugvoering. Die Scheffé-toets is voorts gebruik om enige verskille tussen die onderskeie pare groepe se menings onder die loep te neem.

Die bevindings waartoe die navorser op grond van die literatuurstudie ten opsigte van benadering as 'n aspek van taktvolle terugvoering en die implikasie daarvan vir onderwyserbevoegdheid geraak het, is soos volg:

- \* Geëvalueerdes reageer meer positief op data wat na hul mening geldig en akkuraat is (sien asseblief punt 2.4 in dié verband).
- \* Verslae wat behoorlik opgestel en goed verantwoord is, stel onderwysers inderdaad in staat om hulself te verbeter. Geskrewe verslae dien egter geen doel indien hul inhoud vir die geëvalueerdes duister is nie (sien asseblief punt 2.4 in dié verband).
- \* Terugvoering word nie altyd deur almal verwelkom nie (sien asseblief punt 2.4 in dié verband).
- \* Hoofde van skole behoort hul terugvoering aan onderwysers behoorlik te begrond en te verantwoord (sien asseblief punt 2.7 in dié verband).
- \* Die tydsberekening van die terugvoering speel 'n deurslaggewende rol in die bevordering van onderwyserbevoegdheid (sien asseblief punt 2.6 in dié verband).

Belangrike empiriese bevindings in verband met onderwyserbevoegdheid.

Onderwyserbevoegdheid bestaan uit die volgende twee faktore, naamlik:

- \* terugvoeringsbevoegdheid, wat op sy beurt weer uit 95 verskillende items met 'n Cronbach-alpha-betroubaarheidskoëffisiënt van 0,984 bestaan; en
- \* onetiese terugvoering, wat weer op sy beurt uit 11 verskillende items met 'n Cronbach-alpha-betroubaarheidskoëffisiënt van 0,734 bestaan.

In die lig van die feit dat die betroubaarheidskoëffisiënt ten opsigte van onetiese terugvoering te laag was, is dié faktor egter buite rekening gelaat.

In soverre dit terugvoeringsbevoegdheid betref, is belangrike statistiese verskille tussen die persepsie van opvoedkundiges blootgelê, soos in die gemiddelde faktortelling van die volgende groepe weerspieël word:

- Die tipe skool, die onderwyser se opvoedkundige kwalifikasies, die provinsie waarin die onderwyser tans werksaam is, die onderwyser se huistaal, die bywoning van leerlinge en onderwysers aan die betrokke skool en die openbare beeld van die skool.

Die hoofdoel van die onderhawige studie was om 'n ondersoek te onderneem na die belangrikheid van **benadering** as een van die aspekte van taktvolle terugvoering en die implikasies wat 'n taktvolle benadering vir die bestuur en bevordering van onderwyserbevoegdheid inhou. Ten einde hierdie doel te bereik, is daar in die eerste plek 'n deeglike literatuurstudie gedoen, welke studie ook die grondslag vir die empiriese been van die navorsing gelê het. Die bevindings van die navorsing het uiteindelik in die volgende aanbevelings gekulmineer:

#### Aanbeveling 1

Onderwysbestuurders moet hulself met die evalueringsproses vertrou maak en onderwysers moet evaluering aanvaar as synde bloot daardie proses waardeur hulle waardevolle en opbouende kritiek op hul werk gelewer kan kry. Indien albei partye hulself eers deeglik met die proses van onderwyserevaluering vertrou gemaak het, sal dit die hele bestuur van onderwyserbevoegdheid bevorder en vergemaklik.

#### Aanbeveling 2

Ten einde opbouende terugvoering te kan gee, moet tydsberekening in aanmerking geneem word, anders mag dit moontlik net gebeur dat die hele evalueringsessie ontspoor. Ten einde te verseker dat die evalueringsessie doeltreffend verloop, moet onderwysers voldoende tyd gegun word om die evaluering in te neem en daarvoor te besin.

### Aanbeveling 3

Onderwysbestuurders moet onderwysers op die belangrikheid van die evalueringsproses bedag maak. Evaluering behoort, sover moontlik, nooit met negatiewe ervarings geassosieer te word nie. Die prestasie-evalueringsonderhoud moet intendeel beskou word as 'n gulde geleentheid wat aan onderwysbestuurders gebied word om hul ondergeskiktes met behulp van positiewe terugvoering tot groter hoogtes aan te spoor. Ons kan daarom die gevolgtrekking maak dat terugvoeringsbevoegdheid by evaluering 'n belangrike aspek vir die bestuur van onderwyserbevoegdheid is en dat dit 'n onderafdeling moet uitmaak van enige opleidingsprogram wat vir onderwysbestuurders in die vooruitsig gestel word.



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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education in South Africa is facing a major crisis. Educationists, parents, politicians and all other stakeholders who have a vested interest in Education are worried about the deterioration of the standard of Education. The proof of the declining standards is clearly seen with 1995 poor matric results (Govender, 1996:3). This notion was also acknowledged by the National Minister of Education, Professor Bengu, when reacting to the poor matric results. He attributed the poor results amongst other things to the lack of teacher competence.

Teacher competence is a major contributing factor in the declining standards of Education for without competent teachers it is unlikely that matric results will improve. Similarly, parents are removing their children from public schools to ex "Model C schools". Their reason for doing this is a belief that the competency of teachers in the schools is not the same. Teachers in the ex Model C schools are perceived by parents to be more competent when compared to those in public schools.

The question of teacher competence is also taken into cognisance by the discussion document Committee on Teacher Education Policy (COTEP, 1994:14). It is in this policy document that the aims for Teacher Education pertaining to teacher competence were proposed. The fundamental aim of Teacher Education as outlined by this document is "to educate and train teachers to teach effectively, in order to facilitate learning." Teachers in schools will have to conform to the norms and standards of Teacher Education as laid down by the COTEP document.

Additionally, there is no way that we can speak about teacher competence without having to mention evaluation. The two cannot be divorced from one

another. Therefore it is important to start debating issues such as teacher evaluation and feedback in order to improve teacher competence, although the South African Democratic Teachers Union have certain reservations about evaluation (S. Ramagaga, Personal communication, 15 March 1996). The need for competent teachers cannot be underestimated. Thus negotiated criteria for teacher appraisal are necessary.

When dealing with teacher competence it must be acknowledged as asserted by Mac Coll (1995:6) that "in any appraisal of a teachers general or overall performance, classroom performance must clearly be the most important ingredient or factor. After all, the teachers prime task is to teach in his/her habitat in the classroom. It is on achieving improvement in this regard that appraisal or evaluation can therefore be the most rewarding process."

In the light of the above problems associated with improving educational quality a research project on the appraisal of teacher competence was initiated. A large number of teacher competences were identified by means of focus group interviews with secondary school teachers and by use of a literature survey. A structured questionnaire led to the identification of eight (8) possible factors which can be associated with teacher competence and five (5) possible factors regarding the feedback provided when evaluating said competences.

The five factors associated with feedback are:

- an invitational approach;
- credibility;
- tactfulness;
- transparency; and
- intercultural sensitivity.

Each factor is being investigated by four (4) students and this particular group is responsible for **the use of tactful feedback and its implications for teacher competence**. More specifically this mini-dissertation deals with **how approach as an aspect of tactful feedback could enhance the performance of**

**teachers.** In the light of these introductory remarks a statement of the problem will now be attempted.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the preceding information it appears as if the problem of this research project can be summarised by means of the following questions:

- What is tactful feedback and what are its essential features?
- Does approach as an aspect of tactful feedback have a role to play in improving teacher competence?
- To what extent can approach as an aspect of "tactful feedback" be used to enhance teacher competence?

Having demarcated the research problem it is now necessary to state the aim of this research project.

## 1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In view of the problem formulated above, the general aim of this project is to:

Investigate the essence and nature of tactful feedback as a means of improving teacher competence.

In order to achieve the general aim of the group the specific aim of this research essay is to:

- \* investigate the essential aspects of tactful feedback;
- \* investigate teacher opinion about the approach or technique of tactful feedback received from educational managers; and
- \* determine whether the approach or technique used during tactful feedback can enhance teacher competence.

In view of the preceding problem and aim statements the method envisaged in order to research the problem of teacher competence can now be discussed.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature survey will be used to elucidate teacher competence in an effort to clarify the main aspects of this concept. Furthermore, literature about feedback as a contributing factor to teacher competence will be investigated. More specifically, this script will concentrate on approach or technique as an aspect of tactful feedback.

To supplement the preceding literature survey an empirical study will be undertaken. A structured questionnaire will be drawn up using the literature research as a basis in an effort to obtain teacher opinion regarding the approach or technique of tactful feedback as a facet to enhance teacher competence.

#### 1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In order to avoid misconceptions which may arise due to the use of certain terms or concepts employed in this study, the researcher deems it imperative to define the following concepts namely:

##### 1.5.1 Teacher competence

“Competence”, according to the Oxford Dictionary, refers to an ability or state of being competent that is, properly qualified or skilled, adequate, suitable, satisfactory and acceptable (Tulloch, 1993:260). It is a wide concept which embodies the teacher’s ability to transfer knowledge and skills to new situations in the classroom. It incorporates his/her innovation, planning and organization of work.

Competence can also be defined as:

- \* a “more than average” acquired or native skill in the performance of some act or operation with the implication that this completed task can be rated objectively as being either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Competence indicates adequacy rather than excellence of performance in a field (COTEP, 1994:11).
- \* a cluster of integrated knowledge, skills values and attitudes (COTEP, 1994:10).

A competent teacher, thus, is a leader, guide, mentor, master and educator who needs to demonstrate expertise, capability, skill, proficiency, mastery and ability in his/her interaction with learners in the classroom (Mac Coll, 1995:20).

### 1.5.2 Feedback

In a very broad sense feedback is the information a person receives about success or failure to achieve agreed outputs and standards. Feedback provides answers to questions such as:

“Am I meeting standards or not?”

“Am I achieving the necessary outputs?”

“If I continue working like this, will I achieve my planned outputs?”

Furthermore, feedback is a purposeful activity. The purpose of the activity is to let a person know how outputs are regarded so that performance levels can be improved or maintained.

In addition Weiner (1956) as quoted by Nadler (1987:68) calls feedback the property of being able to adjust future conduct by means of past performance.

Feedback is information provided to the teacher concerning the appropriateness of his/her teaching (Mayer, 1994:279). This definition

has three components namely the:

- \* feedback occurs after an appraisal;
- \* teacher is actively involved during the feedback; and
- \* feedback helps the teacher to develop his/her individual talents and it tells the teacher what to do in order to improve (Sportsman, 1986:10).

### 1.5.3 Tactful feedback

To recapitulate, feedback is the principal's response about the teacher's performance in the classroom. In order for this feedback to be tactful one should also consider what Rubey (in Bull and Solity, 1987:25) suggests namely that feedback will be tactful if characterised by the 6 c's namely it should be:

- \* clear
- \* correct
- \* courteous
- \* concise
- \* complete
- \* continuing.

Furthermore the principal should be diplomatic, discreet, judicious, polite, decorous and thoughtful during feedback. When all these aspects are present then the feedback can be considered to be tactful as it is also likely to be motivating to the person receiving it.

### 1.5.4 Evaluation

The Oxford English Dictionary refers to evaluation as "an action of determining the value of or estimating the force of", something.

Commonly, evaluation is understood to be a judgement about whether something or someone is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, appropriate or inappropriate (Duke, 1987:103). He further emphasizes that when the term evaluation is in the context of school personnel

decisions, it has come to mean a formal process by which judgements are made about the extent to which desired outcomes have been achieved.

#### 1.5.5 Educational leader

A leader is a person who has an influence on a number of people. In this project an educational leader will be referring to the principal of a school.

### 1.6 ORDER OF DISCUSSION

In chapter one, the introduction, problem statement, motivation, aims of research, concept clarification, research methodology and order are discussed.

The following aspects are discussed in chapter two namely:

teacher competence, tactful feedback, aspects of appraisal and the principal/appraiser. The changing relationship between the principal and the teacher also receives attention.

Chapter three deals with a discussion on the structured questionnaire used in this study. This is followed by a statistical analysis of the data obtained after administering the questionnaire to teachers and principals in a random sample of schools especially in the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

The findings will be tabulated, analysed and interpreted in chapter four.

Chapter Five provides a summary, findings and recommendations.

In chapter two a literature review will be undertaken in order to further demarcate the research problem.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, teachers are facing a major problem of being remunerated according to their inputs. Teachers can be well qualified, but if they are not productive they are to remain on the same salary scale until their productivity is well acknowledged by their seniors. This simply suggests that teacher competence will play a major role in the future. Teacher competence is however difficult to measure and has generated heated discussions and disagreement amongst the role players in education (Van der Merwe & Grobler, 1995). A great deal has been written by different stakeholders on the requirements of teachers competence. The National Department of Education has stipulated certain requirements for competent teachers. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU, 1992) on the other hand have also stated their requirements for teacher competence. Already these two are in conflict in as far as their stipulated requirements are concerned. In general a great deal can be written about competence, however, according to (COTEP, 1994:11-23) teacher competence concerns a wide range of competences in terms of knowledge, skills and values in different educational contexts.

In dealing with teacher competence we must be clear about what we mean. Exactly what is meant by teacher competence must be clearly spelled out. It must be clearly stated, for instance, whether competence refers to teachers who produce good results, or those who are good in sports or those who are always present at school or those who are well qualified. If this is not done it could cause serious problems for those who will be evaluating the different teacher competences. Furthermore if professional qualifications are to be the only criterion used then serious implications could be experienced (SADTU, 1992) as not all educated or highly qualified teachers are competent. Many of such teachers possess certificates which contradict their competence.

According to Van der Merwe & Grobler (1995) competence in education can also

be associated with the professional qualifications held by the teacher. "Qualification" points to the possession of certain required skills and is generally applied to professions for which a minimum schooling or training is needed. However, they also agree that well qualified teachers may not necessarily be competent.

## 2.2 TEACHER COMPETENCE

From what has been written above it is obvious that it is difficult to define competence. There are as many definitions of competence as there are writers. However, most of them agree on certain aspects, as mentioned by Van der Merwe & Grobler (1995) namely:

- \* Competence is seen as being an objective of teacher education
- \* It is value laden
- \* It divides the educational community into different camps of pros and cons (Hall & Jones; in Van der Merwe and Grobler 1995:5).

The Suffolk team quote approvingly from Wise, Darling Hammond, Mc Laughlin, Berstein (1985:38) who argue that:

"Teaching competence may be conceived as being a continuum. The further one moves along the continuum from minimal competence to excellence, the more wide ranging and inferential the source of data and the less uniform and generalisable the specific indicators. The demands of evaluation differ along this continuum."

According to the team, the implication of all this is that the two concepts of teaching they identify constitutes the stages of professional development which vary from minimally acceptable levels of competence to excellent. The two concepts they identified are "teaching as a professional activity" and "teaching

as an art”.

Wolf (as quoted by Van der Merwe & Grobler, 1995:10) asserts that competence is the ability to perform to the standards expected of employees. A wide range of competences in terms of knowledge, skills and values have therefore been postulated for teachers in different educational contexts (COTEP, 1994: 11-23).

### 2.3 FEEDBACK

Many writers have different opinions about the meaning of feedback. Generally speaking feedback would simply mean knowing the results of the action performed. According to Bull and Solity (1987:104) feedback is the knowledge of results. One has to have know-how of the results as to what teachers did that was appropriate. Furthermore according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English “feedback means information about the results of a set of actions, passed back to the person in charge so that changes can be made if necessary.”



According to Nadler (1987:67) feedback is a concept which was developed in the 1940's and 1950's when scientists began looking at the world in terms of systems models. Nadler further states that the term “feedback” was introduced by Weiner in his formulations of an approach called cybernetic theory. Feedback can thus be defined as information regarding the actual performance of the activities of a system. It is a results-orientated approach.

It is also said that not all information is feedback. Only information which is used “to control the figure functioning of the system” is considered feedback. The basic view of feedback is illustrated by the following diagram:

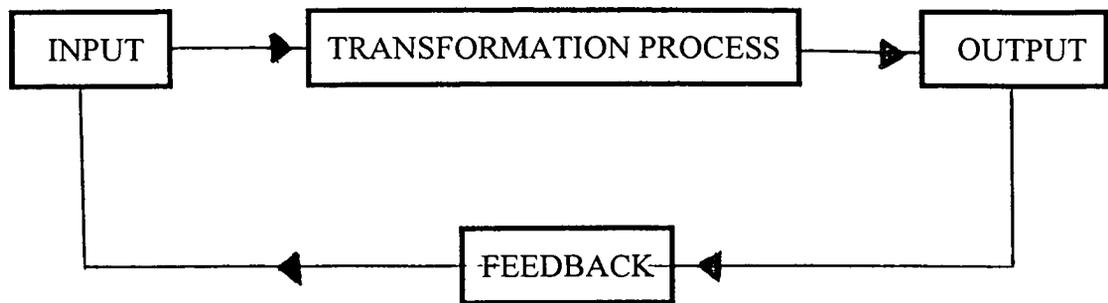


Figure 1: The basic systems feedback model

Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1994:10) explain feedback in terms of a two-way communication. They suggest that for the communication process to be effective, provision for feedback must be provided. For the manager communication may come in many ways. In the case of this research the principal and the teacher are the two parties concerned. The teacher's performance should be evaluated and feedback provided by the principal as soon as possible after the appraisal episode.

Feedback from management is ineffective if it does not promote improved employee performance (Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich, 1992:441). They point out that a healthy organization needs effective upward communication if its downward communication is to have any chance of being effective. Table 2.1 presents some of the major characteristic of effective and ineffective feedback (Donnelly et. al., 1992:441).

Table 2.1 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF FEEDBACK

<b>Effective feedback</b>	<b>Ineffective feedback</b>
Intended to help the employee	Intended to belittle the employee
Specific	General
Descriptive	Judgemental
Useful	Inappropriate
Timely	Untimely
Willingly heard by employee	Makes the employee defensive
Clear	Not understandable
Valid	Inaccurate

Donnelly et. al. (1992:450) further assert that one-way communication processes do not allow receiver-to-communicator feedback. Two-way communication processes provide for such feedback. It is desirable to make provision for feedback in the communication process in terms of a feedback loop which provides a channel for receiver response, enabling the communicator to determine whether the message has been received and produced the intended response (Donnelly et. al., 1992:427).

Furthermore, for the manager, communication feedback may come in many ways (Donnelly, et. al., 1992:428). In face to face situations, direct feedback is possible through verbal exchanges as well as through such subtle means as facial expressions that indicate discontent or misunderstanding.

Performance evaluation, provides important feedback about how well the individual is getting along in the organization. Inaccurate or ambiguous information regarding important circumstances can only lead to performance problems (Ivancevich & Matterson, 1990:559).

To avoid these problems, it is imperative that performance evaluation sessions take place in a face-to-face meeting between the individual and the manager and that in the context of the job, the performance criteria must be as objective as possible (Ivancevich & Matterson, 1990:559).

Having discussed what feedback is all about, it is necessary to point out that for feedback to be successful the manager needs to be tactful. One facet of tactful feedback to be discussed in this essay is the approach which is employed.

## 2.4 APPROACH AS AN ASPECT OF TACTFUL FEEDBACK

In order to be tactful the most important phenomenon for the manager to consider is the approach or technique that is to be used. When approaching a feedback conference with the teacher, the principal should seriously consider how the teacher concerned should be approached. For instance, Gibson et. al. (1994:653) stresses the fact that feedback on teaching performance is an important managerial responsibility. Gibson et. al. (ibid) also state that many managers are inadequately trained to meet this responsibility. Managers simply do not know how to evaluate their subordinates performance and give feedback.

Furthermore, Bruce and Bernard as quoted by Gibson et. al. (ibid) stress that even the best intentioned feedback may, however, not be received as well as it should be by all people at all times. They further assert that individuals may become defensive when encountering information about themselves that does not quite fit their own view of themselves, especially when they feel pressure to change their behaviour. From the above discussion it can be seen that it is imperative that managers should have a technique which accentuates a tactful approach when giving feedback.

The manager should also try to create a motivational climate. Constructive comments should be the order of the day. In this instance, clear instructions and expectations are critical in the managers effort to create such a climate. Therefore evaluation should not be associated with negative experiences. The

performance appraisal interview should be regarded as the opportunity for managers to motivate their employees to higher levels of performance through positive feedback. Smelzer and Walton (1984:86) suggest that if such a climate is created, subordinates can see feedback as constructive criticism rather than as negative criticism. Such a climate will cause them to listen actively and stop them from becoming defensive.

The notion of a climate conducive to discussions is further emphasized by stating that post conferences should be conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. Signs of a peaceful discussion should always prevail in order to obtain successful results. There is no way that teachers could accept criticism in a positive way if the principal is in a "fighting mood". Facial expressions as mentioned by Aphane, Boikanyo and Motsilanyane (1992:30) play a vital role when providing tactful feedback. Subsequently feedback is not always verbal. It can also be conveyed by means of a facial expression or attitude. Dekker as quoted by Badenhorst (1988:47) rightly remarks "people sometimes speak loudest with their feet as they walk away in order to avoid contact!" (Direct translation). Because the teacher plays such a key role he should not "walk away" when faced by a problem such as for instance a disagreement with a member of the management team. Instead his/her case should be clearly stated so that the matter can receive the necessary attention.

In addition, the manager should deal with both positive and negative criticism in a businesslike way and explain a particular point of view clearly. The teacher should feel at ease about feedback. It is at this point in time that the manager should explain to the teacher that the main aim of performance evaluation is to assist the teacher to build upon strengths and so improve performance (Gibson et al, 1994:231). The manager should initially focus on positive feedback and leave the aspects of negative feedback to the end so that it will not counteract the positive feedback given earlier on.

Nadler (1987:147) believes that people will be more responsive to data which they feel are valid and accurate. Based on this assumption the data in feedback

needs to be presented in a manner enabling receivers to validate the findings. This will enable the receiver to make his or her own judgement of whether the data was truly representative of what was happening in the classroom or organisation.

A further technique to enhance tactfulness is to give feedback within a team context. This could be done before the individual post conference is held. The importance of such an approach is to first set the minds of the teachers at ease and to create a climate of trust by sharing information. It is during this type of discussion where team members should have an opportunity to give their perceptions and to discuss changes that should occur (Spangenberg, 1994:169).

On the same note it is suggested that giving feedback to the entire team could diminish the occurrence of mistrust and misunderstanding which is sometimes associated with the traditional feedback method. Mullen (1990) as quoted by Spangenberg (1994:148) further emphasises that team members should also be coached on how to give feedback to one another giving prominence to improving process, rather than criticising individuals.

When using this approach it is also important that the manager should be open to receiving feedback from members of the team and should also be willing to improve the team effort. Haller and Whittaker (1990) in Spangenberg (1994:170) emphasized that managers must have the ability and desire to coach people in order to improve them.

Verbal feedback on teaching performance should be followed up with a written report. This aspect will now be briefly discussed.

## 2.5 THE WRITTEN REPORT

A written report is a particularly useful means to ensure tactful feedback. In the first instance the report should be readable. Whether the teachers are well qualified or not, the reading should be made easy without sacrificing accuracy.

For instance - Gibson et. al. (1978:36) suggest that managers should consider the following pointers to make reading easier:

- \* shorten your sentences;
- \* cut out the deadwood;
- \* write shorter paragraphs;
- \* check the vocabulary to make sure you have used familiar words; and
- \* if you must use a technical term unfamiliar to readers, define it clearly.

No purpose is served if managers write reports which will not be understood by subordinates being evaluated and provided with feedback. Instead errors will continue and no performance improvement will occur. The language used will act as a barrier in communication between the manager and the evaluated employee.

The timing of the feedback given is a further important aspect.

## 2.6 TIMING DURING FEEDBACK



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As part of tactful feedback, it is also imperative that managers should regard timing as an important approach when providing feedback. If timing is not carefully considered major damage could be done to the whole process of evaluation and providing feedback. The timing and nature of the feedback should be negotiated by the principal and the teacher concerned. Feedback can also take on various forms (Clegg & Billington, 1994:72). They further suggest that there should be a brief meeting towards the end of the inspection which simply explores main findings and key issues. This would then be followed by a more detailed feedback, focusing on all aspects of the school and the subject areas.

The importance of timing is emphasized by Spangenberg, (1994:171) who suggests that the sooner feedback is received after the activity has been performed, the better. He also suggests that a day-to-day feedback is in fact

highly desirable. Baird (1986) as quoted by Spangenberg (1994:171) suggests that the only exception noted is in complex learning or problem solving situations. In such cases individuals need feedback, but they also need time to reflect on what they have learned.

Still on the question of time, it is of vital importance to specify the goals of the evaluation, a coordination structure and plans for the process of the events that will occur. It is important to specify the time periods over which these events will occur in order to prevent unrealistic expectations being created. For example, evaluation data will be ready for feedback two days after evaluations are finished in order to prevent time factors from being used for defensive purposes (Nadler, 1987:93).

The success or failure of the evaluation is an issue that often receives much attention at the end of the specified time period. Furthermore, Smeltzer & Walton (1984:34) suggest that feedback should closely follow the behaviour being discussed. The time frame inbetween should not be prolonged. They suggest this on the basis that immediate feedback always has more impact on the receiver than delayed feedback. In their deliberations they further indicate that certain employees may require more than one annual review as it is difficult to relate to a specific behaviour a year after its occurrence.

Another factor to be considered as an approach of timing is that evaluations should not follow too close together. Managers should structure it in such a way that time is allowed so that improvement can occur before the next visit. MacColl (1995:17) believes that there is a habit in a few schools, of conducting appraisals, or evaluation too close together. In his report he cited an example of a staff member that had been visited once by 06 October, twice by 10 October, and a third time by the 14th October in the same year. Time for improvement is not provided in this case. Instead one could suggest that such an experience for the teacher observed, could only have been frightening.

## 2.7 REASONS FOR FEEDBACK

It is also tactful for principals to provide teachers with reasons for giving feedback. As the head of the organisation the principal should make the teacher aware that giving feedback is important because it enables one to:

- \* Praise or reinforce good performance. This is motivating and encourages good performance as the subordinates know what is expected of them.
- \* Explain why performance is not up to standard and assist the subordinate to improve.

Alphane et. al. (1992:27) suggests that the principal bears the following important aspects in mind when providing feedback as this enhances tactfulness:

- \* **On what aspects do you provide your staff with feedback?** They need feedback, not just about output but also about the tasks they perform, as a means to achieving the final outputs or results. They need to know what it is they are doing well. They also need to know what is not acceptable.
- \* **When should you give them feedback?** Feedback should be given regularly but not for everything a staff member does. Staff should not become dependent on receiving feedback from their manager, so that if feedback is not given, they cease to perform. A rule of thumb is that staff should receive sufficient feedback in order to know that they are moving in the right direction. If a staff member is not performing to an acceptable standard it is better to give feedback sooner rather than later. This may help to prevent the unacceptable behaviour from becoming habitual and may also limit the harmful effect the behaviour could have on other staff members if allowed to continue.

- \* **Where should you give feedback?** This depends on the sensitivity of the issue involved. Feedback on good performance can be given spontaneously as you pass a staff member in the passage. Feedback on unacceptable performance sometimes also needs to be given on the spot, but should occur in private.

Principals should bear in mind that discipline should be private, and that the person should have the opportunity to respond.

Furthermore, principals should ensure, that feedback assists the staff to increase their self awareness, especially regarding their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback can lead to a better working relationship between manager and staff especially if the criticism is directed at the particular incident observed and not at the person (Poster & Poster, 1991:83).

## 2.8 GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

Therefore the following guidelines are useful as a technique in giving feedback:

- \* Describe what the person has done.
- \* Focus on the performance issue, not on the employee as a person.
- \* Mention behaviour that can be changed.
- \* The feedback should be specific and based on hard evidence. It should not be vague and general.
- \* It should reinforce positive new behaviour.
- \* It is intended to help the person improve or develop.
- \* It should be well timed (Alphane et. al., 1992:28).

In the light of the guidelines for giving feedback, it is essential that the manager also maintain the self-esteem and dignity of his subordinate, during the feedback session.

However, it is also important to bear in mind that people do not necessarily relish feedback (Aphane et. al., 1992:36). This may even be true for feedback for good performance as the teacher may feel embarrassed. Feedback given for poor performance, may cause defensiveness. Therefore it is important that a manager gives feedback in a constructive way so as to avoid embarrassing or upsetting the person receiving it, as this will be tactful.

The following advice as given by West & Bollington (1990:29) to observers may be helpful as an approach to bear in mind during feedback sessions as this will facilitate tactful feedback, namely a good observer should:

- \* Allow the teacher to talk.
- \* Check progress towards previously established targets.
- \* Focus on a limited number of areas (not more than three) for remedy/improvement/setting targets.
- \* Ensure careful recording so that commitments and suggestions to support improvements are not lost.
- \* Enable the teacher to diagnose his/her own performance and to suggest future needs and targets.
- \* Leave the teacher wanting to repeat the process.

The main aim of the observer should be to collect factual data to present to the teacher (West & Bollington, 1990:21) As an approach in the first instance, it should be for the teacher to reflect on and interpret the data. Only then should the observer offer interpretation and these should be on the basis of agreed and known criteria. The aim should be to use the data gathered to develop the plans for future professional growth. Such plans may emerge at the feedback meetings following the observation (West & Bollington, 1990:22).

Poster and Poster (1991:179) add that the data should be recent, accurate and that the observation should occur as near to the appraisal interview as possible. When the teacher acknowledges that the data collected is accurate the educational manager, working cooperatively with the teacher, formulates recommendations for change in classroom instructional behaviours (Beach & Reinhartz, 1984:30).

West & Bollington (1990:75) assert that observation should lead to a productive discussion and an exchange of ideas about those aspects of teaching identified as points of focus during initial planning. They further state that this session should be held as soon after the observation, as possible.

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one could state that teacher evaluation is now an inevitable factor in many educational systems, and teachers should know more about it, show interest in the ways it is done and in the ways it should be done. Among other things, as mentioned by Nevo (1994:108) evaluation could help teachers develop their teaching competence, improve their teaching performance and get national recognition for their outstanding skill and competence, and be accountable for their teaching service.

Educational managers also need to be cognisant of these aspects which influence tactful feedback as this could improve teacher performance which in turn effects the learning task of the pupils. The approach or technique used during tactful feedback is thus an important skill which educational managers could use to enhance teacher competence.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature study in Chapter 2 formed the framework for the empirical study. The specific aim of this study was also highlighted in Chapter 2 as approach or technique as an aspect of tactful feedback: implication for the management of teacher competence. A brief discussion of the design of the research instrument now follows.

### 3.2 THE INSTRUMENT OF RESEARCH

#### 3.2.1 The design of the questionnaire

The design of the empirical investigation was a structured questionnaire consisting of 106 open ended items (see Appendix A). The items were based on research done by Van der Merwe & Grobler (1995). This research indicated that feedback competence was designed around the theoretical constructs of:

- \* Invitational feedback
- \* Credible feedback
- \* Tactful feedback
- \* Transparent feedback
- \* Culturally sensitive feedback.

Subsequently groups of students were assigned to investigate each of the above constructs of feedback competence in greater detail. This resulted in 106 questions designed to obtain the perceptions of members of the teaching profession as to how often educational managers demonstrate certain behaviours pertinent to feedback.

Although this particular research paper deals with approach or technique as an aspect of tactful feedback all the questions formulated by this group are represented in Table 3.1. The questions relevant to approach as an aspect of tactful feedback are indicated by means of an asterisk:

TABLE 3.1  
ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TACTFUL FEEDBACK

Item no.	Description	Mean score	S.D.	Rank Order
B76	Leave you with distinct impression that you are making a meaningful contribution towards the success of the school	3,38	1,34	18
B31	Ensure that good teaching performance is followed by personal recognition and praise	3,32	1,40	23
B50*	Give feedback which is balanced so as to benefit both school and individual	3,29	1,29	29
B12	Leave you with a feeling that your efforts will be sufficient to obtain your goals	3,23	1,34	31
B49	Indicate that the resources necessary to teach effectively will be provided	3,21	1,34	33
B4	Ensure that the meaning of the feedback is understood through discussion and consensus	3,21	1,33	33
B98	Clearly state which aspects of teaching have been evaluated	3,17	1,35	39
B78*	Ensure that criticism is directed at a particular incident observed and not at the person	3,16	1,29	42
B32*	Keep feedback short and simple so that the teacher is not overwhelmed	3,14	1,30	44
B87	Ensure that you are absolutely sure as to the purpose of the appraisal	3,13	1,33	46
B11	Give you a written report that is a true reflection of your classroom performance	3,09	1,50	50
B61	Set challenging yet attainable goals together with you	3,06	1,33	59
B38*	Take care to emphasise only positive aspects and avoids the negative all together	3,02	1,31	66

B25*	Avoid facial expressions which indicate anger, displeasure or hurriedness	2,97	1,35	73
B77	Discuss your specific area of weakness with aim of providing in-service training	2,94	1,38	79
B6.	Ask for your opinion about the appraisal process	2,80	1,37	89
B105	Explain how a particular teaching behaviour was judged	2,71	1,37	93
B24	Withhold information from you which could affect your promotion	2,64	1,44	95
B20	Also discuss your future career with you giving concrete examples of how you can gain promotion	2,58	1,45	100
B104	Share your assessment with you in the presence of a colleague of your choice	2,26	1,33	105

\* = Items involved with approach or technique as an aspect of tactful feedback

S.D. = Standard deviation

Having displayed the various items involved in tactful feedback only those items relevant to this research will now be discussed.

### 3.2.2 Discussion of approach or technique as an aspect of tactful feedback:

Each question was formulated in such a way that the respondents could indicate how often a educational manager demonstrated a particular behaviour, for example:

“In your opinion, when providing feedback how often do educational managers:

- \* Ensure that criticism is directed at the particular incident observed and not at the person.”

A positive response was given regarding this question. This is evident by the rank order which is 42 to the question. Poster and

Poster (1991:83) rightly maintain that feedback can lead to a better working relationship between managers and staff especially if the criticism is directed at the particular incident observed and not at the person. The mean score of 3,16 further emphasises the importance of the question.

- \* Avoid facial expressions which indicate anger, displeasure or hurriedness

Facial expressions as mentioned by Aphane et al, (1992:40) play a vital role when giving tactful feedback. The ranking order which is 73 and the mean score of 2,97 indicates the fact that the majority of managers avoid facial expressions which indicate anger, displeasure or hurriedness. In supporting this notion, Donnelly, et. al. (1992:427) emphasize that in a face to face situation, direct feedback is possible through verbal exchanges as well as through such subtle means as facial expressions that indicate discontent or misunderstanding.

- \* Take care to emphasize only the positive aspects and avoids the negative all together.

The rank order of 66 and the mean score of 3,02 seems to indicate that managers take care to emphasize only the positive aspects and avoid the negative all together.

However, Gibson et. al. (1994:231) indicate that managers should focus on positive feedback points. He further suggests that negative feedback points can be introduced in such a manner that it will not tarnish the image of the positive feedback given earlier on. In addition Smelzer and Walton (1984:86) asserts that a positive attitude when giving tactful feedback, should be the order of the day.

- \* Keep feedback short and simple so that the teacher is not overwhelmed.

A mean score of 3,14 seems to indicate that educational managers are fairly successful at keeping feedback short and simple.

The structure of a feedback report has certain impacts on improving teacher competence. As Gibson et. al. (1994:171) suggest that it will not serve any purpose that managers should write reports which will not be understood by their subordinates who are being evaluated and given feedback. Research indicated that many managers fail to keep the feedback short and simple and hence teachers were overwhelmed by the vastness of the criticism. West and Bollington (1990:20) further assert that managers should ensure careful recording so that teacher commitment and suggestions to support improvements are not lost.

- \* Give feedback which is balanced so as to benefit both the school and the individual teacher.

It is apparent from the mean score of 3,29 and the rank order of 29 that the majority of educational managers give feedback which is balanced so as to benefit both the school and the individual teacher. It is, however, important that teachers should know and understand that the main aim of performance evaluation is professional development and that the employee needs to build upon strengths and improve upon weaknesses to improve performance (Gibson et. al., 1994:231).

### 3.3 THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

#### 3.3.1 Respondents

Respondents were chosen from the various post levels of the teaching profession. It was felt that the perceptions of the teachers at the various post levels relative to teacher competence should vary and hence it was important to sample as wide a range of post levels as possible (see Section A question 2 of the questionnaire).

#### 3.3.2 Biographical details

The following biographical details were requested:

Gender, post level, age, teaching experience, highest education qualification, province in which you are presently teaching, religion, primary or secondary school, mother tongue, gender of the principal of your school, attendance of pupils, attendance of teachers and image of your school.

It was reasoned that these aspects could be related to feedback competence and could influence teachers perceptions on how often educational managers demonstrated such behaviours.

#### 3.3.3 The research group

Questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of members of the teaching profession especially in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. However, a random selection of teachers from the other provinces were also involved. Schools were selected on the grounds of their accessibility to members of the research team and all Provinces except the Provinces from the Cape were represented in the sample.

Principals were approached in order to obtain their cooperation. The questionnaires were handed to principals by a member of the research team and personally collected again after completion. Cooperation in most instances was excellent and this enabled a good return of questionnaires to be obtained.

#### 3.3.4 Return of questionnaires

The following figures summarise the information relevant to the questionnaires:

\* Feedback competence

Handed out	Returned - useable	Percentage return
1500	1116	74,4%

The questionnaires were now sent to the statistical consulting service of the Rand Afrikaans University where the data was transcribed and processed.

### 3.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter a description of the empirical investigation was provided. The questionnaire was discussed and the course of the research was briefly indicated. In Chapter 4 the following aspects will receive attention:

- \* reliability and validity of the instrument; and
- \* some aspects of the data following from the statistical analysis will be examined, tabulated and interpreted.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF A SELECTED SAMPLE OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the limit imposed on the length of a research essay a detailed discussion of the various statistical techniques is impossible. Hence the discussion will be limited to the following:

- \* *a discussion on the validity and reliability of the research instrument;*
- \* *a comparison of one of the independent pairs by stating appropriate hypotheses and interpreting the statistical tests involved;*
- \* *a comparison of one of the independent groups containing three or more groups by stating the hypotheses and analysing the appropriate statistical data; and*
- \* *a discussion of the differences in the factor mean scores of the various groups sampled.*

#### 4.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

To ensure content validity the questions were designed within the framework of the relevant theory using the five constructs described by Van der Merwe and Grobler (1995). Experts in the research field from the Department of Educational Sciences and from the Statistical Consulting Service of the University also reviewed the questionnaire to judge the relevancy of each item.

The construct validity of the instrument was investigated by means of successive

first and second order factor analyses performed on the 106 items. The first order procedure involves a principal component analysis (PCA1) followed by a principal factor analysis (PFA1). These procedures were performed using the BMDP/4M Program (Dixon, Brown, Engelman, Frane, Hill, Jenrich & Toporek, 1985:448-454) in order to identify a number of factors which may facilitate the processing of the statistics.

The ten factors obtained from the first order factor analysis were now used as inputs for the second order procedure. This consisted of a PCA2 with varimax rotation and orthogonal axes followed by a PFA2 with doblomin rotation.

These procedures resulted in the 106 items being reduced to two factors namely:

- \* Feedback competence consisting of 95 items with a Cronbach-alpha-reliability coefficient of 0,984 with no items rejected. The 95 items can thus be regarded as one scale with a maximum value of  $95 \times 5 = 475$  and a minimum scale value of  $95 \times 1 = 95$ ; and
- \* Unethical feedback consisting of 11 items with a Cronbach-alpha-reliability coefficient of 0,734. This reliability coefficient was regarded as being too low and hence this factor was not used in any of the analyses. The factor on unethical feedback was thus discarded.

The factor named feedback competence is, however, valid with high reliability and could thus serve as a basis for evaluating the feedback competence of the educational manager. Thus any weakness in feedback competence can be determined and appropriate training given.

Now that the validity and reliability of the instrument has been established the appropriate statistical analysis can be discussed.

## 4.3 HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses were formulated in respect of all the independent groups. The comparison of two independent groups will now follow.

### 4.3.1 Comparison of two independent groups:

At the multivariate level two groups can be compared for possible statistical differences by means of Hotelling's  $T^2$  test. This implies that the vectors of the mean scale scores of the two groups are compared in respect of the two factors taken together. Should a significant difference be found at this multivariate level then the Student t-test is used in respect of each of the variables taken separately.

As only one factor is involved in feedback, tests at the multivariate level are unnecessary and hence Hotelling's  $T^2$  is dispensable and the t-tests are sufficient to point out any significant differences between the various groups.

Possible differences between the opinions of male and female principals in respect of feedback competence will now be discussed.

#### 4.3.1.1 Differences between male and female principals relative to feedback competence

TABLE 4.1

COMPOSITE HYPOTHESES WITH MALE AND FEMALE PRINCIPALS  
AS THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Dimension	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test
Differences at the single variable level	Principal	Hot	There is no statistical significant difference between the mean scale scores of male and female principals in respect of feedback competence.	Student t-test
		Hat	There is a statistical significant difference between the mean scale scores of male and female principals in respect of feedback competence.	



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TABLE 4.2

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES IN THE OPINION OF EDUCATORS  
BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE PRINCIPALS REGARDING  
FEEDBACK COMPETENCE

Factor	Group	Factor average	p-value (Student)
Feedback competence	M	295,97	0,2253
	F	302,35	

N1 (Men) = 349

N2 (Women) = 767

\*\* = Significant at the 1% level

\* = Significant at the 5% level

Mean factor score for feedback competence = 300,35

o

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 indicate that there is no statistical significant difference ( $p = 0,2253$ ) in the mean scale scores of educators in respect of the feedback competence of male and female principals. Thus there is no significant statistical difference in the opinions of educators between the feedback competence of male and female principals. Educators do, however, have the perception that female principals provide more competent feedback.

#### 4.3.2 Comparison of three or more independent groups:

In respect of three or more independent groups differences are investigated by means of ANOVA (analysis of variance) in respect of feedback competence. The mean scale scores are compared and should any differences be revealed the Scheffé test is used to investigate any differences between the various pairs of groups involved.

As an example of differences between three or more groups the various religious groupings are considered.

4.3.2.1 Differences between the various religious groups in respect of feedback competence.



TABLE 4.3

COMPOSITE HYPOTHESES WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS  
THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Dimension	Variable	Symbol	Description	Test	
Differences at the multiple variable level	Religion	HoA	The average scale scores of the three religious groups do not differ from one another in a statistically significant way in respect of feedback competence.	Anova	
		HaA	The average scale scores of the three religious groups differ from one another in a statistically significant way in respect of feedback competence.		
		HoS	There are no statistical significant differences between the average scale scores of the three religious groups when compared pair-wise in respect of the following factor namely:	Scheffé	
FACTOR			PAIRS OF GROUPS		
			A vs B	A vs C	Bvs C
Feedback competence			HoS.AB1	HoS.AC1	HoS.BC1
Differences at the single variable level	Religion	HaS	There are statistical significant differences between the average scale scores of the three religious groups when compared pair-wise in respect of the following factor namely:		
FACTOR			PAIRS OF GROUPS		
			A vs B	A vs C	Bvs C
Feedback competence			HaS.AB1	HaS.AC1	HaS.BC1

TABLE 4.4

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS  
IN RESPECT OF FEEDBACK COMPETENCE

Factor	Group	Factor average	p-value (Anova)	Scheffé		
				A vs B	A vs C	B vs C
Feedback competence	A	303,77	0,0012**		**	
	B	293,53				
	C	273,19				

A = Christian (N = 860)

B = Islam (N = 86)

C = Hindu (N = 104)

\*\* = Significant at the 1%

\* = Significant at the 5%

Using Tables 4.3 and 4.4 it follows that HoA is rejected at the 1% level of significance. The deduction can be made that there is a statistical significant difference between the average scale scores of the three religious groups A, B and C in respect of feedback competence. The null hypotheses HoA is thus rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis HaA.



Regarding the pair-wise comparison of the groups the following conclusions can be made:

- \* *there is a statistical significant difference at the 1% level between the average scale scores of Christians and Hindus in respect of feedback competence. HoS.AC1 is thus rejected in favour of HaS.AC1. HoS.AB1 and HoS.BC1 can, however, not be rejected. Teachers belonging to the Christian religion thus perceive educational managers to be significantly more competent in giving feedback than do teachers of the Hindu faith.*

Significant statistical differences were also found between most of the other independent groups investigated. Due to the limits in length imposed by a research essay these differences are summarised in Table 4.5.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**MEAN SCORES OF SOME OF THE INDEPENDENT GROUPS**  
**IN RESPECT OF FEEDBACK COMPETENCE**

NAME	CATEGORY NAME	MEAN SCORE
		Feedback competence
Gender	Men	295,97
	Women	302,35
School Type	Primary	305,28*
	Secondary	294,39*
Post Level	Teachers	295,92
	Teachers with merit awards	302,76
	Heads of Departments	313,75
	Higher Promotion posts	319,94
Highest Qualification	Lower Std 10; Std 10; Diploma	323,32*
	Teachers Diploma	300,84*
	Diploma; Degree	298,02*
	Degree plus	287,96**
Province	Gauteng	292,02**
	KwaZulu-Natal	327,80**
	Other	294,52**
Home Language	Afrikaans	303,29
	English	283,48**
	Sotho	*295,43
	Nguni	*319,40**
	Indian	*280,37
	Tsonga	*284,55
Attendance of Pupils	Good	310,78**
	Average	298,89**
	Poor	255,54**
Attendance of Teachers	Good	313,92**
	Average	293,74**
	Poor	249,22**
Image of School	Excellent	322,10**
	Good	308,12
	Average	*273,21**
	Disturbing	*239,97**

- \*\* = Significant difference at the 1% level
- \* = Significant difference at the 5% level

#### 4.4 BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FACTOR MEAN SCORES IN TABLE 4.5

The various factor mean scores obtained by the independent groups in respect of feedback competence is summarised in Table 4.5 and it is necessary to briefly explain the differences observed. First the independent group will be cited and this will be followed by a brief discussion.

- \* **Gender** - women have a higher factor mean score in respect of feedback competence than men do. Women are naturally more conforming and obliging in their opinions as opposed to men. They seem not to challenge authority and hence they award a higher factor mean score, to the feedback competence of educational managers.
- \* **School type** - educators who have gained most of their experience in primary schools have a higher factor mean score and differ from the scale score of secondary school educators at the 5% level of statistical significance. Primary school teachers thus have a more favourable opinion about the feedback competence of educational managers than do secondary school teachers. This is probably due to the fact that secondary teachers are academically well qualified and are more critical of the feedback competence of educational managers.
- \* **Post level** - although no significant differences occur between the factor mean scores of the various groups there is a direct proportion between the factor scores of the various post level groups and the feedback competence of educational managers in the sense that the higher the post level the higher the factor mean score of the feedback competence. Teachers with merit awards surely are hardworking people who are not

afraid of the responsibility and are probably willing to listen and learn. People with such characteristics always have positive attitudes as opposed to people with negative attitudes who will always be defensive and be unfairly critical.

\* **Highest qualification** - educators with an honours degree or higher qualification have the lowest factor mean score and differ from teachers with the lowest educational qualifications on the 1% level of statistical significance. Teachers with the lowest qualifications also differ from the other two groups at the 5% level of statistical significance. There is an indirect proportion between the various qualification groups and the feedback competence of educational managers in the sense that teachers with the lowest qualifications have the highest factor mean score whereas educators with the highest qualifications have the lowest factor mean score. Well qualified educators probably believe that they are experts (highly specialised people). They do not expect much advice and guidance from other people with regard to their fields of expertise. They are probably well versed with the many intricacies of feedback. This seems to be related to attitude.

\* **Province** - educators from KwaZulu Natal have the highest factor mean score and differ from educators in Gauteng and other provinces at the 1% level of statistical significance. This significant difference could be due to the fact that teachers in rural communities do not easily criticise persons in positions of authority as this is against the normative system prevalent in rural communities. On the other hand the collaborative competence of the KwaZulu educational managers has been shown to be high and this factor could relate to the culture of the majority of people in that province (Zulus) which has to do with possible submissiveness to people in positions of authority.

\* **Home language** - Nguni-speaking educators have the highest factor mean score and they differ statistically significantly from teachers with

English as home language at the 1% level. Nguni-speaking educators also differ at the 5% level of statistical significance from the Sotho, Indian and Tsonga-speaking groups. The high factor mean score of the Nguni group corroborates the finding in respect of the provinces given above. It is of interest to note that the Afrikaans-speaking educators have the second highest factor mean score and they thus also perceive their educational managers as possessing feedback competence. It could also be that Afrikaans-speaking educators have a high regard for persons in positions of authority and hence will not readily criticise educational managers.

- \* **Attendance of pupils** - educators with the perception that pupil attendance at their schools is good have the highest factor mean score and differ from those groups who perceive pupil attendance to be average and poor at the 1% level of statistical significance. There is also a direct proportion between the attendance of pupils and the feedback competence of educational managers. This relates to school discipline which could be regarded as the by-product of school culture. This in turn is related to effective schools where teaching and learning has a high priority.
- \* **Attendance of teachers** - there is a close parallel in the results between teacher and pupil attendance. Teachers with the perception that teacher attendance at their schools is good differ at the 1% level of statistical significance from the groups who perceive teacher attendance at their schools to be average and poor. These results seem to indicate a direct link of some sort between teacher attendance and the feedback competence of educational managers and it is possible that teachers perceive the attendance of teachers in their schools to be good because the feedback given by the educational manager is of a high quality.
- \* **Image of school** - there is a direct proportion between the feedback mean scores and the image of the school as indicated by the fact that

teachers who perceive the school image to be excellent also perceive educational managers to be competent in respect of feedback. On the other hand, teachers who perceive the image of the school to be disturbing, are of the opinion that the feedback given by their educational managers is not up to the standard of the other groups. Educators who perceive the image of their school to be excellent have the highest factor mean scores and differ from the average and disturbing groups at the 1% level of statistical significance. Teachers who perceive the image of the school to be average also differ at the 5% level of statistical significance from the factor mean score of teachers who believe the image of their school to be disturbing. Competent feedback is all about effective communication and it could be that teachers view the image of the school as disturbing because of a lack of communication on the part of educational managers.

The two successive factor analyses performed on the 106 items in the questionnaire indicated that feedback competence has construct validity. The statistically significant differences highlighted in the discussion above indicate an ability to distinguish between groups which are known to differ from one another. This corroborates the findings of the factor analysis and indicates that feedback competence has construct validity.

Competent feedback should thus consist of the following aspects namely it should be:

- \* invitational in nature;
- \* credible;
- \* tactful;
- \* transparent; and
- \* contain cultural sensitivity.

## 4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter an analysis and interpretation of some of the empirical data was undertaken. The construct validity of the research instrument was investigated by means of two successive factor analyses which reduced the 106 items to just two factors namely:

- \* *Feedback competence consisting of 95 items with a reliability coefficient of 0,984; and*
- \* *Unethical feedback consisting of 11 items with a reliability coefficient of 0,734. This factor was discarded from the analyses as the reliability coefficient was deemed to be too low.*

An instrument which has construct validity should also be able to distinguish between groups which are known to differ from one another. It can be seen from the data in Table 4.5 that many of the groups which one expects to differ significantly from one another do indeed differ in their perceptions of feedback competence.

The limited scope of a research essay rationed the research to a comparison of one example of two independent groups and one example of three or more independent groups. Hypotheses were set and multivariate statistics were used to analyse and interpret the data.

From the research conducted it can be concluded that feedback competence consists of a single construct. This factor has construct validity with a high reliability and could thus serve as a basis for measuring and developing the feedback of education managers.

In Chapter 5 a summary of the research will be given. Important findings will be discussed and recommendations will be made.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this research was to determine how tactful feedback can improve teacher competence. It is on this note that the researcher deemed it fit to investigate the essence and nature of tactful feedback given by educational managers after every evaluation session.

The researcher felt it was important to research this topic because of the following reasons:

- Teachers are to be paid according to their inputs, that is, the harder they work, the more they will be rewarded.
- The standard of education in South Africa is declining due to amongst other things the lack of teacher competence.
- Parents are removing their children from public schools and placing them in private schools which are extremely expensive for the majority of them. The main reason for this action is that in public schools teachers are not as competent as those in private schools. Therefore the researcher found it imperative to investigate this topic in order to assist the educational manager when providing feedback about teaching performance.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY

In chapter one, an introductory orientation and statement of the problem was given and some of the problems that lead to a lack of competence were highlighted. Concepts such as feedback, tactful feedback, evaluation and

teacher competence were also clarified.

Chapter two focussed on a literature study on approach as an aspect of tactful feedback. The definition of teacher competence, feedback and the approach used when providing tactful feedback were also researched. In the literature review guidelines and advice on how to give tactful feedback were outlined. The main significance of the technique in giving tactful feedback is that the manager has to be aware of certain important aspects such as how to write evaluation reports.

The design of the research project was explained in chapter three as an empirical investigation involving a structured questionnaire consisting of 106 open ended items. Respondents were required to indicate how often an educational manager demonstrates a particular behaviour.

Questionnaires were distributed to members of the teaching profession in the provinces, but mainly in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. There was a 74,4% return of questionnaires which were sent to Statistical Consulting Service of the Rand Afrikaans University where the data was processed.

The analysis and interpretation of the empirical data was undertaken in Chapter four, where reliability and validity of the questionnaire was discussed. A comparison of two independent groups was undertaken. The differences in respect of three or more independent groups relative to feedback competence were investigated by means of ANOVA (analysis of variance). The Scheffé test was used to investigate any differences between the various pairs of groups.

## 5.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS

### 5.3.1 Findings from the literature in respect of approach as an aspect of tactful feedback and the implication for teacher competence:

- People respond more to data that they feel is valid and accurate

(see 2.4 p.21).

- Well written reports help teachers to improve. Written reports will not serve any purpose if they are not understood by subordinates (see 2.4 p.22).
- Feedback may not be received well by all people at all times (see 2.4 p.23).
- Principals should provide teachers with appropriate reasons when giving feedback (see 2.7 p.26).
- The timing of the feedback plays a major role in improving teacher competence (see 2.6 p.20).

#### 5.3.2 Important empirical findings in respect of teacher competence:

Teacher competence consists of two factors namely:

- \* Feedback competence which consists of 95 items with a Cronbach-alpha-reliability coefficient of 0,984; and
- \* Unethical feedback consisting of 11 items with a Cronbach-alpha-reliability coefficient of 0,734.

Since the reliability coefficient on unethical feedback was too low, this factor was discarded.

In respect of feedback competence significant statistical differences were found between the perception of educators as reflected in the mean factor scores of the following groups:

- \* School type, educational qualifications, province in which one is

presently teaching, home language, attendance of pupils, attendance of teachers and image of the school.

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of this research project was an investigation into the importance of approach as an aspect of tactful feedback and its implication for the management of teacher competence. In order to realise this aim a literature survey was undertaken and this served as the foundation upon which the empirical research could be based. The findings of this research are now amalgamated by the following recommendations:

### 5.4.1 *Recommendation 1*

Managers should be familiar with the process of appraisal and teachers should accept it as a process, with positive criticism. If both parties are familiar with the process of teacher evaluation it could lead to an improvement in the management of teacher competence. The approach of the evaluator is thus important.

### 5.4.2 *Recommendation 2*

In order to provide productive feedback, timing should be taken into account. If this is not adhered to the evaluation session given or undertaken will not provide the required results. To make the evaluation exercise effective, teachers should be given sufficient time in order to absorb and reflect on the evaluation. Timing is thus an important aspect of the approach of an evaluator.

### 5.4.3 *Recommendation 3*

Managers should make teachers aware of the importance of evaluation. Evaluation should not be associated with negative experiences. The

approach used during a performance appraisal interview should motivate employees to higher levels of performance. Thus feedback competence which includes the approach used by the evaluator is an important aspect in the management of teacher competence and should be included in any training programme envisaged for educational managers.

These three recommendations thus all serve to emphasize the importance of the approach or technique when providing feedback and indicates that the approach used by an evaluator is an important aspect of tactful feedback.

#### 5.4.4 Topics for further research:

The following are some areas that could not adequately be evaluated in this study, and that merit further investigation.

- \* the **process** of teacher evaluation;
- \* the **involvement of teachers** in preparation for teacher evaluation;
- \* the role of the manager in **guiding teachers** to improve performance; and
- \* the role of the educational manager in demonstrating the importance of evaluation in teacher competence.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Staff evaluation is an area of contestation in South Africa because of the historical baggage around it. It appears that evaluation in the past was often carried out not for staff development purposes but rather to undermine and demotivate staff. Managers will require training to understand how to develop

useful staff development programmes, and how to appraise staff to encourage them to improve their instructional methods for the benefit of their students and the school.



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