



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL
ASSESSMENT ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF PUPILS WITH BORDERLINE
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES LEARNING IN MIXED ABILITY ENGLISH LANGUAGE
CLASSES**

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a research study aimed at examining the impact of informal and formal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline difficulties and language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English language classes. The thesis adopted a qualitative ethnographic methodology with triangulated methods to enquire into macro and micro views of the main concepts in this study. Thus, data were collected by participant observation within English classes, informal and formal interviews with pupils and teachers at the research site and semi-structured interviews at home with parents and pupils. Questionnaires for 6 teachers, pupils and parents [total n=31] were administered 22 pupils were observed over a period of nine months, spanning 5th September 2005 to May 2006 and 3 parents interviewed due to availability of willing pupils and their parents. This was followed by structured and semi-structured questionnaire administration and interviews with six teachers and pupils [n=22].

The experiences of pupils deemed to be struggling with learning, yet not certificated as having learning difficulties were analyzed utilizing the methodology outlined by [Lincoln and Guba 1985; Creswell 1998; Richards 2005; and Bryman 2004] among others, and the data provided rich ground for a potential development of a substantive theory of learning and self-esteem. The questions focused on the evidence of classroom, and on verbal and non-verbal teacher treatment of the focus group. It also focused on the perceptions and expectations of teachers and students regarding assessment [formal and informal] and how it impacts on pupils' self esteem. Some themes that emerged in the study included the following: resistance to learning and to authority, ridicule and racism, treats and intimidations, student-teacher infatuation, racial and bullying, counter- school culture, and unfair teaching practices.

Findings from this research study are a mixed bag. The evidence suggests that, self-esteem is dynamic and has an inherent executive capacity based particularly on individual competence, beliefs, thinking and feeling components. Furthermore, there was no evidence to suggest that pupils performing poorly suffered low self-esteem.

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Prologue

When I have been listened to and when I have been heard, I am able to perceive my world in a new way and to go on. It is astonishing how elements that seem insoluble when someone listens, how confusions that seem irremediable turn into relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard. I have deeply appreciated the times that I have experienced this sensitive, empathetic, concentrated listening.

[From 'A Way of Being', Rogers, 1980]

**TO MY LATE MOTHER AND FATHER IN LAW AND
ANDREW [MY BUDDIE].**

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**CHAPTER ONE:
DEFINING THE PROBLEM**

1.0. Introduction

The self-esteem phenomenon has been heralded as a major factor in the well being of a people, [Mecca et al., 1989], and for Cremin [2007], self-esteem is one of the most common psychometric measures used to evaluate programmes of various kinds today. For instance, in America, low self-esteem was singled out as a root cause in several major areas: ‘crime and violence, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, child and spousal abuse, chronic welfare dependency and failure to achieve in school’ Steinem [1992, p. 37]. Further, Steinem [ibid] writes, ‘in a high school that explored connections between self-esteem and unwanted teenage pregnancy, the number of such pregnancies fell over three years from 147 to 20’ [p. 38]. And, to compound on to these assertions,

Kaplan, Martin and Robbins [1982] demonstrated prospectively that non drug abusing teenagers with low self-esteem were significantly more likely in future years to become drug abusers than their non-drug abusing age-mates with high-esteem [Schwarzer, 1992 p. 60].

One wonders, ‘What then is the problem with rich and successful individuals who find themselves immersed in drug abuse?’ Does it follow too, that they have low esteem? How does self-esteem manifest itself and what causes it? Could assessment [formal and informal] contribute to the feeling of low self esteem in poorly performing pupils? Answers to these questions generate a lot of personal, educational, philosophical and psychological questions which demand investigating.

However, some researchers such as Emler, 2001; Mruk 1999; do not agree with Cremin’s 2007, Steinem’s 1992 postulations on Self-esteem. For instance, Emler [2001] has pointed out that using the self-esteem in this way is deeply flawed. Conversely, Mruk [1999] argues that there are problems with the self-esteem concept and its loose use in schools by educationists and the implications attached to the phenomenon by politicians, celebrities and educationists alike. Mruk [1999] argues, ‘although competence and worthiness are factors that affect self-esteem, it turns out that the relationship between the two is equally important’ [p. 26]. Thus, if Mruk [ibid] is correct about competence and worthiness, and since self-esteem is seen as

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essentially evaluative, referring to the extent to which the individual likes or accepts him or herself [Rogers 1951], then we can hypothesise that the majority of borderline pupils with learning difficulties should have very low esteem.

However, Cremin [2007] argues that, the difficulty with the concept of self-esteem is that, technically, it is morally neutral, which is contrary to the way in which it is often used. Hypothetically, Cremin [2007] argues, if a young person's ideal self is bent on committing crimes without getting caught and succeeds in doing so; she/he then has high self-esteem. Nonetheless, this is contrary to the social workers', teachers' and psychologists' notion of self-esteem; rather, it is quite the opposite. Such a young person is construed as having low self-esteem and in need of intervention to achieve greater self-worth and greater acceptable social behaviour. But, according to Branden [2001], esteem and respect are linked to status in the social hierarchy and putting someone down can invite tangible and even life-threatening consequences.

This assertion raises questions about our understanding of; and what the agreed definition of self-esteem is particularly in education circles. Questions arise when conflicting evidence is presented. For instance, Branden [2001] further contends that street-gang members have been reported to hold favourable opinions of themselves and turn to violence when these estimations are shaken; also that playground bullies regard themselves as superior to other children; and that, low self-esteem is found among the victims of bullies, but not among bullies themselves.

Now, given that the majority of pupils with borderline learning difficulties often find learning and keeping up with the rest of the average pupils very challenging and are often ridiculed by peers, does it follow that their self-esteem is diminished in any way? Does failure to achieve unanimously become a single factor for low self-esteem and cause for exclusion and expulsions as pupils become disgruntled, turning to mischief and delinquency? If so, following concessions by Steinem 1992; California Task Force 1998, by continuing to retain pupils who are failing to achieve, one can argue that schools are breeding future social misfits since it has been postulated that learning and achievement collate with self-esteem. Therefore, this thesis

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explores how formal and informal assessment may impact upon the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties in mixed ability English classes.

This chapter which is the introduction of the thesis is divided in two sections. The first section advances the case with key questions in relation to the problem of the study. The second section presents the manifestation of my conceptions; the purpose and significance of the study and the questions guiding the investigation. The chapter also attempts to explain these components and sets forth a working definition of self-esteem as well as arguments for its validity; its considerations in curriculum and assessment issues in educational structures.

In exploring the research question, the researcher used four principal means of data collection:

- Questionnaires for teachers, pupils, parents and the head of English department [HoD];
- Structured and semi-structured interviews with teachers, pupils, parents and HoD;
- Participant observation of four English classes during classroom lessons taught by five different teachers;
- Documentary reviews that include school reports from the inspectorate [Ofsted], pupils' written work and teachers' comments.

The data were then analysed using the grounded approach [Strauss and Corbin 1990; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Charmaz, 1995] in a triangulation process and were also subjected to comparative analysis with contemporaneous relevant literature.

1.1. The Research Question:

An Investigation of the Impact of Formal and Informal Assessment on the Self-Esteem of Pupils with Borderline Learning Difficulties and Language Deficiencies in Mixed Ability English Language Classes.

1.1.1. Sub -Questions

1. To what extent do teachers consider the impact/effect of formal and informal assessment and feedback on pupils' self-esteem?

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2. How do poorly performing pupils deal with failure, negative and unfavourable assessment comments?
3. How do poorly performing pupils deal with positive praise or comments?
4. What are the teachers' perceptions with regards to self-esteem of their poorly performing pupils?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of assessment comments and their effects on pupils' self-esteem or behaviour?
6. What is the evidence that facilitates the justification for the use of self-esteem to describe pupils' personalities?
7. Do teachers have a clear sense of what they mean by self-esteem and its implications?

1.1.2. Objectives

As with all works of this nature, this thesis was carried out with a view to:

1. Originating a set of research questions and generic learning objectives to frame the thesis.
2. Consider approaches to research, select and justify a method suitable for answering the questions posed by and achieving the objectives of this thesis.
3. As a reflective practitioner and in light of the research undertaken, formulate views based on the results with a view of building up a theory.
4. Consider the extent to which these findings may be generalised and make recommendations for action and or further study.
5. Reflect upon the ways that the context and my own perspectives are relevant to and are likely to have influenced this research.
6. Assess the effectiveness of the research undertaken.

Parallel to these, I also seek to:

- Study learning/ teaching, in the current UK education policy particularly as it applies to assessment and curriculum with a view to checking how perceptions of and subsequent assessment of the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies by concerned teachers.

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- Examine the background of assessment and self-esteem in education circles.
- Observe and analyse a number of English teachers and pupils in English learning situations and environments then carry out interviews to ascertain their views on how they assess and monitor the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies in their classes.

At this juncture, it is noteworthy to indicate that the separate placement of objectives was for convenience's sake and should not be construed to be separate issues being addressed.

1.2. Defining the Problem

In this modern society, literacy is the gate way to success and a basic and most fundamental element everyone should possess. It follows therefore that, any obstacles that try to hinder progress in acquiring this life necessity should be tackled. In this light, the Assessment Reform Group [ARG 1989], argue that assessment for learning should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact. Thus:

Teachers should be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners' confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in the feedback that they give. Comments that focus on the work rather than the person are more constructive for both learning and motivation [the Assessment Reform Group 1989].

Because learning is not always successful for every learner, I have wondered how pupils, especially those with learning difficulties feel if learning outcomes are not favourable. Are children's self-esteem affected by the way they are assessed, by their teachers' comments and, is the self-esteem a universal phenomenon?

For me, it emerged that there were gaps in my understanding of self-esteem phenomenon and how it could or would not affect pupils' education, which needed to be seen and addressed. I will argue in the later chapters that there are also important gaps in our understanding and a lack of it in our definition in the field of self-esteem and some of the deficiencies will be addressed directly under various headings in this thesis. Thus, the focal point to the research study is to investigate what is known about self-esteem in schools and how one's self-esteem is affected by class work activities. Judging from arguments put forward by [Steinem 1994, The

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California Task Force 1998; McGivney 2003] it is widely accepted by educators [particularly teachers], politicians, some psychologists and celebrities alike, that one's self-esteem can be damaged by comments and actions of other people, which in turn affects one's competence and self-worth..

Many people too believe that education can be used to shape, mould, make or break a people. This goes to highlight some of the grey areas that surround self-esteem and what we perceive to be the consequences of lack of it. For instance, commenting on the experiences of an excluded girl, Wright et al., [2005] write:

Sirita believes that coping with school exclusion has greatly contributed to strengthening her character. As a result, she believes that she is now more mature, determined and aware. She has learnt how to deal with painful problems because she developed confidence and communication skills during the appeal procedures. Sirita argues that she has the will-power to work hard and get good grades in her GCSEs. She plans to go to Beauty College and own a beauty salon and is optimistic that her future aims will disprove the predictions of her teachers [p.45].

Nonetheless, despite the fact that education may not provide equality, it does change the quality of pupils' lives. As such, educational equity is a political issue, which is systematically opposed as is observed in the following quotations by P.M. Blair; [the then Labour Party leader and Prime Minister of Great Britain]

'Education is and remains the absolute number one priority for the country because, without a quality educational system and an educated work force, we cannot succeed economically' [The Times Educational Supplement, July 05- 2002]. Further, Blair [ibid] argues:

A generation ago Britain tolerated an education system with a long tail of poor achievement because there was a plentiful supply of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. This is no longer the case. By breaking the cycle of underachievement in education we can extend opportunity across society' [ibid].

Supporting P.M. Blair's [2002] remarks, the Department for Education and Employment [DfEE] [1995-2006] argue that, 'the success of children at a school is crucial to the economic, health and social cohesion of the country, as well as to their own life chances and personal fulfilment'. Technically, the [DfEE] is referring to the domino effects of education, the cogs

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that drive the education successes and its importance to the prosperity of the nation, [if more and more students succeeded in learning].

The remarks by the DfEE and Mr Blair [2002] seem to suggest that all is not well in the education circles at this point in time. To back this assumption, the then secretary of State Education and Skills; Estelle Morris resonates Blair's [ibid] and the Department for Education and Employment's 1995-2006 by arguing:

At almost every point in our lives what happens in schools matters to us. As a country, we are still wasting an enormous amount of talent by denying some of our children the quality of education that would make a real difference to their lives.

The most vulnerable pupils are those with learning difficulties as they usually slip through the cracks and thus remain, for the most part, a major underserved and inappropriately served group of students in our schools today. However, what the then secretary of State echoes is not a new phenomenon but rather, a fossilized reality of denying some children the much needed means to a better future. Although it is true that, good education does not guarantee better life, in these modern times, it certainly is the key to better avenues.

However, despite the fact that, gaps exist in the research literature in the areas of self-esteem and how it is affected by assessment and the pupils' views of the phenomena, McGivney [2003] attributes failure to succeed in education to 'low self-esteem'. McGivney [ibid] asserts that, 'low 'self-esteem' is the problem that prevents many from engaging not only in education but in other forms of valuable activity' [p.4]. Nonetheless, McGivney [2003] is not alone in this blatant castigation of the 'self-esteem' phenomenon. Many people [educators, psychologists, politicians and celebrities alike] believe that self-esteem is consequently influential in shaping people's lives. Conversely, some believe that, a sound self-esteem [locus of control] is capable of curing all bounds of social life; from health to education, right through to personality [see Baumel on line].

It is a concern to me how self-esteem has suddenly become so ubiquitous and a 'very important aspect of one's personality' and yet, we really do not have a true picture of what self-esteem is or is not. I would argue that, there is no consensus on the exact meaning of self-esteem phenomenon. To some scholars; it is just a mirage hence no consensus on what it really is.

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From this standpoint, it is intriguing to hear the likes of Oprah Winfrey, teachers and other celebrities blaming 'self-esteem' for all the ills of the world.

For instance, Mecca, Smelser and Vasconcellos [1989] postulate:

The well-being of society depends on the well-being of its citizenry...the more particular proposition that forms our enterprise here is that many, if not most of the problems plaguing society have roots in the low self-esteem of people who make up society [p.1].

Corroborating, Steinem [1994] writes: 'since studies show that low self-esteem correlates with both prejudice and violence -that people who have a negative view of themselves also tend to view other people and the world negatively' [p.19]. What of a school child whose expectation is to fail because s/he is failing to cope with education demands? Moreover, is it not common knowledge that, experience leads to expectation and expectation to behaviour?

Baumeister, [2001] found that street gang members were reported to hold favourable opinions of themselves and turned to violence when these estimations were shaken. The same trend was manifested by playground bullies who regarded themselves as superior to other children and so are violent criminals who describe themselves as superior to others - as special, elite persons who deserve preferential treatment [ibid].

1.3. Self-Esteem Contours

So, what are the contours that provide for self-esteem? From the various definitions available and from students' points of view, it seems these contours appear to come from learning experiences, interactions with teachers and peers, parents [the child's environment]. To begin to research the role of self-esteem in learning and assessment, there is need to draw upon assessment feedbacks, experiences of learners with borderline difficulties and language deficiencies and analyse their feelings to establish its manifestation or otherwise. However, Cremin [2007] argues that, the difficulty with the concept of self-esteem is that, technically, it is morally neutral, which is contrary to the way in which it is often used.

For Steinem [1994] the influence of self-esteem goes much further than the school experiences, as shown by the hailing the phenomenon is receiving. Steinem [ibid] espouses that, self-

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esteem is 'a prerequisite for democracy and for equal power in democracy [ibid]. This premise by Steinem [1994], is substantiated by a definition of self-esteem by the 'Task Force' created by California's legislators which postulate that: 'Self-esteem is a social 'vaccine' against an epidemic of school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, child abuse, and other destructions of the self and others' [ibid, p. 35].

For Wells [online], children with low self-esteem have a difficult time dealing with problems, are overly self-critical, and can become passive, withdrawn, and depressed. They may hesitate to try new things, may speak negatively about themselves, are easily frustrated and often see temporary problems as permanent conditions. They are pessimistic about themselves and their life. Furthermore, Wells [ibid] contends that, criticism from parents or others can cause children with low self-esteem to feel worse. Further, he [ibid] also postulates that 'children can also develop low self-esteem if parents or others press them to reach unrealistic goals'. Thus, Wells' [online] arguments about self-esteem so far, put paid to the controversies that surround the self-esteem phenomenon.

However, along similar arguments, a more recent article 'KILLER FATHERS' by 'The Sunday Telegraph' of November, 19-2006: Yellowlees [2006] proved that the self-esteem argument has moved from just being a partisan issue to being political and a social phenomena. Yellowlees [ibid] reignites the low self-esteem debate started by the California task force [1998] claims. By blaming lack of self-esteem for the merciless killings of one's own children, Yellowlees [2006] is masking the actual cause or problem; despite revelations by psychologists and police officers that, 'finding common factors among murderous fathers is notoriously difficult' [ibid]. In the same article, Yellowlees [ibid] further argues:

Women tend to talk to friends, go out and drink too much or maybe chop off the sleeves of their husbands' suits. Others, in particular these fathers, have not developed those coping skills. They have low self-esteem; they are very controlling and less able to handle rejection. They can't talk about it: it is as if they have failed and they cannot accept that. They feel utterly humiliated and respond with the ultimate act of revenge... [The Sunday Telegraph 19/11/2006 p.20]

What I fail to understand from Yellowlee's argument [ibid] is what stops men from developing the so called coping mechanisms as women do? The disparities that self-esteem is said to affect individuals manifesting similar traits raises more questions than answers.

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In unison, Browne [The Sunday Telegraph 2006] argues ‘the minority suffer from personality disorders –the mentally ill. But there is a majority who have a history of violent and abusive behaviour, the so-called ‘generally violent’. The same article argues that, ‘both groups often had troubled childhoods making them particularly challenged by feelings of jealousy and fearful of abandonment’.

The confusion surrounding self-esteem phenomenon continue to amount, as Levin [2006] contributing to an article in [The Sunday Telegraph 2006] postulates, ‘psychologists argue that the majority of women who kill their children are seriously mentally ill, fathers who do so rarely are not’, but an act of low self-esteem. Such discrepancies create the confusion that surrounds the self-esteem phenomenon. Where is the empirical evidence that led Levin [2006] to suggest the disparities between mother killers and father killers?

A brief look at self-esteem properties may influence an informed understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, Branden [1969] describe self-esteem properties as follows:

- It is a basic human need, i.e., ‘it makes an essential contribution to the life process...is indispensable to normal and healthy self-development, and has a value for survival’.
- Is an automatic and inevitable consequence of the sum of an individual’s choices in using their consciousness?
- Self-esteem is experienced as a part of, or background to, all of the individual’s thoughts, feelings and actions.

As can be seen, the self-esteem phenomenon is linked to wide ranging magnitudes of problems that bedevil society today. However, there are some individuals who question the premise of self-esteem as argued by Steinem [1998] and California Task Force [1998]. For example, Seligman [1995b] writes:

Armies of American teachers, along with American parents, are straining to bolster children’s self-esteem. That sounds innocuous enough, but the way they do it often erodes children’s sense of worth. By emphasizing how a child feels, at the expense of what the child does-mastery, persistence, overcoming frustration and boredom, and meeting a challenge-parents and teachers are making this generation of children more vulnerable to depression. [p. 27]

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Therefore, considering the various conceptions of self-esteem discussed so far, it can be argued that none has been able to provide a comprehensive and convincing definition. So, I too am perplexed by the pragmatism 'self-esteem' has received in the past and continues to receive to date. The 'infectious' way this phenomenon has been chronicled and heralded and its widespread use has captivated my desires to explore its uses and influences in the education circles. If, the self-esteem phenomenon has such devastating consequences, why do progressive governments continue to force failing, despised and disgruntled pupils in the school system against their will? Does it not follow then, that we are breeding a new generation of future killer fathers, prostitutes and social misfits in our schools?

I am therefore drawn to this subject of self-esteem not only because it has just begun to be a big political and contemporary issue but because I foresee a danger that we may be aiming at a phantom or aiming in a wrong direction all together. As such, all education efforts being pursued may turn out to be blanks, or we may as well be bucking a wrong tree by heralding self-esteem issues as 'the' problem.

Maybe self-esteem is not at all responsible for these social discords or I maybe sceptical of self-esteem's existence, I am yet not sure. Rather, I am sure that the uncertainty surrounding this phenomenon, has motivated me to explore its existence or non existence in pupils with borderline difficulties and language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English language classes. To attempt to do this effectively, I decided to explore the self-esteem phenomenon within a school setting through the exploration of various assessment regimes and school ethos.

By exploring this phenomenon, I do not envisage producing an argument about self-esteem, but to begin to understand the phenomenon and how it may be affected by the way we assess pupils. I hope to heighten awareness and create a dialogue about the self-esteem phenomena within a specific context and content. I envisage that the research can lead to better understanding of how pupils feel when learning outcomes are not favourable.

So, I chose to explore this phenomenon in English lessons environment: firstly because of the subject's strength and influence as a medium for learning other subjects. Secondly a mixed

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ability English language classroom in a multicultural society, provides a unique opportunity for studying diverse assessment techniques used by teachers to assess diverse multicultural pupils. For, the ethnic and cultural diversity represented in any multicultural English language class depends on the population served by the institution within which it is embedded, and so should be the self-esteem phenomenon of individuals.

Therefore, in order to contribute to debate in this area of interest, this thesis will go on to establish that the literature review work indicated, lack of clarity in the fields of pupils' self-esteem in relation to some crucial areas of curriculum and assessment further compounding difficulties surrounding understanding self-esteem. Secondly, the concept of self-esteem needs defining as there is no agreement on its definition either theoretically or operationally, which suggests that we require a better taxonomy of researched self-esteem phenomena. This leads to a need for better clarity in terms of definition and empirical research evidence that would allow researchers to begin to define self-esteem boundaries.

It is also noteworthy at this juncture to mention that I adopt this line of argument with recognition that I have yet to come across research works that have reported reliability and empirical evidence regarding self-esteem issues, identification and relevance in learning and how it is affected by assessment and learning.

Conversely, Mruk, [1999] argues:

It is possible even necessary to see self-esteem as an on going developmental process. From this point of view, self-esteem is not just a stable influence from the past, once set shapes perception and behaviour. Rather, this position allows us to see, that new situations or events may influence self-esteem or even change it over the course of a lifetime [p.39].

Mruk's [ibid] statement suggests and demonstrates that there are lots of grey areas, confusions and gaps that still exist in our understanding of esteem issues.

Furthermore, Mruk, [1999] postulates that,

When we reach a goal that requires dealing effectively with problems or obstacles that also have personal significance, then we demonstrate a higher level of competence of

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dealing with the challenges of living than we have known before. Such successes represent a developmental achievement in the person's own maturation [p. 85].

Is the later argument by Mruk [ibid] prevalent in young pupils still at school? If so, what then happens if pupils fail to achieve higher levels of competence as postulated by Mruk? Does failure to demonstrate a higher level of competence trigger a sense of low self-esteem? If it does, are we then justified to blame self-esteem and not lack of incompetence?

The variances in the self-esteem definition [see chapter two] raise questions that led me to wonder how pupils who find learning a little challenging are coping. I also question how education as a factor contributes to the diminishing of pupils' self-esteem through the administration of assessment and feedback? However, to begin to speculate and attribute negatives and positives about a phenomenon that has no agreed consensus and definition creates problems. So I endeavour to explore how assessment might impact upon the self-esteem of pupils with borderline difficulties and language deficiencies in mixed ability classes. From the many definitions I have explored about the self-esteem phenomenon, my working understanding of self-esteem is: 'one's reflections/mirrored-image of competence, beliefs and values that set the tone with which to present ourselves to the reflections of the world'. It is however noteworthy to indicate that, the provision of my understanding of the phenomenon does not shed light on what is and is not self-esteem and hence does not remove the scepticism of the phenomenon.

1.4. Possible Causes of Low Self-Esteem at School

I explore the self-esteem phenomenon in the knowledge that the efficacies of the current assessment methods in learning have had a noteworthy impact on public education culminating in demands for alternative assessment methods. It appears that the diversity of cultures now prevalent in England and Wales, different life styles and employers' demands for better and knowledgeable school leavers is convincing the public education authorities to make assessment alternatives available. As a result, a paradigm that supports learning as opposed to the current educational measurement and assessment practices which seem to emphasise sorting and selecting students appear to be gaining impetus. Thus, the [ARG] Assessment Reform Group, [2002] argues:

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A teacher's planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to initial and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.

This drive for accountability has its own consequences on the less gifted learners as they find themselves sidelined in pursuit of excellence. Meanwhile, Frederiksen et al., [1993] have proposed the development of a new test theory grounded specifically in recent developments in cognitive theory as opposed to the current system that appear to be embedded more on accountability which some analysts think is only serving political aims. Conversely, Shepard [2000] argues, 'the pervasive negative effects of accountability tests and the extent to which externally imposed testing programs prevent and drive out thoughtful classroom practices' [p.9]. My understanding of Shepard's [ibid] observation [ibid] is that, although testing is an essential component of schooling, it brings undesirable residues if it is only tailored to answer accountability critics.

More broadly, sociologist Furedi [2003] argues that 'education has always played a central role in shaping a culture's account of human potential and the social relations that follow from it' [quoted by Ecclestone 2006, p.13]. Suffice therefore to say, in this fast paced world, education is generally looked upon by many as 'a vehicle for change' and or as an agent for transmitting a nation's culture. Therefore, it is only logical to suppose that conscientious individuals may find it disturbing if things do not add up. Thus, 'peoples' perception of their ability to cope with life's problems is shaped by the particular account that their culture offers about the nature of human potential' [ibid]. On that note, Ecclestone [2006] argues, 'once cultural accounts of self and identity take an introspective, diminished turn, beliefs about potential and aspirations change too [p.13].

This observation is crucial to the learning spirit of all school children and teachers alike. A chain of failing marks may dampen the verve to learn and enjoy a particular activity. Could this lose of verve to learn be equated to a sense of lost self-esteem, I wonder? However, it should be born in mind that, one man's meat is another man's poison. Suggesting that,

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depending on individuals, character and culture, failure can turn out to be a motivating factor and a drive to persevere.

For me, education is an endeavour that is central to empowering both the free and full development of every individual child and a socially necessary development that must meet the needs of a people as a whole. Therefore, institutions where this endeavour is cultivated and natured becomes an important part of the lives of children where they begin to develop new skills; make friendships that help prepare them for their future. Importantly, it is worth remembering that, pupils learn for compelling reasons that affect their lives and livelihoods; they may envisage better jobs upon completion of their studies, furthering educational opportunities, promoting social interaction, adaptation to a new culture, or enhancing their self-esteem. This education is acquired in learning environments where classroom experience is affected by social and internal factors such as interaction between students and their teacher(s), classmates and peers, the content of the curriculum, the feedback and assessment etc. To me, this is the real world of challenges that perhaps need to be inculcated and fostered. If then, in the process of acquiring this important aspect of life, pupils find their self-esteem diminished, maybe for these disgruntled children, education is not worth it. Maslow [1970] argues that, such individuals will never actualize or reach their full potentials.

Conversely for other people, education is considered a tool that elevates individuals people out of poverty and ignorance; hence the continual monitoring of developments that may affect its worthiness by education practitioners. So, one would want to believe therefore that, in this country and elsewhere in the world, public education is about reducing prejudices that, in other quarters have often been a potential source for conflicts. This entails drawing up and planning the curriculum, testing and assessing pupils and changing the curriculum and assessment regimes in a manner that does not diminish the way individuals construct themselves as subjects.

The irony with this drive is that, the general growth in demands for accountability and educational reform increases the salience of testing to high stakes testing as argued by [Gardner 2006; Ecclestone 2005; Harlen 2004; Madaus 1988]. Given the central role that

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assessment now plays, there is greater need to engage all pupils in learning and to cater for individual learning difficulties.

However, the provision of this much needed commodity, does not equate classes, but rather brings realisations of their own. Thus, Sapsford and Jupp [1996] argue,

Apart from being a preservation of social structure of the society, education also became a 'site of classification' phenomenon. But more insidiously, school plays a part in assigning some children to higher-grade occupations and others to lower ones by a process of self-shaping, resulting in rank-ordering of children with regard to their abilities [p.333]

As a matter of fact, in order to minimise disadvantages brought by assessment in learning/teaching, it has become imperative that teachers have a better understanding of the assessment system being used as well as its uses and abuses. This calls for, over and above standardized testing, oral questioning and informal observations –that are central to the assessment that teachers rely on to make informed decisions. One wonders then if all children or the majority of them are ready to produce the kind of demands of the new reforms, without impeding on their self-esteem. This may be one factor that lends teachers to talk of this or that child's low self-esteem or the media describing one's personality as having low self-esteem.

Such descriptions of learners lead me to wonder then, 'what this self-esteem really is; how it affects pupils and if it can be observed, measured and or categorised and more importantly, what teachers and pupils perceive it to be?

For the purpose of exploring the impact of assessment on the self-esteem phenomenon, a mixed ability English language classroom is an interesting context for studying how the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and learners with language deficiencies are affected by classroom activities, formal and informal assessment curriculum and school ethos. Many believe that, individuals' self-esteem can be fostered in what can become a safe composite of culture, gender, class, religion, nationality, race and educational aspirations or can be unwittingly shattered by the way pupils are assessed or viewed.

Conversely as Branden [2006] argues, if teachers tried to nurture self-esteem by empty praises that bear no relationship to the students' actual achievements, -dropping all objective

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standards, allowing students to believe that uniqueness is the only passport to self-esteem, then, they undermine self-esteem and academic achievements.

Therefore, with Branden's [2006] argument in mind, the focus of this research is aimed at exploring the impact of formal and informal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies. In an attempt to achieve these, the study explores how some pupils may be challenged by the way assessment is administered which may influence classroom interaction and future self-worth of these individual pupils. The experience of interaction in this contact zone has a special relevance for understanding and acquiring the skills necessary for understanding and coping with the rapidly evolving opportunities for interaction in a global society. Home and school learning activities will be compared in order to determine how different curricula activities affect children's self-esteem. The focus of this work will be on the pupils' contributions and perceptions although teachers' inputs will also be considered as they play a vital role in pupils' moral.

In order to understand the impact of formal and informal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline difficulties, their opinions and attitudes, the next chapter [chapter two] will explore some theories and concepts that are likely to throw light on the findings of the study.

1.5. How My Conceptions Were Manifested

When I started teaching in 1987, having gone through teacher training for three years, a group of pupils presented problems that were difficult to handle, problems that left other teachers and me unable to assist these pupils. During my early years as a newly qualified teacher, I experienced times when; having identified the needs of certain individual pupils, -who were struggling with learning, I simply did nothing due to my inability to assist. So, unwittingly I allowed these pupils to further deteriorate into slow learners. Some inevitably dropped out of school as they did not find solace in continuing with education.

For those who laboured on, my failure to tackle this phenomenon gradually led those pupils to be disenchanted by learning, bad behaviour crept in and in some instances led to truancy, bullying and petty crimes and eventually loss of trust in education. When I reflect on this, I

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hope that I did not help breed ‘future killer fathers,’ social misfits and low self-esteem citizens who will vote unwisely as postulated by Steinem [1994, Yellowlees 2006].

As a newly qualified teacher, I found solace from the fact that the experienced colleagues were no better as they could not offer any practical solutions. They too had pupils whom they had branded trouble-makers, dull, bullies and in some cases ‘unteachables’. One particular girl’s comment troubled me then and still worries me now. Having failed to get correct answers to what I thought were simple Maths problems, the girl sadly said to me, ‘you know what Sir, I sometimes wish my answers were the only correct ones and everyone else were wrong’. Here was a pupil who looked and felt sad that she was getting some Maths wrong and yet, wished she was the cleverest pupil.

Later on however, the experience of teaching primary pupils and later drawing up learning programmes for both primary and secondary pupils with learning difficulties, cemented my desire to look into the problems that I encountered as a newly qualified teacher. My involvement with the Zimbabwe Schools’ Psychological Services deepened and attuned my quest to take a closer look on pupils with borderline learning difficulties since, to me this group of pupils is the most marginalised and in cases, let to deteriorate into slow learners by the teachers’ ineptness in dealing with their dilemmas. Such pupils will inevitably leave school without any form of qualifications.

In Zimbabwe for instance, it is not unusual to meet a large group of pupils whose parents spent so much time and money educating their children and yet, some of these children came out of the system with no qualifications at all. To me, this professionally and morally wrong as the chances of these youngsters succeeding in life are next to nothing and yet, these pupils could have been assisted whilst they were still at school.

The question of ‘what can be done for these pupils, lay dormant in my sub-conscience until during my short stint with the Zimbabwe Schools’ Psychological services in 1990. It was then that, I appreciated Maslow’s [1970] argument that, everyone has full potential to learn, with some learning faster than others, although with variables affecting individual person's speed of learning and that, individuals vary in ways they prefer to learn.

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For me, to let these pupils and parents invest so much time and money for nothing is professionally and morally wrong and unacceptable. Therefore, to harness this trend, I believe that teachers need better diagnosis of borderline needs and to know how assessment generally is affecting pupils' performance and then devise practical methods of passing on the correct diagnosed results to the next teacher. There is also need to know how informal and formal assessment affects children's self-esteem or behaviour and the ethical and technical difficulties of assessing self-esteem.

So, for these professional and personal reasons discussed earlier, an attempt to investigate how formal and informal assessment may impact upon the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies is on the pinnacle of this study. To achieve this, students from different races, continents and language backgrounds were observed and interviewed in an attempt to describe the many-faceted relationships and feelings among the students and their teachers, who are themselves from very different backgrounds. As Apple, [1979] argues, 'any subject matter under investigation must be seen in relation to its historical roots - how it evolved, from what conditions it arose, etc.- and its latent contradictions and tendencies in the future' [p. 132].

I therefore set to carry out an in-depth ethnographic case study of pupils with borderline difficulties at an urban multi-ethnic community college in the Highfields district of Leicester City. This is a college mainly made up of pupils from working class, asylum seekers and impoverished backgrounds. The majority of pupils at this community college use English as their second and some third language. Arguments put forward by psychological anthropologists, seem to point out that, in different cultures children's individual development and participation in social practices is mediated through language [Stevens, 2000].

In unison, Hymes [1972] argues that children need to learn not just various aspects of the language system –grammar, phonology etc. but also how to become competent speakers within a particular cultural setting. Miller and Hoogstra, [1992], argue further that:

Children have to know when and how they should talk in different contexts and with different people and how to interweave non-verbal gestures and body language in with

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speech. Equally important, they have to learn when and how listen and how to ‘detect and interpret the unspoken assumptions that lie behind the talk’ [p.84.]

As can be appreciated, these skills are crucial competences necessary in learning and shaping one’s experiences of self. For Vygotsky [1987] children first internalize the real-life dialogues they have had with others and apply these to mental problem solving. It should be remembered that sometimes, problem solving may be a group work affair rather than a solitary mental activity. Thus, ‘because the internalized dialogues bring with them their social and cultural connotations, the language children use to think with is always heavily culturally and socially situated’, [Stevens 2000, p.253]. Furthermore, Stevens [ibid] contends that the very learning activities which form the basis for children’s cognitive and conceptual development are those which induct them into particular cultural values and beliefs and ways of organising knowledge and experience. If this argument is valid, children might have internalised popular images of self-esteem, outlined in the first sections of this chapter. So, hypothetically, it should be easy to identify and explore self-esteem problems in this learning environment, at this community college.

The participants for this research were identified through the recognition of choice, networking with teachers and reflection through observations. Follow up interviews validated their experiences and allowed them to reflect on their respective roles, feelings of success and failures as well as approval and discontentment on issues being investigated. Choice exercising was a dominant founding principle and commitment to personal and educational needs which were the key to participation in this research project.

1.6. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this in-depth ethnographic case study is to investigate and describe how formal and informal assessment impacts upon the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English language classes. Also, this thesis will strive to explore whether populist, generalised uses of self-esteem permeate the school’s hidden curriculum. The study will explore how teachers interact with their students in lesson deliveries, the feedback, types of feedback and the impact they have on students’ emotions and self-esteem toward school. It explores the frequency and duration of time they

allow between question and answer for different ethnic pupils in lessons as well as the different academic outcomes that result from the sessions. At this stage in the research, self-esteem is defined as ‘the culmination of feelings and perceptions manifested in pupils’ inward looking mirrors of themselves towards education’.

Borderline difficulties are defined as ‘difficulties that will not generally end up in the child being certificated, but may retard the child’s acquisition of new knowledge since the child may require more than average effort to understand a concept or master a skill.

1.7. Significance of the Study

There are growing concerns on the part of partisan use of the ‘self-esteem phenomenon’ socially, politically and educationally. A preliminary examination of the issues surrounding the adoption of such specialised words to describe pupils’ personalities and feelings seem to denote the creation of another set of problems that could frustrate attempts to provide quality uncompromised education, particularly to pupils with borderline difficulties. The question is: what is the evidence that facilitates the justification of use of such jargon to describe pupils’ personalities? Or what is the evidence that teachers, who use this phenomenon to describe pupils’ state and do all players, clearly understand the true meaning of the self-esteem phenomena?

The general adoption and use of specialised jargon to describe certain pupils in learning circles is fast emerging in many countries. My premise is that there are short comings surrounding the identification of pupils and the subsequent use of these specialised words which could hinder the delivery of and provision of proper educational facilities dictated by such pupils. These might include (a) the needs and attitudes of educators and other education practitioners in community set-ups, with respect to those labelled or identified pupils, (b) the lack of proper efforts and time allocation befitting the actual problems concealed beneath the symptoms manifested by pupils in question.

There is growing concerns about disaffected pupils and students entering our schools and colleges, which readily attributed to low self-esteem and ‘emotional baggage’. It is also postulated that these problems have become a challenge for universities used to ‘traditional’

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students. Thus, the so-called low esteemed pupils are deemed to be disaffected and have problems with bad behaviour [Ecclestone, 2006]. ‘When they come to us [college], their self esteem is at bottom. They have all the rude words in the world. People who have low self-esteem can retreat into their shells, cut themselves up or beat up a policeman’ [14-19 coordinator, in Midgley, 2005], quoted by [Ecclestone, 2006].

Practitioners [Seligman, 1995b, Mruk, 1999, Emler 2001] have expressed concerns by cautioning advocates about the effects of, use and reliance on words whose meaning we are unsure of such as the use of self-esteem to describe personalities. They are also concerned about the effectiveness of treating symptoms rather than carrying out a proper diagnosis then address the problem. As stated above debates have ensued concerning the use of the self-esteem phenomena by the California task Force [1998] among others, have maintained that self-esteem as a factor has a critical role to play in peoples’ lives.

It is therefore apparent that emotional ‘dysfunction’ is a major concern for policy makers. As such, random, overtly and implicitly stated claims regarding self-esteem and diminished personalities challenge educational initiatives and need empirical evidence for support or challenges. Thus, my concerns about the impact of assessment on self-esteem seem to resonate with the government’s accounts of the effects of low educational achievement and participation on pupils with borderline learning difficulties. Conversely, Hayes [2003] argues that, ‘real progress for education can only be made by longer term investment in the foundations of the education system, in building the self-esteem of all our children’ p. 35]

It is intended therefore that this study will contribute to the emerging body of literature that informs policy, educators and decision-makers when they design assessment strategies for all pupils and be mindful of particularly of pupils with borderline difficulties. Normally, attitudes and perceptions of educators are assumed as directly relating to their roles in the teaching and learning process, where they impact on the methodology and curriculum of the process [Fisher [1995]. But it is necessary for them to be researched in their capacity as individuals in the teaching and learning process.

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The deficit or gap in the literature, which gives this study originality, is the research into the combination of self-esteem and assessment particularly in special needs education on particular dominant themes. These include themes such as learning outcomes, learner characteristics, programme content and loose use of self-esteem notion to describe pupils' personalities and others. This study has the potential to better prepare teachers to prevent deterioration of or deal with pupils' self withdrawn/ isolations, some causes of tensions that may manifest in pupils experiencing learning difficulties, conflicts that may surface between teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil emanating from learning frustrations in classrooms. The study can also inform those educators and scholars involved in teaching or research in special education provisions, education examiners, and multicultural education provisions. Findings from this research could reopen avenues or reignite the debate about self-esteem concepts for future research.

1.8.

1.9. Summary of Chapter One

This introductory chapter has provided the foundation on which the remainder of the thesis is built. The chapter has assisted me to put my research topic into context given the brief summary and description of the institution in which the research is to be undertaken and outlined the political environment in which that institution is set. Derived from these are insights into my thinking as I started the work and from these were the research questions formulated and objectives that have provided the framework for the process. This chapter has analysed the need for such a study and its importance in the context of understanding assessment and how it might affect the self esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties. Most importantly, this chapter has also tried to illuminate the reasons why I chose to research the topic in question.

Also, the chapter has provided information on the understanding and the dilemmas regarding self-esteem concept and its role in motivating or de-motivating individual pupils to learn and referred to situational characteristics of teachers and some pupils in the study. I tried to establish that generally, the self-esteem concept is a difficult phenomenon to understand as it has no concessions on its influence in peoples' lives. Conversely, some believe that self-

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esteem can be diminished by what other people say to us and that it can be built or destroyed wittingly or unwittingly.

It has posed the central research problem, questions guiding the investigation and the significance of the study in contributing to the body of available literature. Issues about the need to consider educators' roles, attitudes and pupils' needs, feelings and perceptions have been highlighted. I reasoned that, my arguments and the problem of the research may be understood when educators and learners themselves are allowed to tell their experiences with learning/teaching through an ethnographic research.

In the next chapter, I review the concepts of learning difficulties, self-esteem, assessment and other various problems related to the main concepts identified as understood by different practitioners. Other themes emerging from the focus of this study and some studies in the psychological, sociological and anthropological studies but with focus similar to this study will also be discussed.

1.10. Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part 1 that includes Chapters 1-3, provides background information on the whole of the research, including the theoretical framework and the literature review that underpins the study. The second part consists of Chapter 4 emphasising the methodological considerations necessitated by the study research and the design. The third and final part which comprises chapters 5-8, presents the general and specific findings from the qualitative dimensions of the study; the researchers' personal critique on the strengths, weakness and limitations of the study and the conclusions, contributions, implications and recommendations made based on this piece of research.

Part 1-Context of the problem

Chapter One - Defining the Problem

This chapter contains the background to the research with an emphasis on my conceptions of how pupils with borderline difficulties and language deficiencies may not be engaged in learning and how the national curriculum and assessment methods in use may impact upon the

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self-esteem of such pupils and what this piece of research can offer. This is mainly the introduction to the nature of the problem and so sets the scene for the direction of this thesis. Within this part, discussions and highlights that are of personal nature and reasons that have led to the close study of crucial conceptual- theoretical, pedagogical and policy issues. This is then followed by the layout of how the whole thesis is presented.

Chapters Two and Three – Literature Review

These two chapters present findings of literature reviews and critiques of various issues surrounding the topic under investigation. Issues of curriculum, learning assumptions and various assessment methods and theories and practices surrounding self-esteem, language deficiencies and some learning difficulties as presented by individual pupils are also discussed. The literature review is used to identify self-esteem premise and concepts. Many existing definitions were reviewed in the light of the embedded metaphors which re-directed the development of my research study on these issues. A number of research articles, journals and books concerning empirical evidence have been used extensively.

Part 11-Methodology

Chapter Four- Methodological Considerations

This chapter provides the data collection procedures related to pupils, teachers and parents' views, participant observations by the researcher, interviews and questionnaires. Also included in this section is the rationale for adapting a qualitative ethnographic approach to this study. The preliminary stages procedures of the research design, the methods for the data analysis which constitute all the processes prior to, during and after the data collection are highlighted. It features the issues of access, mainly in terms of access to the school, conceptual framework for staging the research visits and performances. In this chapter, attempts will be made to code any emerging data. The chapter also addresses ethical issues and considerations undertaken during this research.

Part 111-Results of the Study

Chapter Five- Meeting Data Collection Challenges

CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

This chapter is an extension of the methodology chapter and discusses the challenges that were encountered in the process of conducting the research and how they were solved.

Chapter Six- Analysis and Discussion of the Questionnaires and Interviews with Pupils Parents

This chapter presents salient themes, views and perceptions that were highlighted by individual students during interviews and questionnaires regarding the impact of formal and informal assessment on their esteem, and how they generally perceived the assessment criteria used to assess their school work and self-esteem; results of the observations, questionnaires and the interviews conducted with pupils are reviewed in accordance with the structure of the research. A theoretical model that emerged from the analysis of the interrelationships between these themes is also discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

Chapter Seven- Analysis and Discussion of individual interviews with teachers and Parents:

Chapter seven directs a focus on the findings and analysis of the various issues and themes brought forward by English teachers, assistant teacher and the HoD on the impact of informal and formal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English classes. The findings generated from this qualitative aspect of the study are discussed in relation to existing literature and other researches in this field. Issues about teachers' perceptions on the self-esteem phenomenon are also discussed and addressed.

Chapter Eight-Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter contains the discussion of the major findings and predominant themes generated from the qualitative dimension of the study in relation to the existing literature. My personal critique as a researcher on the strengths, weakness and limitations of this research study are highlighted. Thus, this final chapter of the thesis reviews what has been learnt from the main study by summarizing the results; connects data with theory and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of my work, noting the limitations, draws conclusions and recommendations in the preceding chapters. The contributions of this study as well as some suggestions are potential

avenues for future research and interventions. In conclusion, the significance of this thesis is recapitulated followed by the researcher's final note.

1.11. Summary

In summary, Chapter 2 reviewed literature from varied research areas, which relate to the study. These research areas considered were ethnographic research in education, the curriculum in use in England and Wales's schools, assessment regimes, special educational needs provision learning difficulties, [Dyslexia] ADHD, language deficiencies, intercultural communication, multicultural education, which focused on the impact assessment, has on these pupils' self-esteem.

It has been established that problems in assessment and classroom interaction may lead to student and teacher attrition, discouragement, feelings of failure and even exacerbated prejudice that could in turn lead to low self-esteem and social mischief by some pupils. However, there is no consensus on how this phenomenon may affect pupils' performance let alone what really this phenomenon truly is as there are claims and counter claims on its effects.

Nonetheless, it was established that high self-esteem positively correlated with scholastic attainment and is based on the individual's evaluation of the discrepancy between self-image and the ideal self and depends upon the extent to which the individual cares about this discrepancy Rogers [1980]. However, Reasoner [2006] postulates that a healthy self-esteem stems from quiet confidence in one's potential that require strong feelings of self-worth and competency. Importantly, he espoused that a healthy self-esteem is developed from within and that children just cannot be handed self-esteem.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE:

2.0. Introduction

The process of exploring the phenomenal impact of formal and informal assessment on borderline pupils with learning difficulties began with literature search of assessment, curriculum related literature and self-esteem issues. This took the form of World Wide Web search for journals, books, reports newspaper and magazine articles and periodicals. The search yielded sizeable amounts of educational, psychological and generic articles on self esteem and assessment literature, which was very useful in developing my understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

This chapter which is divided into two parts is the overall bridge between the theoretical and empirical issues that are raised by the review of literature concerning relationships between assessment and pupils' self-esteem. In these two parts, I discuss the theories and concepts underpinning the study. The first of the two chapters, [chapter two] consists of theories and concepts about self-esteem, include Emler's [2003] notion of self-esteem, the California Task Force [1989] on self-esteem, Maslow's [1970] hierarchy of needs and Rogers' [1980] concept of 'self' among others. Also discussed are: the importance of language, the education acts and arguments about the curriculum.

Chapter three concerns learning and assessment literature review. The chapter further discusses the convergence of these theories and how they are potentially seen to be helpful in understanding the pupils' and educators' views and attitudes towards effects of assessment practices on pupils' self- esteem. However, before I embark on the literature review in earnest, I am obligated to comment first on the theoretical framework adopted.

Due to the combination of questions being explored, there are no established or obvious theoretical frameworks within a methodological body of literature that can easily be exploited. The work being undertaken draws from sociological, psychological, and educational perspectives. However, I am fortunate that there are vast amounts of research on assessment

and learning, [Black and William, 2003; Black, 1997; Crooks, 1988; Garfield, 1994] among others that I intend to explore for the good of this research. Equally so, there are large amounts of research articles focusing on self-esteem. But, because few studies directly address the combination of themes in the question, it has been necessary to draw on research from diverse areas of studies covering a number of these issues that have a direct bearing on this research. For this reason, the literature review section will draw from literature related to the study in the following key areas: curriculum, various types of assessment, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, language and language deficit, as well as self-esteem and learning theories.

2.1. The Purpose of Literature Review?

There are many purposes for conducting a literature review [Hart 2000]. ‘The literature review has no single purpose. Its purpose will be largely dependent upon the type of research that you have intended to do’ [ibid, 2000, p. 173]. Some of the most common purposes have been listed below.

- Holistic demonstration of skills and intellectual capabilities and scholarship of the research student.
- Show a critical awareness of previous work and how it relates to current work.
- Help the reader to understand the problem that was explored.
- Give perspective to the work, to help orient the reader towards the rest of the thesis.

[Hart 2000]

Philips and Pugh [2005] argue that researchers write the literature review in order to:

...demonstrate that you have a fully professional grasp of the background theory to your subject. ...that you have something to say about your fellow professionals that you would want them to listen to. So organizing the material in an interesting and useful way, evaluating the contributions of others [and justifying the criticisms of course], identifying trends in research activity, defining areas of theoretical and empirical weakness, are all key activities by which you would demonstrate that you had a professional command of the background theory. [p.57]

On the other hand, Hart [2000] defines literature review as:

the selection of available documents [both published and unpublished] on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed. [p.13]

Furthermore, Hart [ibid] argues literature review is ‘about evaluating the logical coherence of theories, methodologies and findings in a context of informed scholarship’ [p.44].

However, Patton [1990] argues that review of literature can help focus the study as other people’s work may help shed some insight on similar approaches. Furthermore, Patton [ibid] argues, ‘reviewing the literature can present a quandary in qualitative inquiry because it may bias the researcher’s thinking and reduce openness to whatever emerges in the field’ [p. 163]. Thus, a literature review may not take place until after data collection. None the less, Patton [ibid] suggests, ‘the literature review may go on simultaneously with field work, permitting a creative interplay among the processes of data collection, literature review and researcher introspection’ [p. 163]. For this research study, I chose to go with the latter because I felt that literature review could inform and guide the data collection phase.

2.2. The Methodology for the Literature Search

According to Hart [2000] ‘research can generally be classified according to its design features and its intended outcomes’ [p. 44]. Therefore, firstly, my literature search focused mainly on types of particular research since, ‘the bulk of research in the social science is aimed at exploring or describing the occurrences [or non-occurrence of some phenomenon]’ [ibid]. As such, aims of a particular research will be relevant to provide understanding and informed selection of relevant empirical research. For the purpose of this research, literature search will draw from empirical published and unpublished works, books, varied research journals, newspapers and magazines.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the concept of assessment and its effects on self-esteem seem to be under-researched especially in the areas of special needs perspective. Therefore, I investigate this conjecture examining a representative sample from a normal English language class to explore what effects teacher assessment, feedback and comments have on individual pupils’ self-esteem -especially pupils who have borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies. Although our understanding of the effects of assessment on self-esteem is limited, recent articles [Seligman, 1995b, Emler, 2001, Baumeister, 2001] have shown that there is no common consensus on what is and what shapes this phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE:

On the contrary, other publications [Steinem, 1994; The California Task Force 1998] have heralded lack of self-esteem as the 'root cause' of undesired social events in our society. It is also argued by such writers that, children who have a history of learning failure will approach new situations with an expectation to fail. Thus, the relation between self-esteem and failure is two-way: failure can lead to low self-esteem and a low self-esteem can lead to failure.

As such, the following literature search chapter will attempt to delve deeper for better understanding of this remarkable phenomenon.

2.3. Key words for Searching:

Part one of this literature search uses the following key terms for searching: learning difficulties- dyslexia, attention deficit disorders [ADHD], language and language deficiencies, self-esteem, locus of control self-actualization concepts, self-concept, and self-image. Part two of this chapter addresses assessment regimes [Summative, formative, diagnostic, authentic or peer assessment and classroom] and curriculum among others.

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND SELF-ESTEEM CONCEPT

2.4. Introduction

Piaget [1980] argues that all children have ‘critical’ periods when they are most responsive to learning. That all children develop via a universal sequence of stages from physical control through to abstract concepts. However, there is a group of pupils who fail to realize their full potential despite going through their milestones just like any other children. These children experience difficulties with learning and are considered to be pupils with specific learning difficulties or dyslexia. According to Steinem, 1994, Wells, [online] such pupils present a quandary of challenges that may eventually lead to low self-esteem.

However, Coles [1989] argues that there is anguish and embarrassment of persistent learning failure by postulating that educational difficulties are shaped by political, economic and cultural factors. According to Apple [1979], the content of the curriculum continues to be a source of social conflict. Apple [1979] contends that, politics and values keep entering into curriculum deliberations, creating difficulties not easily dealt with under the rubrics of management ideologies. Consequently, accordingly Coles [1989], schools as organisations embedded in social and economic contexts, have a tendency to explain failure by labelling the child ‘learning disabled’. In United States of America for instance, this term is used to denote problems described as having specific learning difficulties [dyslexia] [Pumfrey and Reason, 2001].

To do justice to Cole’s [1989] assertions, there is need to explore the constructs of learning difficulties commonly manifested by pupils. In doing so, I start by exploring learning difficulties, spell out my focus and proceed to issues in learning difficulties. Also explored in this section of the chapter are the links between concepts of learning, as its purpose, self-esteem and learning difficulties before moving to types of assessments and curriculum issues in part two which concludes with a summary of key issues and empirical questions.

2.5. Dyslexia

Stipulatively, dyslexia, is defined as a specific learning disability with a biological or experiential origin, with one of the experiential causes being inexplicit teaching, importantly teaching that fails to appreciate the student's problems in understanding concepts expressed in particular ways [Marcel, 1978]. However, Pennington [1999] contends that there is no 'gene for dyslexia'. For Gayan and Olson [2001] the degree of genetic influence on individual differences in any population depends partly on the range of environmental influences. But, Kerr [2001] contends that attitudes and beliefs manifested by teachers and providers in adult in basic education show very considerable confusion and uncertainty as to what dyslexia might be, how it manifests, what to do about it and even whether it existed at all; while some teachers have argued that dyslexia has become a diagnosis label of convenience [McGuinness, 1998]. For Curtin et al., [2001] postulate that dyslexia might be explained as outcomes of teaching method and strategic choice, not as outcomes of biological constraint.

Nonetheless, the British Dyslexia Institute reference made estimates, based on government-sponsored studies, that 10% of children have some degree of dyslexia while about 4% are affected severely and need significant help. The institute further contends that boys appear to be affected more than girls [ratio 4:1] [online] other researchers consider this estimation to be a conservative one as the numbers are lower than what is being experienced.

For Pumfrey and Reason [1991]:

...in terms of their ability to become literate, pupils with SpLD have much in common with other pupils; but they also manifest a number of differences in their abilities and attainments that are pedagogically important [, p. 113].

In an attempt to better understand the meaning of SpLD, the researcher looked at other dyslexia definitions and found the following.

The World Federation of Neurologists, [1968] defined Specific Developmental Dyslexia as:

A disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instructions, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity. It is dependent upon fundamental cognitive disabilities, which are frequently of constitutional origin [World Federation of Neurologists, 1968].

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For the British Dyslexia Association:

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which results in a significant and persistent difficulty with reading, spelling, written prose, and sometimes arithmetic. It occurs in spite of normal teaching and is independent of socio-cultural background or intelligence [British Dyslexia Association].

Nonetheless, Kirk et al., [1993] argue that remedial education observes that, the term dyslexia is overused which gives an inaccurate impression that everyone with a reading or literacy problem has dyslexia. The overuse of the term may reflect negatively and perhaps encourage both mistaken diagnoses by practitioners. Nevertheless, for Habib [2000], the evidence for dyslexia is problematic since the actual mechanics are mysterious and currently still remains the subject of intense research endeavours.

However, according to [Edwards, 1990] dyslexia is not readily accepted by some teachers and parents. Thus:

A failure by teachers to accept the existence of dyslexia was coupled with a readiness to label the pupils as disruptive and/or 'dim'... The boys...are reported as having experienced four groups of adverse responses from teachers: unfair treatment/discrimination, inadequate help and humiliation [ibid, p. iv].

Edwards, [ibid] further argues that the pupils' emotional reactions include truancy, psychosomatic pains, isolation, alienation from peers, a failure of communication with family, lack of confidence, self-doubt and denigration, competitiveness disorders, sensitivity to criticism and behaviour problems [p. iv].

Conversely, Rutter [1995] contends, through systematic hard work, many children with dyslexia learn to read in an acceptable and functional way, although they are more likely as adults to read at slower speeds than normal...dyslexia in other words, must be seen within a lifelong context similarly to ADHD. Nonetheless, dyslexia, empirical evidence suggests that dyslexia is independent of intelligence: there is not necessarily any relationship between literacy and intelligence [Paulesu et al, 2001]. However, it is more easily detected in those with average and above average intelligence because of the obvious difference between their literacy skills and their intelligence and abilities in other spheres.

2.6. Learning Difficulties

Baumel, [online] defined learning difficulties as: ‘A learning disability that affects the way kids of average to above average intelligence receive, process, or express information and lasts throughout life. It impacts the ability to learn the basic skills of reading, writing, or math’.

The Department of Health [2001] states that: ‘In the case of people with mild/moderate learning disabilities, lower estimates suggest a prevalence rate of around 25 per 1000 population- some 1.2 million people in England’ [p.15]. There have been other estimates of prevalence of learning disabilities that are similar to 2.5% suggested by the Health Department [2001]. Emerson et al., [2001] suggested that the prevalence was between 2.5% and 3%; while The World Health Organization [1985] put the estimates for children in industrialized countries at 2%-3%. However, it is worth noting that these estimate figures cannot be accepted uncritically.

2.7. The Focus of the Research

Although the literature search will consider specific learning difficulties to inform discussions, the focus of this research is on pupils who have borderline learning difficulties, learning in mixed ability English classes. [See the research design; chapter 4]. These pupils may or may not have language deficiencies. As stated in the first chapter, because very often, pupils who are operating at learning levels just above the ‘certification’ level [see the education act section] are missed out in the initial screening process.

Many of the children who have this need are missed at the early screening stages because they may have managed to achieve reading ages that are above the cut-off levels designed by the tester. In no way is the use of a simple normative reading or spelling test sufficient to diagnose in depth those areas of communication that are likely to increase in difficulty as the child advances through the school [Pumfrey and Reason, 2001, p.238].

Thus, the current screening system may be ideal for screening weaknesses in the basic subject areas for specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia but not for other minor learning difficulties. Consequently, such pupils are not considered or catered for in the planning provisions and so; the overt denials by institutions deny these pupils learning support that would assist with provisions such as scaffolding, turning them into slow learners. These pupils may then turn to mischief, truancy and are most likely to be ridiculed by peers. Although

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specific learning difficulties cannot be prevented, the impact of some educational difficulties can, by prompt diagnosis and early intervention, be alleviated through appropriate teaching and support.

With contestable figures of students [1/5 girls and 1/3 boys] estimated to be dyslexic and the advent of high stakes orientated assessment, there is danger that more and more such pupils will be 'sacrificial lambs'. The system will not cater adequately for their individual demands prompting such pupils to leave school without any certificates. There is considerable consensus among researchers that pupils who are marginally engaged in learning especially those perceived as 'less able' cease to even try. By refusing to try, they save themselves from possible failure and so are able to 'retain the last vestiges of a crumbling dignity' [Hargreaves 1982, p.64]. For Vygotsky [1987], pupils with learning difficulties appear to rely heavily on the teacher who takes up the scaffolding role. Provision for this benign and very important aspect for information transferability is missing from the current assessment set up as education is result oriented, leaving the struggling pupils 'to their own devices'.

It has also been ascertained by research that pupils with learning disabilities such as dyslexia are significantly less likely to graduate from high school and significantly more likely to be placed in juvenile detention facilities [Winters, 1997; Crawford, 1996]. For example, students with dyslexia and/or Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD] are typically said to have average to above average intellectual potential and can succeed in school. However, an information processing dysfunction limits their ability to use information successfully in one or more academic areas [Elbro, 1996; Paulesu et al., 1996].

On the other hand, Duvner, [1994] in Kuivsberg et al., [1999, p. 43] argues, 'if development includes cognition, attention, perception, motor skills, behaviour, social relations, oral and written communication, children with dyslexia have problems with written and to some degree, with oral communication'. However, Rutter, [1995] notes that after all, it is not all gloom and doom as:

Through systematic hard work many children with dyslexia learn to read in an acceptable and functional way, although they are more likely as adults to read at slower speed than normal and may have spelling. Dyslexia, in other words, must be seen within a lifelong context similarly to ADHD.

It is worth noting that Kuivsberg et al., [1999] write, ‘no cures are yet available to remove every trait of any of these disorders’ [p.42]. So, the better trained the staff, the greater the likelihood of educational success it seems.

2.8. What is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD]?

According to Kewley [1999], ‘AD/HD is still thought of as ‘hyperactivity’ [or hyperkinesis] in some circles. But on the contrary, it has now been realised that ‘hyperactivity is but one of three core AD/HD symptoms; the others-impulsiveness and inattentiveness- are in their own way equally important’ [p.1]. The broader concept of AD/HD takes into account the fact that other coexisting conditions occur frequently with AD/HD adding to the child’s degree of impairment [ibid].

Therefore, children with AD/HD present a wide range of unique difficulties. The other coexisting conditions that may manifest in children with AD/HD may include the following

- Excessively oppositional behaviour
- Depression
- Specific learning difficulties
- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Low self-esteem [Kewley 1999, p. 1].

AD/HD is an internationally recognised condition of brain dysfunction. According to Kewley [ibid], individuals manifesting this condition:

...have difficulties with attention and /or hyperactivity and /or impulsiveness, which are so pervasive and persistent that they significantly interfere with everyday life. Such problems give rise to educational, behavioural and other difficulties, usually showing up in early childhood...a diagnosis of AD/HD is a clinical diagnosis- there being no blood test or scan that is diagnostic [p.11].

Further, Kewley [1999] argues that AD/HD ‘is often familial- it appears that genetics and biology tend to create a vulnerability that can be compounded by difficulties in the child’s environment’ [ibid].

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE:

For Baumel [online], 'Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder [AD/HD] is a neurobehavioral disorder that affects an estimated 3-7 percent of the school age population'. Baumel [ibid], further argues 'a child who is a 9-year-old may act more like a 6-year-old in his ability to focus and use self-control... finds it hard... to sit and concentrate on instruction' [online].

These pupils' behaviour sometimes disrupts the smooth running of lessons. However, the irony is that these pupils do not plan to disrupt lessons but due to the nature beyond their control, are found appending to the teacher's problems. The pupils appear to be very fidgety, will not sit still, are always wriggling or giggling, naughty and restless and who appear to be growing more rude and wild [as evidenced by a school report on child S-. of R-. school], [See appendix F] are branded trouble makers and are sometimes excluded from school.

Arguing on similar circumstances Kuivsberg et al., [1999], assert that this could be, due to the coexistence between dyslexia and ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorders] known as 'comorbidity' and outline the problems that result from these disorders. They [ibid] further postulate that the coexistence [comorbidity] frequently co-occur and affect almost all developmental areas. Kuivsberg et al, [1999] claim that descriptions of hyperactive children were reported by Still [1902] as a hereditary phenomenon of brain abnormalities often affecting several members of the same family. Further, Kuivsberg et al, [1999] describe comorbidity and the consequences of the coexistence of dyslexia and ADHD. Kuivsberg et al., argue: 'comorbidity is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more unrelated conditions or disorders' [p.42]. Kuivsberg et al., [ibid] however contend that it is undisputable that a child's development could be hampered by two or more disorders, such as the coexistence of dyslexia and ADHD.

Nonetheless, Kuivsberg et al., [ibid] assert:

These are developmental disorders, in both of which the symptoms change with age [Barkley, 1990; Hoisen and Lundberg, 1997] and some children may be severely affected, some moderately, others mildly. Both disorders affect approximately 5% of school-age children; four boys for every girl.

2.9. How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

But according to Baumel [online] diagnosis of ADHD is not a straight forward exercise. ‘There are no medical tests, such as blood tests or electrical imaging [such as MRI] that diagnose AD/HD’ Baumel, [online]. ‘Assessment is basically a questionnaire of fairly ‘normal’ behaviour criteria that is subject to bias conclusions and may be interpreted differently’ [ibid]. ‘Behaviour criteria from DSM-IV [assessment questionnaire] are used to make the determination of AD/HD’ [Baumel [ibid]. Further, Baumel [online], contends that there are discrepancies in the instrument as, ‘some of the behaviour is seen more often at certain periods of child development and behaviour may vary for boys and girls’ [Baumel, online]. As can be appreciated, the inconsistencies of the instrument make the diagnosis unreliable and very subjective. Thus Baumel argues:

Because of inconsistencies in diagnosis by medical professionals, the American Academy of Paediatrics’ [AAP] came out with its guidelines in May 2000. They recommend a comprehensive assessment that relies on direct information from parents [or caregivers] and the classroom teacher [or other school professional] using developmental history, rating scales, observations, and available test results. Information from all of the sources is reviewed carefully. The clinician has to make a judgment about whether the symptoms of AD/HD impair academic achievement, classroom performance, family and social relationships, independent functioning, self-esteem, leisure activities, and/or self-care. So it usually takes two or more visits to the clinician before a diagnosis can be made [Baumel, online].

Accordingly, Baumel [ibid] further contends, ‘The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV [DSM-IV], published by the American Psychiatric Association, describes three subtypes of AD/HD:

- Inattentive: - can't seem to get focused or stay focused on a task or activity
- Hyperactive-impulsive: - very active and often acts without thinking
- Combined: - inattentive, impulsive, and too active’ [Baumel, on line]

2.9.1 ADHD Diagnosis

Observations for ADHD ‘diagnosis,’ generally start before age 7. Baumel, [online], makes it clear that ADHD is not an intelligent issue but rather a purely behavioural perspective. ‘...symptoms need to be present in at least two places, e.g., at school, home, community, childcare setting, and for at least 6 months: they should occur more often and be more severe than for other kids of the same age or developmental level’ [ibid, online]. Notably, children

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE:

with AD/HD may be delayed by as much as 30 percent of their actual age in their ability to pay attention and remember. However, 'it doesn't mean that the child's intelligence is any less; it's just the ability to control impulses that's affected,' Baumel [online]. Further, Baumel [ibid] contends that children with AD/HD may be eligible under 'specific learning disability' since attention problems may be the cause of significant academic difficulties. Or they may qualify as 'emotionally disturbed' if their social or emotional behaviour negatively affect their ability to learn [ibid]. as can be seen, pupils diagnosed as being affected by ADHD are entitled to appropriate assistance as dictated by their condition. This is unlike pupils with borderline learning difficulties who are left to endure in silence.

Below are some of the symptoms that may manifest in pupils with ADHD:

- Difficulty to pay close attention to details
- May appear inattentive when spoken to directly
- Very easy distractibility
- Finds it difficult to organize and complete task
- Fidgets with hands and feet; has difficulty concentrating on tasks
- Fails to settle, inappropriately climbs excessively
- Talks continually
- Interrupts conversations and intrudes upon other fellow pupils' games
- Resents involvement in tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Does things that are dangerous without thinking about possible outcomes

[Kuivsberg et al., 1999, Baumel, online; accessed 23/04/07]

However, Goldstein [online] advocates for the need of a concerted effort in order to maximise the help offered to pupils with such a condition. Thus Goldstein [ibid] argues:

...it is important for parents to understand that when kids struggle emotionally, behaviourally, or developmentally it is likely they may experience difficulty in a number of important life activities. The process of assessment is not just to count symptoms and proclaim diagnoses but to understand a child's strengths, as well as weaknesses, in ways that assist in providing support and help.

2.10. ADHD and Its Influence on Self-Esteem and Learning

Pumfrey and Reason [1991] argue that, when children fail to achieve educational progress as expected, family members particularly parents and the child concerned have to accommodate the tensions and conflicts that can arise. Citing Ravenette [1979], Pumfrey and Reason [ibid]

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE:

argue that because of the stigma of being Dyslexic, a child /pupil could be placed in a permanent role of being 'disabled'. In unison, Creswell [1998, p. 19] noted:

Knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way; and knowledge evolves, emerges, and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied.

Pumfrey and Reason [1991] further argue that this labelling can lead to misunderstandings between the family and the school if discussion centres on the existence of a condition rather than agreed and shared methods of interventions. Conversely, Rogers [1959] postulates that:

Because the child's behaviour by its parents and others are sometimes positive and at times negative, the child learns to differentiate between actions and feelings that are worthy [approved] and those that are unworthy [disproved] [p. 467]

Rogers, [ibid] further argues that unworthy experiences tend to be excluded from the 'self' concept even though they are organismically valid. This asserts the idea that, although the 'self' possesses the inherent tendency to actualise themselves, they are subject to strong influences from the environment and especially from the social environment. Rogers [1987, p.36] alludes to the notion that, childhood circumstances sometimes inhibit or obscure a person's tendency to actualisation which could be the case with 'Dyslexic' labelled children. On the other hand, contrary to Miles [1988] cited by Pumfrey and Reason [1991] take a different view. Miles [ibid] espouses that the term 'Dyslexia' assists parents and the child to map occurrences they know to exist. The argument put forward by Miles is that, if the child's difficulties are established, this removes the sense of self-blame and he/she sees this as a cornerstone for counselling both children and parents. Somerville and Leach [1988] in Pumfrey and Reason [1991, p. 69] warn against the perpetuation of programmes, including counselling, that receive favourable reports from consumers but lack objective evidence of effectiveness.

Suggested solutions included courses that meet learning needs of all students. It can be argued that, healthier care in program selection for students whose unique learning needs are outside of the traditional academic model is a starting point. Of critical importance though, is the training of staff, to teach these pupils. Mischief makers too often become repeat offenders because they are not able to alter the behaviours that got them in trouble in the first place. Experience has also proved that, when a teacher does not realize a pupil is unable to follow the

chain of events that led to an action [as too often quickly explained by the teachers], ‘due to naughtiness’, both the pupil and the teacher fail. The pupil can become stalled in the downward spiral thereby jeopardising the pupils’ learning and future. The ripple effects are that the teacher may lose the chance to really help the pupil turn his or her life in a more positive direction as he /she will be expelled from school.

Any learning situation is generally followed by some kind of assessment be it formal or informal. The general consensus in assessment is that learners need to engage with explicit and implicit standards and to internalise assessment language and the implications of the criteria. However, in order for one to appreciate the reasons why certain types of assessment regimes are prevalent in English and Welsh schools, a brief look at the Education Acts that govern learning is essential.

2.11.0. Learning Difficulties Provisions

2.11.1. The Education Acts

The Education Act [1981] and the Education Reform Act 1988 [ERA 1988] govern the conduct of assessments. The Education Reform Act [ERA 1988] requires schools to adopt a National Curriculum. Commenting on this development, Gewirtz et al., [1995], argues that a number of teachers regard this curriculum as incompatible with mixed ability teaching [p. 576]. Gewirtz [ibid] contends that this is because of its [the curriculum] levelled nature and related to this, the introduction of a tiered examination system. None the less, Pumfrey and Reason [1991] argue that, under the Education Act 1981, there are two groups of children with special needs. The first small group that consists of children with special needs that calls for the authority to determine the special provision and to make a statement. For the second group, it is necessary for the authority to determine the special provision and therefore no statement was required. Pumfrey and Reason [ibid] further argue that, it was the second group that were the responsibility of the governors of an ordinary school that were charged in the 1981 Act to use ‘their best endeavours’ to meet the pupils’ needs in the ordinary school. However, in both cases, dyslexic pupils were involved and a full multidisciplinary assessment was required by the act before authority could make a decision. Section 7 of the same act also requires parents to see that their child is educated according to his / her age, ability and aptitude and with regard

to any special educational needs that he or she has. It appears though that, it is this group of pupils who are marginalised as no one seem to really know what to do about their quandary.

When an assessment has been done and pupils confirmed as being dyslexic, their curriculum may be modified or completely changed. Parents and pupils will know the causes of the pupils' failures. The need for concessions in examinations would have to be evident if they apply to his/her handicap and another provision would be identified and recorded in a statement [Pumfrey and Reason 1991]. However, the fundamental question is how many parents and teachers have read and understood the provisions of the 1981 Education Act? How many know where to go, who to talk to for the necessary interventions. For, pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties [SpLD] have to be taught to master the many elementary skills that most children acquire with relatively little difficulty in their progress towards becoming literate and numerate. 'Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs under the 1981 Education Act require educational, psychological and medical advice as well as administrative involvement', [Pumfrey and Reason ,1991 p. 216].

2.11.2.

2.12.0. The Self-Esteem Phenomenon

2.12.1. Introduction

The introductory chapter explored self-esteem problems and established that there is no consensus regarding this phenomenon and how it affects the way we feel. It was evident that, important differences exist between supporters of the concept and antagonists. Some writers believe that the self-esteem concept is responsible for a lot of social ills such as drug abuse, prostitution; unwanted teenage pregnancies and failure to succeed in school work [The California task force, 1998]. Other writers have argued that one's self-esteem can be improved although doing so in an artificial way will be like building castles in the sand [Seligman 1995b], while for Lloyd and Sullivan [2003] low self-esteem is widely recognised as a factor associated with poor educational attainment and non-participation in education and training.

It has been postulated that all human beings have a mirror image of themselves known as self-concept [Maines and Robinson, 1998, Maslow, 1970, Erickson, 1964]. According to DfES

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[2005b], certain emotions are claimed to promote learning well-being, feeling valued, feeling safe] while others do not [frustration, anger]. Thus the DfES [ibid] has made emotion a key focus for its educational strategies, informing teachers that intelligent handling of emotions and empathy with others are inextricably linked to good citizenship, work success, inclusion and social cohesion.

Thus, 'a person's self-concept is his perception of his unique characteristics such as appearance, ability, temperament, physique, attitudes and beliefs' [Maines and Robinson, 1998, p.4]. These variables influence one's position in society and the value to and relationships with other people. The development of self-concept is a continuous process that begins with the baby's interactions with, first family and later the outside world. However, 'on entering school relationships are began with new 'significant' others' [ibid, p. 4].

For Rogers, [1983] there are differences between the 'self' and 'self-concept'. Self-concept comprises self-perceptions and the value attached to those perceptions. The self-concept is often incongruent with the organismic self because it is largely dependent on attitudes and values of 'significant others'. The individual's perception is his/her reality and behaviour is in response to perception of an experience or situation. Conversely, Branden [online], contends, '...to have greater self-awareness or understanding means to have a better grasp of reality'.

Thus, Rogers's notion [1983] of self-concept is built on the assumption that self-concept is learned. Accordingly, an unhealthy self-conceptualisation with feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, failure, worthlessness and insecurity can therefore be unlearned or replaced, with learned feelings of worth, competence, adequacy and confidence. Rogers [ibid] argues:

The individual has within him vast resources for self-understanding, for self-understanding, for altering his self-concept, his attitudes, and his self-directed behaviour...and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitate psychological attitudes can be provided [p. 15].

For Rogers [1951] the core attitudes necessary to facilitate change in the self-concept are warmth, respect and acceptance, especially from those who are significant 'others' in the life of the individual. Accordingly, Rogers [ibid] contends that, self-concept has three aspects,

namely, self image, ideal self and self-esteem. These concepts will be discussed simultaneously under respective headings starting with self-esteem.

2.12.2. Self-Esteem

For Emler [2001], the definition of self-esteem is difficult to pin down. Emler [ibid] postulates that 'self esteem is a favourable opinion of oneself, [p. 4]. While James [1890] contends that self-esteem, 'is success divided by pretensions [p. 311]'. On the other hand, Branden [2006] contends:

Self esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. It is confidence in the efficacy of our mind, in our ability to think. By extension, it is our ability to learn, to make appropriate choices and decisions and respond effectively to change. It is also the experience that successes, achievement, fulfilment, happiness, are right and natural for us.

Thus, proponents of self esteem argue that positive self-esteem entails enjoying and accepting who one is. Berenblatt and Berenblatt, [1994] contend that high or positive self-esteem is: a feeling of total acceptance and love for oneself as one is; respecting and valuing oneself as a worthwhile human being; honestly seeing oneself good and not-so-good points; taking care of and nurturing oneself so one can become all one is capable of being.

Conversely, Coppersmith [1967] postulates that self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness, expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards him / herself. Thus, self esteem is seen as essentially evaluative, referring to the extent to which the individual likes or accepts him or herself. Teachers seem to have a different view of what self-esteem is. The table below summarises characteristics of high and low self-esteem prevalent in schools.

Table 2. 1. Characteristics of pupils with high and low self-esteem

HIGH SELF-ESTEEM	LOW SELF-ESTEEM
Confidence /assured/self-reliant	Lack confidence or anxious; need to please; over react to situations.
Independent learner	Continual need for reassurance/guidance
Stand up for themselves	Get teased, bullied or ignored
Can show initiative and leadership	Over-assertive, aggressive; need to dominate others.
Can take responsibility for own behaviour	Full of excuses for behaviour; blame others; feel that they are unfairly treated
Work/play well with others	Isolated or unpopular
Listen well to peers and adults	No attention for others
Generally appropriate and co-operative behaviour	Attention seeking; reassurance seeking
Others listen to them	Ignored
Can cope with frustration	React badly to frustration
Can learn from failure	Easily give up; destroy work; feel stupid
Accept appropriate criticism	Overwhelmed by criticism; ignore /deny criticism
Realistic view of themselves and their abilities.	Unrealistic views of themselves and their abilities
Gain attention appropriately	Gain attention inappropriately; class clown or need to impress others
Able to respond flexibility and deal with changes	Lack of flexibility and inability to deal with disappointment
Able to work at tasks	Distract attention away from work
Able to read/respond to social signals	Inability to read social signals
Emotions-a response to the present	Emotions dominated by past events

[Source: Ayers et al., 1995, p.73]

Dweck [1999] argues ‘self-esteem is too often seen as a thing that children have or don’t have, where having it leads to good things and not having it leads to bad things, [p.127]. For Dweck [ibid], these views result from a limited view of how self-esteem is instilled. Thus Dweck [1999] postulates ‘these beliefs lead us as adults to lie to children...to exaggerate positives, or to sugar –coat negative information entirely’ [p.127]. The picture painted to children seems to suggest that children require constant success to feel good and that failures send a negative message about intelligence and work. Rather, the reality of life dictates that setbacks and failures are informative and challenging [Dweck, ibid].

However, Emler [2001] argues:

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The largest single source of variations in self-esteem is genetic, at least one third of the variations are parents either directly or indirectly, who continue to be potent influences in later life. These include among others circumstances, experiences and conditions [p. 48].

According to Branden's [2006] definition, self-esteem is a combination of everything that affects our lives both intrinsically and extrinsically. Furthermore, Branden [ibid], postulates that there are numerous factors that affect our self-esteem. Thus, self-esteem judgments are based on value indicators such as attitudes, beliefs, or interests [ibid]. However, Branden asserts that self-esteem is closely related to the concept of self image that seems to play a major role in how we feel.

2.12.3. Self- Image



Wagner [online]

According to Anderson and Bourke [2000] self-esteem, locus of control and self-efficacy are closely related phenomena, 'but, self-efficacy is more directed at specific tasks for subjects. It refers to how capable the learner feels of succeeding in a particular task or type of task. It is characterised as 'I can' versus I can't' [p. 35]. Anderson and Bourke [ibid] further postulate that it is learned response over a long period through the learner's multiple experiences of

positive and negative outcomes. ‘...the more a student experiences failure in relation to a type of task the more likely it is that they will become convinced of not being able to succeed’ [p.67]. The student develops a condition known as ‘learned helplessness’ [ibid]. These feelings have a massive boost or vice versa on individuals’ motivation drives.

2.13. Self-Esteem Relationship to Motivation and Learning

For Ecclestone [2005], there is a growing perception that the UK has a cultural problem of poor motivation for learning, while ideas about motivation remain confused, particularly in relation to their implications for teaching and formative assessment. Ecclestone [ibid] further argues that confusion arises from a long running distinction in psychology between:

- Behaviourist perspectives that emphasise extrinsic motives based on external goals, performance rewards and short-term goals;
- Humanist perspectives that offer a hierarchy of intrinsic motives for learning, based on the idea that people [particularly adults] have an innate desire to learn and develop; and
- Cognitive perspectives that emphasise learners’ tendencies to adopt preferred learning styles, or strategies, so that motivation increases if learners can work within their preferred styles [p. 77].

There is empirical evidence linking self-esteem to motivation and learning, for example, [Branden 1994; Steinem 1998 and California Task Force 1998]. Emler [2001] contends that real successes and failures matter in building or diminishing one’s self-esteem. Most importantly, Emler [ibid], argues: ‘appearance also matters, but not remotely so much as beliefs about appearance. It is clear that self-esteem is not simply the sum of the judgements one makes about oneself. It shapes those judgements’ [p. 48]. On the contrary, Branden [1994] argues,

...to attain ‘success’ without attaining positive self-esteem is to be condemned to feeling like an impostor anxiously awaiting exposure, the acclaim of others does not create our self-esteem. Neither does erudition, material possessions, marriage, parenthood, philanthropic endeavours, sexual conquests, or face-lifts. These things can sometimes make us feel better about our selves temporarily or more comfortable in particular situations. But comfort is not self-esteem [on line].

There are varying variables for the possible causal relationship between self-esteem and motivation with regards to learning. Some of the variables lie in one’s self-concept broadly defined, relates to the individual’s perceptions formed through personal experiences and interpretations by significant others and contributions for one’s behaviour. [See self-concept definition]

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For Pumfrey and Reason [2001], ‘there is evidence of a link between self-esteem concept and academic achievement. It is not clear from this literature whether a low self-concept and negative perceptions of self are causes, effects or both of low levels of academic functioning’ [p.67].

Commenting on clinical and remedial implications of research that involved children operationally defined as manifesting reading difficulties with relatively average or good readers; Brayant and Goswami [1990] made three important observations.

1. Children of relatively poor reading ability were found to have lower initial expectations of success, showed greater decrements in their expectations of success following failure. Confidence seemed to easily shaken.
2. poor readers gave up more easily in face of difficulty, [leading to speculation that these children have not discovered that they have the ability to achieve greater than their expectations] according to Brayant and Goswami [ibid], their lack of persistence provided evidence in support of the notion that eroding motivation and confidence increases the probability of future failure.
3. average to good readers tended to attribute their success to the presence of ability [internal locus of control] poor readers on the other hand attributed their success to external causes such as luck and their future to self-perceived lack of competence [Brayant and Goswami, 1990].

It has been established that children who fail to achieve reading skills often develop a lack of confidence in their own ability to succeed. They begin to avoid potentially humiliating situations and refuse to take risks for fear of failure. The consequent negative self-belief may diminish the opportunities to acquire and refine the cognitive strategies that are characteristic of proficient learners [Galbraith and Alexander, 2005]. Conversely, Chapman and Turner, [1997] argue, ‘once children have entered the swamp of negative expectations, lowered motivation and limited practice, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to get back on the road of proficient reading’ [p. 154]. Only when expectations are raised can success be achieved helping children become more self-reflective learners and more interactive in their

learning. ‘A strong desire to succeed is more influential than self-perceptions’ [Elliot et al., 1999, p.87].

12.13. What is learning?

Hergenhahn and Olson [2001] define learning as: ‘a relatively permanent change in behaviour or in behavioural potentiality that results from experience and cannot be attributed to temporal body states such as those induced by illness, fatigue, or drugs’ [pp.6-7]. And, for Crow and Crow [1963], learning involves change, as it is concerned with the acquisition of habits, knowledge and attitudes. It enables individuals to make both personal and social adjustments. However, to achieve desired results in learning, Bruner [1973] suggested that teachers should consider three factors during all learning activities: 1) the nature of the learner; 2) the nature of the knowledge to be learned; 3) the nature of the learning process. These factors stem from the need to make learning enjoyable and interesting to the learner. Failure to achieve this objective, learning is often accompanied by keen sense of displeasure.

It follows therefore, that when teachers plan individual lessons, they take into account factors influencing the ability to learn such as -attitudes, previous experience and background, achievable goals, relevancy of subject matter and learning environment: to name but just a few. However, regardless of how much effort teachers put to involve and cater for pupils’ engagement to learning, sometimes teachers are baffled by queer behaviour manifested by pupils struggling to cope with school demands. These behaviours range from stubbornness to withdrawal from participation in class activities. Some have attributed this behaviour to lack of self-esteem in these students Steinem [1994; The California Task Force 1998; McGivney 2003]. Therefore, to attempt to understand the likely causes of such behaviour, a literature search that links learning and self-esteem was my starting point.

According to a study by Gordon and Grant [2002] a large number of pupils are not enjoying their school days. However, this experience is expected and is common knowledge. The concern provoked; for instance is the fact that, Gordon and Grant [2002] contend that, the most stressful experience by far for young people in school is exam time. One can speculate about the pupils’ feelings during this particular time. But then, one wonders how assessment can be

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taken off the equation as it is part and parcel assessment and learning. Does it not follow that the anxiety and stress these pupils are being subjected to will lead into low self-esteem?

Below are chronicled responses from Gordon and Grant's study on school children's self-esteem:

Today I feel stressed and under pressure. I have to learn so much in such a short time and seem to be getting one test after another. My mum is always telling me to just do my best but I always feel I should do better for her and me. I used to be a happy a cheerful person and now I just pretend [p.71].

I feel bored, depressed and fed up with school, but I am happy, cheerful, lively and on top of the world at home time and lunch time because I hate school but I'm coping very well with work and I am very happy because I can go out to play after school.[m] [p.70]

I am very bored. I wish I didn't have to go to school. School is very depressing, although you learn stuff. The only good thing about it is dinnertime and playtime and home time and that's all [ibid].

From the pupils' accounts, school feels pretty lifeless and dull. Experience has taught me that such pupils are not motivated enough hence the boredom being manifested. In this light, Steinem [1994] argues, 'without that feeling of intrinsic value, its hard for children to survive the process of failing and trying again that precedes an accomplishment...with some sense of intrinsic worth, however, children can survive amazing hardships' [p.81]. Bearing in mind that our children spend much of their time in school, can learning lead to low levels of self-esteem in some pupils, one may wonder?

On the contrary, Mecca et al., [1989], contend that one's high self-esteem means that the person appreciates one's self, and his/her inherent worth. This means having a positive attitude, evaluating one's self highly and being convinced of own abilities, seeing self as competent and in addition, comparing one's self favourably with others. Nevertheless, Branden [2006] contends that, although teachers, parents and other adults can make 'the roads to self- esteem easier or harder, they cannot determine the ultimate level of the child's self esteem'. But, according to Branden [ibid], the values parents instil in their child are likely to be as important as the influence that can lead a child toward or away from growing self-esteem. For the California Task Force to Promote Self Esteem [1998], school climate plays an important role in the development of the self esteem of students. Schools that target self-

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esteem as a major school goal appear to be ‘more successfully as well as in developing healthy self-esteem among their students’ [p.5] Branden [2006] further argues that , if teachers treat students with respect, avoid ridiculing and other belittling remarks, deal with everyone fairly and justly and project strong benevolent convictions about their students’ potentials, then these teachers are supporting both self-esteem and the process of learning and mastering the challenges. Conversely however, if teachers tried to nurture self-esteem by empty praise that bear no relationship to the students’ actual achievements, -dropping all objective standards, allowing students to believe that uniqueness is the only passport to self-esteem, then, they undermine self-esteem and academic achievements.

For Cooley [1964], the self-concept as a product of social interaction and the notion of ‘looking glass self’ seems more appealing to capture this process of seeing one’s self reflected in the eyes and actions of others. Cooley [ibid] believed that individuals and society are interdependent and that social acts and social norms modify each other. The individual’s self-concept is a personalised construction of meaning, largely determined by what s/he believes others think of him/her. ‘Each to each a looking glass, reflects the other that doth pass’ [Cooley 1964, p.184]. And so, we interact with others in a social context and they act as a mirror to us, a reflection of ourselves. We then subjectively interpret the reflection and form these perceived beliefs and evaluations we build our picture of ourselves.

Arguably therefore, ‘looking glass self’ and symbolic interactionism can assist explain successes and failures of pupils, help with understanding the arenas in which learning takes place. The concepts manifested by ‘looking glass self’ and symbolic interactionism could be used to reflect on the development of school culture, the negative effects of labelling pupils, the way in which learning in school is defined, redefined and negotiated [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1992].

On the contrary, Mead [1964] does not conceive of the mind as a simple mirror of the social environment. Mead [ibid] rejects the notion of the ‘looking-glass self’ as it has subjectivist and objectivist tendencies – subjectivism/objectivism is: ‘one of the leading polarities about which much epistemology and especially the theory of ethics, tends to revolve’ [Blackburn 1994,

p.365]. Rather, Mead [1964] argues that ‘subjects’ become ‘objects’ to themselves via symbolic communication. Thus accordingly, Mead [1964] argues:

The self acts with reference to others and is immediately conscious of the objects about it. In memory it is also re-integrates the self acting as well as the others acted upon. But besides these contents, their actions with reference to the others calls out responses in the individual himself- there is then another ‘me’ criticising, approving i.e., the reflective self [p. 145].

Mead [ibid] saw the ‘self’ as arising in social interaction facilitated by verbal and non-verbal communication. Thus, Mead [1934] postulated that, through being called to account for our action by ‘significant’ then ‘generalized’ others and ultimately ourselves through the medium of an inner dialogue, we may mould a self-theory in an attempt to form sense of our presence in the world. The term ‘significant others’ refers to those persons who are important or who have significance in the development of self-concept. Thus, Mead [1964] sees the individual as interacting not only with others, but also with him/her. ‘Every behaviour commences as an ‘I’ but develops and ends as a ‘me’ as it comes under the influence of societal constraints. ‘I’ provides the propulsion; ‘me’ provides direction’ [Burns 1982, p.18].

Thus, Mead’s [1934] assertions have a massive bearing on how self-esteem is shaped. Mead [ibid] seems to suggest that self-esteem is generated by the ‘I’ and shaped by them and others. Thus, self-esteem is imposed on people/us by significant others. It is these significant others and the environment influence that shape our personalities.

The implications of such interactions result in individuals engaging in constant process of monitoring their actions and social selves, producing a ‘self consciousness’ in the individual and overcoming objectivist tendencies [May 1996].

2.14. Perspectives of Human Behaviour

In terms of human and personality development, ‘self’, ‘I’ and ‘ego’ are central terms used by psychologists to direct behaviour [Ryckman, 1993]. Contemporary theories of learning motivation and development discuss the concept of ‘self’ in order to account for differences in individual experiences. Differences in learning and performance will occur as a function of individual’s ‘ego involvement’ [Ryckman, 1993, p.233]. And so, a brief summery of perspectives of human behaviour -in table form will help shade light on the main paradigms of

human behaviour. The identified perspectives will be discussed in detail under respective paradigms.

2.14.1. Humanists or Phenomenologist

Human behaviour is explained by some theorists [Erikson, 1968; Maslow, 1962, 1970; 1998], in terms of the need to meet basic needs. Maslow [ibid] is associated with the notion of self-actualisation, and is said to be the first humanistic proponent due to his concept of the creative self. Maslow [1970] perceived the creative self as a matter of creative choice. He saw the individual in terms of needs; postulated thus, the lower the needs in the hierarchy the more similar they are to needs of other animals. The needs identified by Maslow [1970] include [in ascending order] physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs and finally self-actualisation.

However, according to Child [2001], Maslow [1970] sees two sets of esteem needs. First there is the desire for competence, achievement, independence and freedom, adequacy and confidence in front of one's fellows,. Secondly, he posits the desire for recognition, reputation and prestige, attention, importance and appreciation by others. The first is the desire for confidence in oneself; the other is a wish for prestige and respect from others. Thwarting of opportunities to achieve desires is said to produce feelings of inferiority, weakness or helplessness [p.56].

Conversely, Maslow [1954] who is the proponent of the theory of a hierarchy of needs believes human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs and that certain lower needs need to be satisfied before higher needs can be satisfied. For Maslow [ibid] the hierarchy is dynamic, suggesting a fluid dominant need. Thus, the dominant need may combine other levels and needs that the hierarchy is affected by prevailing situation and the general culture.

Nonetheless, Maslow [1970] argues that few individuals ever reach their full potential or 'self actualisation point,' for example, a child who has low self-esteem might find it difficult to concentrate on learning tasks or keep up with the rest of the class hence fail to achieve full potential. According to Maslow [1970], self actualising persons:

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have a feeling of belongingness and rootedness, they are satisfied in their love needs, have friends and feel loved and worthy, they have status and place in life and respect from other people, and they have a reasonable feeling of worth and self respect. If we phrase this negatively – in terms of frustration of these basic needs and in terms of pathology – then this is to say that self actualizing people do not [for any length of time] – feel anxiety-ridden, rootless or isolated, nor do they have crippling feelings of inferiority or worthlessness [p. 28].

Maslow [1970] postulated that when individual basic needs are met, rather than being deficiency-motivated, people could become motivated and then be open to a multitude of experience. Accordingly, Maslow [ibid] strongly believed that physiological needs such as safety needs, belonging, and love needs and esteem needs all have to be met before self-actualisation can take place. Further, Maslow [ibid] argued that the introjections of B-values, or being values, signify the emergent ‘self’ has enlarged to include aspects of the world, as well as the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘none self’. For Maslow [1998], these hierarchies have to be met for individuals to develop a measure of their future locus of control. Maslow [ibid] further clarifies that the physical/ safety needs have to be met adequately before self-esteem even becomes an issue [Ayers et al., 1995].

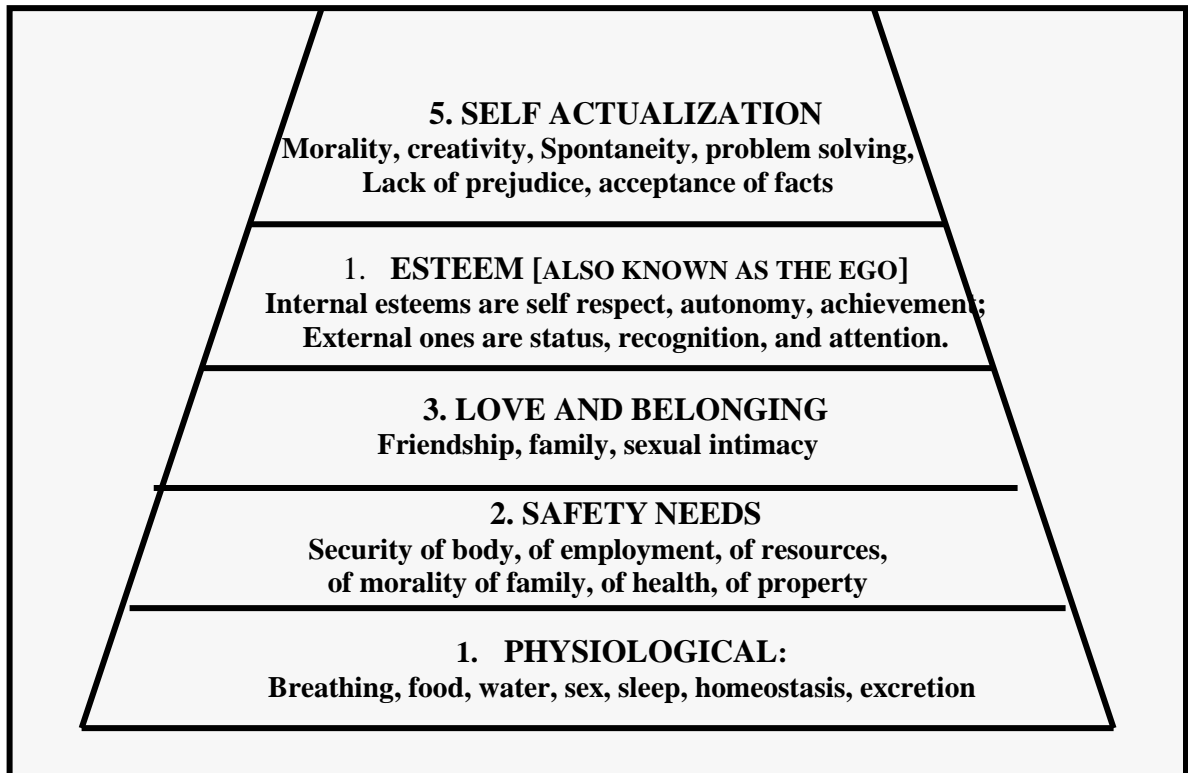
Conversely, Rogers [1961] postulates that, the drive toward self-actualisation may be ‘deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defences [p.35]. Rogers [1961] thus, noticed:

a growth tendency, a drive toward self-actualisation...it is the urge which is evident in all organic and human life-to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature...this tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defences...but it is my belief that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed [p.35.]

It follows therefore, that sometimes, the process of reaching for and getting in touch with our innermost feelings would be difficult and hindered.

The diagram below illustrates a summary of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in pyramid form.

Figure 2.3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid.

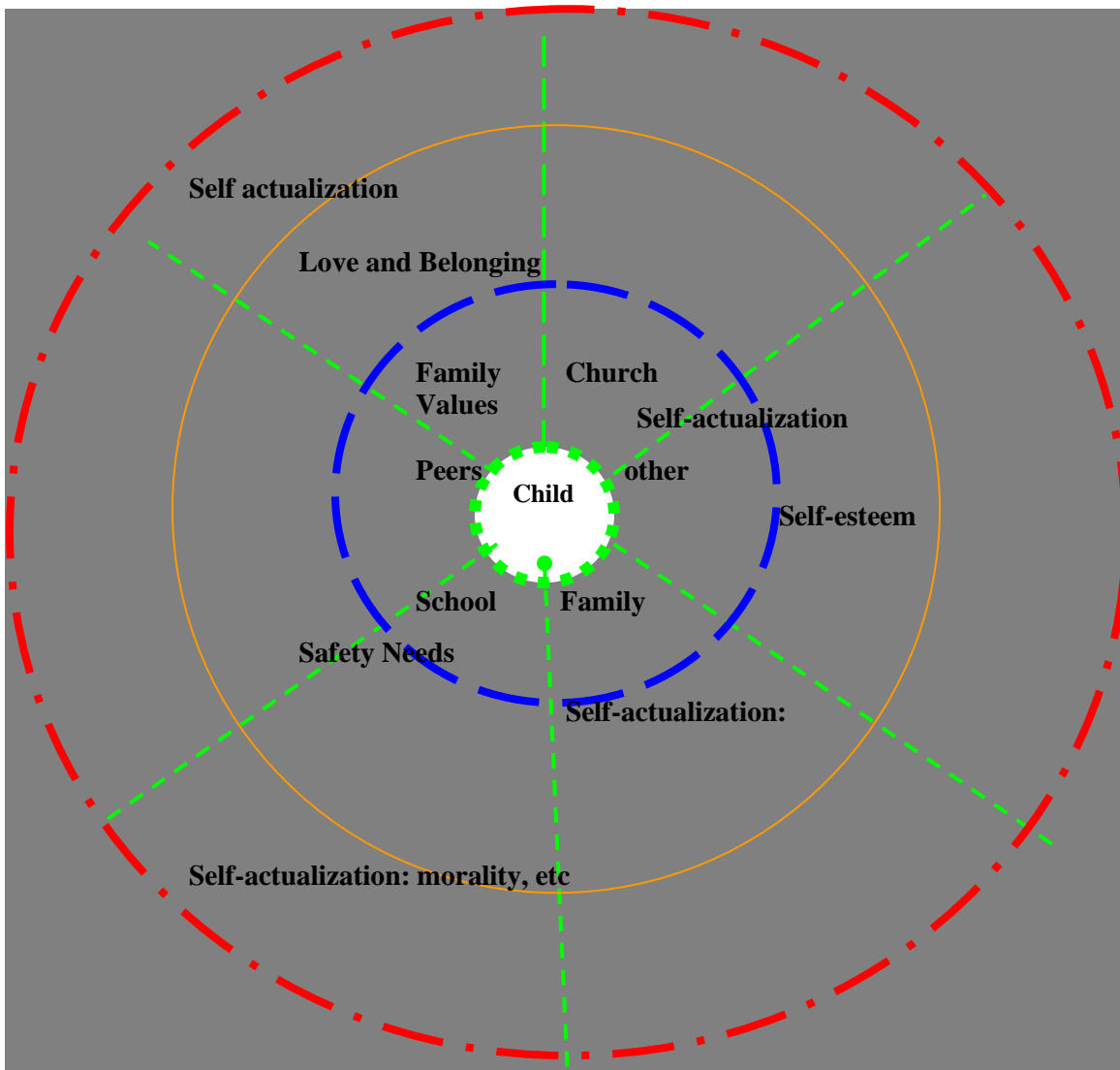


[The diagram was adapted from Motivation and Personality, Maslow [1970] 2nd. ed.]

Maslow's [1970] hierarchy of human needs put physiological needs at the base and self-actualisation at the pinnacle of the pyramid. This suggests a linear and progressive approach to needs in a hierarchical manner. Such interpretation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is problematic as it suggests that one cannot self-actualize before developing one's esteem-needs. Since esteem issues and self-actualisation are value free, what stops individuals from developing some values/needs simultaneously?

Maslow's model of needs is representative of the Western cultures and may not be true of other cultures such as Eastern cultures. For instance, the Dalai Lama [2000] argues that the Christian emphasis on the human capacity for sin and the feelings of guilt and shame gives the self a substance of conflict and guilt that is not evident in the East. I therefore argue and illustrate my interpretation of the needs development through the Web model of needs.

Figure 2. 4. The Web Model of Needs



Thus, in the web format, I argue here that, the immediate environment and circumstances act like a web, and the child is in the centre. Values and needs growth are triggered cultivated and nurtured by circumstances and the need to survive. The environment, acting as a web catches anything emergent that comes along, disregarding anything seen as unimportant. Thus, children born during wartime will inevitable develop different safety needs than those born in peaceful time. Thus, individuals promote their survival through purposeful action and through developing meaning structures. This suggests that, there is a growing need for individuals to develop their own lines of action and continuous reappraisals of relevant meaningful structures so as to move forward and experience a sense of self-concept.

Locus of Control

Locus of Control is considered by some psychologists Rotter [1950], to be the individual's perception of causes of events in life and can manifest as either influenced by [external locus of control] or [internal locus of control]. The general consensus however is that external locus of control is when one believes that his/her behaviour is guided by fate, luck or other external forces, while internal locus of control is when one believes that his/her actions are guided by own personal decisions or efforts [Zimbardo, 1985].

For Brockner [1979] there are clear connections between self-esteem and locus of control although these traits are usually investigated in isolation. Judge et al., argue:

...people with low-self esteem are generally more susceptible to self-relevant social cues than are individuals with high self-esteem. This type of behaviour mimics individuals who have an external locus of control.

Zimbardo [1985] defines Locus of Control orientation to be: 'belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do [internal control orientation] or on events outside our personal control [external control orientation]' [p.275].

Nonetheless, according to Rotter [1950], the locus of control notion seems to account for the reasons for one's behaviour, such that, those who make choices primarily on their own are considered to have internal loci, while those who making decisions based more on what others desire are said to have external loci. Rotter, [ibid] further espoused that having an internal locus of control can also be referred to as 'personal control, self-determination', with males

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believed to be more internal than females who tend to be inclined to having more of an external locus. Rotter [ibid] also believed that, internal locus protects against submission to authority- more resistant to others' influence [but tend to be more premature and less sympathetic than externals].

Conversely, James [1950] postulated that, there is an average base line of self-feeling which each of us carries about with us and which, to some extent, is independent of the objective validations we may have for satisfaction or discontent. James [ibid] argues that, feelings of self-complacency and self-dissatisfaction are two opposite classes that seem to be intrinsic parts of human nature. However, self-feeling is largely dependent on our actual success or failure and position held in the world. James [1963, p. 175] thus saw self-esteem in terms of the relationship between successes and failures.

Further more, James [1950, p. 310] argued that, peoples' self-feeling of the world depend on what they consider themselves as being, determined by the ratio of realities to supposed potentials. Thus, people pursue their multi-selves hierarchically according to their supposed values. Within these values, the material, social and spiritual selves are notably between the immediate and actual and the remote and potential for the individual. Therefore, a healthy balance in these traits does not need to be over emphasized. James [ibid] postulated that the pursuit of an ideal social self is that which is worthy of approval by the highest possible judging companion, which could include God or the Absolute Mind.

James [1970] also espoused that, we know how the barometer of our self-esteem and confidence rises and falls from one day to another through causes that seem to be visceral and organic rather than rational. Individuals or seekers of the truest self need to review their list of selves carefully as well as choose the self perceived to be the most relevant to personal wishes and goals. James [ibid] insisted that human thought is incessantly deciding among many things and so individuals can choose amongst different selves. Also, individuals consider the 'me' as precious, and believe it must not fail. This is the direct feeling of regard for personal existence. Thus, James [1950] outlined the empirical life of the 'Self' as is set out in the following table.

Figure 2.4. The Empirical Life of the Self

Material	Social	Spiritual
Self-seeking Desire to please,	Bodily appetites and instincts,	Intellectual, moral and
Be noticed, admired, etc.	Love of adornment. Foppery,	religious aspiration,
Sociability, emulation, envy,	acquisitiveness,	conscientiousness
love, pursuit of honour,	constructiveness, love of	Self-estimation, Personal, vanity,
ambition, etc	home, etc.	modesty, etc.
		Pride of wealth, fear of
		Property. Social and family
		pride, vainglory, snobbery,
		humility, shame, etc.
		mental superiority, purity,
		Sense of inferiority or guilt etc.

Source: James [1950, p. 229]

Accordingly, Mead [1934] also espoused that human beings have a self; they can see themselves reflected in other people's responses and reactions to them. Mead [ibid] argued that human beings can think about these reactions and act accordingly. He calls this basic concern 'symbolic interactionism' and further argues that it concerns itself with the ways in which individual actors make sense of, analyse or interpret any given situation. According to Mead, [ibid] humans use and interpret symbols; continuously creating or constructing social life by generating meanings and interpretations within small social groupings. Mead [1934] espoused that the social self was divided between an 'I' and a 'me' 'the 'I' is the conversational character of inner experience and is not assumed to be 'an object in consciousness' [May, 1996, p. 68].

However, on the contrary, the East has a very different sense of 'self' from that espoused by the Western World, that emphasis on the human capacity for sin and feelings of guilt and shame [Dalai Lama, 1999]. According to the [Dalai Lama, 2000] inherent self-worth can be actively developed by individual action. However, according to Brazier, [1995], 'western psychology generally leans towards the idea of a self, soul or psyche which exists as an entity in its own right and which can make demands and claims. This is all in accord with long-standing western tradition where, especially in America, a culture has been created around the

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idea of individual rights and needs...Buddhist psychology however recognizes no such entity' [p.34].

According to Brazier, [2001] the 'self' in Buddhism can be thought of in terms of a candle flame. If a candle is lit a flame burns. If one goes away and returns, the candle still burns, but it is not the same flame. A flame has no enduring or intrinsic 'selfness' so there can be appearance without substance. Buddhism recognizes the significance of impermanence and change and consequently sees selfhood as fluid. The sense of fluidity, in part, is informed by the importance of the soul.

Rogers [1986, p. 498], uses the term 'self' to discuss personality. He argues that the concept of 'self' 'as a result of interaction with environment and particularly as a result of evaluational interaction with others, the structure of self is formed, an organisation fluid, but consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships of the 'I' or the 'me' together with the values of attached to the concepts'. Rogers [ibid] further argues that the values attached to experiences, and values that are a part of the self-structure, in some instances are values experienced directly by the organism and in some instances, values introjected or taken over from others, but perceived in distorted fashion as if directly experienced. Furthermore, he argues that when an infant interacts with environment, it builds and assimilates concepts about itself, the environment and about itself in relation to the environment. He again espouses that the direct organismic is intimately associated with valuing the growth experience which appears important for understanding later developments.

Therefore, in relation to the 'I' or 'me' character and learning, Carl Rogers, [1969] suggested that significant learning will only take place when:

- The subject is perceived to be of personal relevance to the individual and that;
- It involves active participation by the learner.

In fact, Rogers [1959] believed that when we interact with significant people in our environment- parents, brothers, sisters, friends, teachers, - we begin to develop a concept of 'self' that is largely based on the evaluation of others. This is driven by the desire for positive

regard from others and it is thus, more compelling than our own organismic valuing process [p.223]. Rogers [ibid] further postulates that this need to seek approval and avoid disapproval leads to self-concept that is conditional on the performance of certain kinds of behaviour [p.209]. Self-concept is the organized set of characteristics that the individual perceives as being peculiar to him or herself [Rogers 1959].

However, to be able to transmit our thoughts, we need a vehicle with a common denominator. And that denominator is a language understood by both parties. As May, [1996] espoused, ‘communication is the basis for maintaining a social group’s unity and integrity during times of social change...and culture includes all that is communicable’ [p. 72]. And for Merleau-Ponty, [1963], people manipulate symbols and use language both to reflect on and control their engagement. Thus, ‘each body-subject finds him-or herself immersed in the world, and particularly a social world, before he or she is in a position to use internalised language to reflect on this engagement’ [ibid, p. 480].

Nevertheless, Rogers [1980] postulates that learning is most likely to be successful in an atmosphere of ‘unconditional positive regard’. This entails the teacher recognizing students as having individual needs and that learning experiences are of limited value unless they impact upon the human condition and the individual’s sense of ‘self worth’. Nonetheless, Rogers [ibid] postulates that the actual structure of the self emerges through evaluative interaction with others and with the environment. The self, therefore, is a fluid yet organized conceptual pattern of perceptions related to the characteristics of an ‘I’ or ‘me’. Any experience that is inconsistent with the organization of the self is seen as a threat and, as a result, the self-structure is organized in a rigid way to protect itself. Behaviour is goal directed in order to satisfy needs, and emotion facilitates goal directed behaviour. Thus actions, comments and attitudes by the teacher and peers may be construed otherwise.

2.14.2. Psychoanalytic

Similarly, Erikson [1964] describes human development as marked by the unfolding of a series of stages that are universal to all humankind. As a former Freudian student, Erikson [ibid] also uses the ‘ego’ notion. Unlike Freud, Erickson [ibid] proposed that the ego often operated

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independently of id emotions and motivations. [The id and ego will be covered under Freud's psychoanalysis]. Erikson [1964] contends that ego exists from birth, but places more emphasis on the external world [such as depression and wars] as modifiers. Erikson [1964] believes that 'ethos' and the influence of culture have massive influences on behaviour and the organismic self. Further, Erikson [ibid] asserts that the programmed course of epi genetic principle [epi-'upon'] depends on the interaction of biological [body] psychological [mind] and the natural [ethos] influences. Erikson [1964] argued that the behaviour of young people is characterised by totalism, thus, 'a setting of absolute boundaries in one's values, beliefs, and interpersonal relationships [p. 92].

Below, is a summary of Erickson's stages of development and challenges the 'self' deals with at every stage of growth and self-actualisation.

Figure 2.5. : The Eight Stages of Ego Development

Stage	Estimated age	Ego crisis	Ego strength
1. Oral-sensory	Birth-1	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope
2. muscular-anal	2-3	Autonomy vs. shame and doubt	Will
3. Locomotor-genital	4-5	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose
4. Latency	6-12	Industry vs. inferiority	Competence
5. Adolescence	13-19	Identity vs. role confusion	Fidelity
6. Young adulthood	20-24	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love
7. Middle adulthood	25-64	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care
8. Late adulthood	65-death	Ego integrity vs. despair	Wisdom

[Erickson E. [1963] Child and Society; New York: Norton]

Erickson's [ibid] summary is psychosocial, and describes major characteristics and consequences of each stage. The nucleus of each stage is a basic crisis that represents the challenges the 'self' faces when in contact with a new facet of society. For example, the child's entry into school during the fourth stage guarantees confrontation with [industry versus inferiority] and other new complexities of social agents. Suffice to point out that the basic crisis that forms the core of each stage does not exist only during that stage, but overlap into other stages. It follows therefore that pupils who are ridiculed at school, not listened to and sometimes despised end up breaking their egos, self worth and personalities. This notion can

inform teachers about the way they can go about dealing with feedback in learning/teaching situations.

Figure 2.2. A Table to Summarise Types of Paradigm Perspectives

Paradigm/ Perspective	Theorists	Model of self	View on self- esteem
Behaviourist/ Social Learning	Watson, Skinner, Bandura.		-Emphasises intrinsic motives based on extrinsic goals; performance is based on rewards and short term goals. Also emphasises the prediction and control of behaviour. -Focuses on overt, observable and measurable outcomes and their reinforcement in accounting for resulting behaviour.
Humanists or Phenomenologist	Maslow, Rogers, May	Organism phases of development	-Offers a hierarchy of intrinsic motives for learning, based on the idea that people have an innate desire to seek knowledge and to develop. -Also focuses on esteem issues, problems in coping with and exploring feelings in accounting for behaviour.
Cognitive	Gestalt theory, Piaget.	Stages of development	-Emphasise learners' tendencies to adopt preferred learning styles [individual traits] or strategies so that motivation increases if learners can work within their preferred styles. -Focuses on cognitive processes [beliefs, attitudes, expectations and attributions. This perspective combines both the cognitive and the behavioural perspective.
Psychoanalytic	Freud	Unconscious processes seeking resolution of psychic conflict, e.g. ego	-caused by conflict between id/ego

2.15. Self-Esteem and Assessment

Therefore, to facilitate learning, Fisher [1995, pp. 2-11] advocates for the creation of learning atmospheres that enable the learner to become a more independent and knowledgeable person.

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He describes a successful learning environment as one which promotes the learner's movement from lower order thinking –knowing the facts , understanding the facts, applying the facts- on to higher levels of thinking characterized by what he refers to as 'metacognitive control'. However, one may wonder how teachers in England and Wales strike a balance between achieving good grades, which would enhance their schools league table standing and creating conducive learning atmospheres of 'unconditional positive regards' for pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies in mixed ability English language classes coupled with pressure from league tables requirements. Rogers' [1980] view of unconditional positive regards is- 'a deep and genuine caring by others, 'uncontaminated by judgements' or evaluations of our thoughts, feelings or behaviours' [p. 1379]. And with unconditional positive regard, the self-concept carries no conditions of worth, there is a congruence between self and experience, and the person is psychologically healthy [Rogers, 1980].

One is bound to ask what happens to pupils if there are imbalances on the suggested learning theories. Britzman, [1998] argues that, students and teachers alike, import a set of beliefs about teaching/learning that are shaped through years of personal experience to their classrooms. In addition to these beliefs, are their perceptions of the students they teach. Conversely, Eliason, [1995] among others see the need for classroom interaction that can accommodate diversity. He [ibid] postulates, 'the role of the instructor cannot be underestimated in a classroom that purports to promote diversity...the classroom environment hinges on the attitude of the teacher' [p.31]. In addition, Eliason [1995] points out that teachers must be aware of their own teaching and learning styles and thinking patterns to promote equity in the classroom by being attentive to the students whose learning styles are different.

People argue that, if one looks with the right intentions, they can find value in what they are engaged in; but this cannot be said about some minority pupils whose family know no success stories that are linked to education. Due to relentless discrimination, unfair systemic treatment and other social segregations, such pupils may have lost faith in education as a prime source of potential help with personal and community problems. And so, with continued failure staring them in the face, they may drop out of school, or engage in anti-school culture so that they are

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excluded from school...permanently. Freire [1974] espouses that, to involve them in education again may require them to reorder their perceptions of their world and their potential in it. Thus, when students understand how school relates to their life in the future, they may find a reason for wanting to do well in school? Bourdieu 1992; Gauntlett 2002 argue that behaviour is influenced mainly by 'habitus' society and individual actions.

The anti-school culture seems to be transmitted to pupils through society, from a tender age that the resistance becomes spontaneous suggesting a two layered effect: a backdrop of society and a foreground of individual action, thoughts and feelings. Gauntlett [2002] believes the backdrop of society and the actions of individuals interact as he argues: 'it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents which reproduces the structure... [the rules which] can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently' [p.75]. However, the same cannot be said about an oppressed minority. Bourdieu's [1992] argument of 'habitus, capital and field' comes to mind and thus, re-enactment of history takes place in the dispositions which people acquire over time, which brings them social situations. May [1996] defines 'habitus', 'as history embodied in human beings...can be considered as a form of 'socialized subjectivity' [pp. 126-7]. According to Bourdieu [1992] a relation exists between the 'habitus and field.'

First, the field structures or conditions the habitus to the extent that it provides for its for its realization...secondly, there is the part that the habitus plays in constituting the field as a place where the agent decides that it is worth investing their energy [p.127].

Bourdieu's [1992] concept of 'habitus', similar to the notion of 'culture' suggests that in the background to individual lives, there exists: an explanatory construct, a collective cultural structure and set of beliefs and norms within and against which agents perform their actions and pursue their goals'

This argument suggests that as a society we work and learn against a backdrop of culture, of socially-constructed rules and 'moral codes' [Drummond, 2003, p. 60]. Thus, the failing pupils do not get any meaning from school related activities and all that comes with it. To some of these pupils, the negative and seemingly controlling school environment reflect a

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pervasive culture of low expectations, hence expressions for desires to see teachers whom they felt ill treated them fired.

It follows therefore that, these teachers' beliefs about learning and perceptions about their students translate into their classroom instructional practice. These practices in turn, shape the dynamics of student learning in these particular learning zones. It should also be born in mind that pupils have a way of telling when teachers or peers exclude them from social events. When they do internalize these teachers' or peer biases, their performance in learning is affected. For Miller [1993] identities are constructed through schooling, 'social, economic, historical and cultural forces influence, frame, and construct individual's interpretations and experiences of education' [p. 44].

Vygotsky [1934] and Feuerstein [1921-] both take a strong sociological approach to the development of intelligence and cognition, with mediation as a key to survival and success. Arguably, the current conditions for teachers and students in England and Wales do not provide adequate atmosphere for proper mediation as proposed by Vygotsky [ibid] and Feuerstein [ibid].

However, there is an NFER [1995] survey report on differentiation and learning that supported the advent of league tables. In this report, the NFER acknowledge a change in differentiation to a:

Close link with pressure on schools to improve their published academic outcomes. In the survey, the need to raise attainment was seen as a key influence, with almost 90 per cent of schools rating it as important [NFER, report 1995].

Differentiation is mainly about planning work to match individual needs. On the contrary, the same report also felt that relatively little was happening in many schools to change classroom practice in line with the agreed goal of matching learning to individual needs. This observation is in contrast to Fisher's suggested 'learning atmospheres'. Conversely, Slee et al., [1998] argue:

Governments and state agencies in general are not prepared to pay for research which shows their own social and economic policies have contributed significantly to crises in the schools. They would rather pay for research which shows that some schools have been able to overcome these created impediments more successfully and 'effectively'

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than other schools. Thus the ideological and political focus is shifted from analysis of the policies themselves to analysis of the differential ability of schools to cope with these policies [p. 119].

Therefore, it can be argued that the advent of league tables caused teachers to not prioritise child centred learning. The result is that more and more children are not reaching their full potentials as their learning needs are not fully met and are let to deteriorate into slow learners and subsequently to learned helplessness as Seligman, [1995b] noted. Seligman, [ibid] puts forward a phenomenon that he calls predisposition: [learned helplessness]. Seligman [ibid] argues that when pupils learn that what they do has no effect on outcomes, they withdraw and make no further effort.

Similarly, Marsh [1984; Marsh and Parker, 1984] proponents of a proposed frame of reference model called the big-fish-little-pond effect [BFLPE], sum up a frame of reference to effects supposedly immersed in social comparison theory. These researchers [ibid], theorise how academic self-concept, pitted against peers substantially influences the ability levels of other students in the immediate context in addition to one's own ability and academic accomplishments. However, Marsh [2001] puts forward an argument to the contrary:

Thus conversely, if these students attend a low ability school, then their abilities would be above average in relation to other students in the school and social comparison processes will result in higher academic self-concepts [Marsh 2001, p.1.]

Marsh [ibid] argues that academic self-concepts depend not only on one's academic accomplishments but is greatly affected also by the performances of other peers and colleagues in the same school the student attends. Other factors such as Yerkes-Dodson's law cited by Nuttall [1989] have impact on performance. Thus, Dodson hypothesizes 'too little or too much anxiety leads to lower performance than if one is moderately anxious' [p.273]. Simply put, thus the conditions of testing can be immensely influential [Nuttall ibid]. Does Marsh's observation have a bearing on pupils' emotions if their school is bottom of league or their performance is not as good as their peers thereby contributing to the lower position in the league? What is self-esteem and how is it important anywhere? One way to answer these questions is by way of exploring what is known about self-esteem, curriculum and assessment and how these are affected by interactions among others.

2.16. The Importance of Language in Learning

As can be appreciated, learning is essentially an adaptive process that uses language as the major fabric of learning behaviour, which plays a mediating role between teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil and the environment at large. For a school child, mastery of the instructional language has specific advantages and relevance and is a highly salient aspect of knowledge acquisition. It follows therefore that, possession of the appropriate language provides the needed interactive facility. Equally so, failure to master the medium of language provides a quandary of problems for the learner as well as for the teacher.

For Rouse [2001] ‘learning is experience, everything else is just information’ [p.8]. Thus, Rouse [ibid] further argues, ‘what we know, feel, learn and think is shaped by how we know, feel, learn and think’ [ibid, ibid]. Rouse’s [2001] belief is shared by constructivists who also argue that children regulate their own learning through meta-cognitive.

According to Fisher [1995]:

‘Meta-cognitive intelligence [also called interpersonal intelligence] is probably the most important aspect of human intelligence as it is linked to the processing of all other forms of intelligence. It is the access we have to our own thoughts and emotions, to what we think and feel and why we do things. It is the heart of the Delphic injunction; ‘Know thyself’ [p. 10]

According to Brown and Shorrock [1998], a constructivist framework: ‘views the learner within a position of power and embraces all dimensions of teaching/learning that would allow educators to articulate meaningfully the ways in which they might provide for children’s education rights’ [p. 189]. The constructivist approaches encompass the ideas of learners actively building their understanding assisted by or ‘scaffolded’ by another more knowledgeable persons such as their ‘trusted’ teachers in their Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD] and gradually becoming more aware of and able to regulate their own learning through metacognition [ibid].

Mercer’s [1994] notion of ZPD embodies a view of the developing the learner as someone whose learning achievements are in part situationally determined. Further, Mercer [ibid] combining ZPD and scaffolding –into amore recent neo-Vygotskian approaches helps to

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describe teaching and learning as a culturally based, interactive process. ‘ the essence of the neo-Vygotskian approach is to treat human learning and cognitive development as a process which is culturally- based, not just culturally influenced; as a process which is social rather than individual; and as a communicative process, whereby knowledge is shared and understandings are constructed in culturally-formed settings [p.92]. Thus, language is central to school learning [teaching and learning], [Bullock report, 1975].

Conversely, Merleau-Ponty, [1962] argues:

In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of ours is the creator...In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person's thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come to being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objections which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws from me thoughts which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time I lend him my thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too [p. 354].

Accordingly, constructivists still uphold Merleau-Ponty's observations [ibid] as they argue that, much of pupils' development is fostered through participation in class deliberations by creating and receiving feedback from peers and teachers alike. For Mead [1934], the individual is seen as a social construction, forged out of joint interactions with others. Thus, learning is regarded as a shared social activity, embedded in classroom interactions. Brown and Shorrock [1998] further argue that teachers have somehow to create the conditions for building up appropriate conceptual foundations for subsequent learning. Under these settings, teachers allow students' responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies and alter content. And students are encouraged to engage in dialogues both with the teachers and with each other [Brown and Shorrock 1998]. At this juncture, pupils with language deficiencies find it very difficult to engage with learning.

Suffice to say, without the appropriate language, learners have daunting tasks of expressing their abstract concepts and as a result, learning stalls. Teachers then find it difficult to handle these students whose backgrounds, language and social class may be markedly different from their own. It is no wonder that in most cases, the majority of struggling pupils manifest language deficiencies.

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Arguments put forward by psychological anthropologists, seem to point out that, in different cultures children's individual development and participation in social practices is mediated through language [Stevens, 2000]. For May [1996], language becomes seen as the medium through which people speak, hear themselves speak and so evaluate their utterances according to the responses of others. Thus, according to May [1996]:

Individuals gain the ability to shape who they are by 'taking the role of others' ...they conceive of themselves through the responses, attitudes and expectation of both 'significant' and 'generalised others via symbolic communication' [p. 69].

Further, May [ibid] argues, 'under normal circumstances, people act under habit and continue in this way on a day -to-day basis, until this is, they are confronted by crisis' [p. 71].

Nevertheless, Hymes [1972] argues that children need to learn not just various aspects of the language system –grammar, phonology etc. but also how to become competent speakers within a particular cultural setting. Yet for Miller and Hoogstra, [1992],

Children have to know when and how they should talk in different contexts and with different people and how to interweave non-verbal gestures and body language in with speech. Equally important, they have to learn when and how to listen and how to 'detect and interpret the unspoken assumptions that lie behind the talk' [p.84.]

Also, Rotter, [1954] argues that language can be used not only to help children make appropriate discriminations between events, but also to increase generalisation.

Since the effect of language is to classify, to categorize, or to abstract similarity in events, it serves, therefore to determine and enhance the nature of generalisation to other events that are similarly abstracted. Not only does language determine generalisation...on the basis of the subject's implicit categorizing...the language of others may be use by the observer as a stimulus to determine, control, or enhance generalisation [p. 220].

As can be appreciated, these skills are crucial competences necessary in learning and shaping own experiences of self. For Vygotsky [1934], children first internalize the real-life dialogues they have had with others and apply these to mental problem solving. It should be remembered that sometimes, problem solving may be a joint rather than an individual mental activity. Thus, 'because the internalized dialogues bring with them their social and cultural connotations, the language children use to think with is always heavily culturally and socially situated', [Stevens 2000, p.253]. Furthermore, Stevens contends that the very learning activities which form the basis for children's cognitive and conceptual development are those

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which induct them into particular cultural values and beliefs and ways of organising knowledge and experience. However, notably, language variations, different values, attitudes and aspirations all account towards pupils' educational performance at school.

Conversely, different languages have syntax and grammatical difficulties that are peculiar and specific to particular languages. This suggests that learning a language is a more complex undertaking surrounded by own inherent problems-especially learning a foreign language. To highlight the importance of language in learning, Borger and Seaborne [1966] postulated, 'the use of a language is part of the fabric of human behaviour –not simply one kind of activity amongst others, but one that plays a special mediating role between the individual and his environment' [p.122]. Generally speaking, life at school evolves around the use of language 'verbal formulation- utilizing instructions or descriptions provided from outside, orally or in writing [p.122]. Suffice therefore, to suggest that actions from individuals are preceded by verbal decisions based on the individual' understanding of verbal and situational understanding. Conversely, English proficiency or competence is usually lacking especially from pupils with borderline learning difficulties.

It can be argued that teachers today, try to centre learning on cooperative learning as they may have noticed that students work in close proximity together. So, students' desks are pushed together in small groups. What could be wrong with this assumption is that, physical proximity does not guarantee cooperative learning. Cooperative learning requires communication and sharing of ideas, materials, responsibilities, and consensus on completing projects [Kendall and Marzano, 1999]. How then is the child with language deficiencies engaged when teachers mainly with producing results?

However, recent research evidence indicates the potential of Social Constructivist approaches with pupils who experience difficulties with their learning [Wells, 1999, Watson 2000, 2001]. And, according to Vygotsky [1985], pupils interact with the outside world primarily through social settings and that adults and peer groups help develop the experiences of a growing child through scaffolding. However, Vygotsky [ibid] further argues that learning only occurs when children are working within their Zone of Proximal Development. He defined the Zone of Proximal Development as the distance between developmental level of a child 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.

Under Vygotsky's [1985] notion, the teacher's role becomes much more explicit in terms of mediating as opposed to directing the class activities. [In all these postulations, the learner is assumed to be well conversant with the language for which the learning is the media of, and for him/her to be part of the learning process?]. What if the learner has considerable difficulties speaking and understanding the language? Clearly, with this calibre of pupils, the writing is seemingly on the wall as this particular pupil or pupils are at sea with their learning. Cummins [2000] does not disconnect his analysis of the importance of interactions at classroom level from wider social forces; he too recognizes that the ways in which ideas are negotiated in these interactions can be understood only in relation. However, Cummins [2000, p.6] asserts that: 'Interactions between educators and students represent the direct determinant of a bilingual students' success and failures'.

2.17. Language Deficiencies

Whorf [1956] argues: 'we can cut up and organise the spread and flow of events as we do largely because, through our mother tongue, we are parties to an agreement to do so, not because nature itself is segmented in exactly that way for all to see' [p.224]. It is not ludicrous therefore, to suggest that the ways individuals think is dependent upon the language they use. Thus the agreed ways in which a culture has curved up and shaped its views of the world and represented it in the language, represents itself and manifests in the individuals' thinking and actions.

Considering Vygotsky's [1934] language theory, children appear to develop unique ways of communication and thinking for them to do well in school activities. And, drawing from the language philosophy, Habermas [1992b] argues that language is the medium for reaching understanding, learning and achieving co-operation. Thus, Habermas [ibid] writes:

Form the structure of language comes the explanation of why the human spirit is condemned to the odyssey...only at the greatest distance from itself does it become conscious of itself in its irreplaceable singularity as an individual being [Habermas, 1992b, p.153].

Conversely, educational theorist [Mercer, 1994] suggests that ‘it is useful to look at the learning of a particular subject from the viewpoint of the linguistic and cognitive processes which constitute it. The cognitive demands of school learning across the curriculum involve a range of thinking processes, such as predicting, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating. These processes are all closely linked to the language required to express them and are capable of being explicitly supported by teachers.

A closer look at the account of aspects of language and communication will assist with shading light on Habermas’ [ibid] premise language use.

Figure 2.6. Aspects of language and communication

Aspects of Language and Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding [receptive language]: The ability to comprehend the language of other people.• Expression [productive language] the ability to formulate a message and convey it to others.• Vocabulary. Words and meanings.• Grammar. The system of the rules which determines how the form of words changes to indicate different meanings [morphology] and how words combine to form sentences [syntax].• Attribution [intelligibility]. The clarity and accuracy of the motor production of a message [speech sounds or manual sounds].• Social use [pragmatics] the appropriate use of a language in different contexts to achieve different goals. <p>[Source: Messer and Jones, 1999, p.282]</p>

For these reasons, it can be argued that sometimes failure to understand a language of instruction can be responsible for the pupils’ failure to do well in tests. According to Wood [1993], some educational theorists believe that important and far reaching effects on educational performance results from variations in the way those children from different backgrounds use language. In collaboration with this view, Bernstein [1970] espoused that people of Britain are divided by language, at least in relation to educational achievement and vocational opportunity.

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Further to these assertions, Bernstein [ibid] contends that there are differences between the language forms of language found in different social classes. Conversely, Woods [1993] argues, 'social background is one of the most reliable predictors of a child's likely performance at school' [p.112], and so, 'teachers make [perhaps implicit or unconscious] judgements about children's' educational potential on the basis of how they talk, setting up self-fulfilling prophecies which lead to the anticipated differences in levels of achievements' [ibid]. Arguably these disparities are also reflected in socio-economic status, thus affecting more the working-class children. As Woods [ibid] argues, the likelihood of these children being prejudiced in learning are high as 'teachers expect less of children from some social backgrounds, these children are taught and learn less [ibid, p, 112]. On the same note, Hillman and Mortimore [1995] argues, 'an effective school adds extra value to its students' outcomes in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes' [p. 3].

Similarly, Reynolds and Creemers [1990] assert, 'schools matter... schools do have major effects upon children's development...schools do make a difference' [p.1]. In relation to this argument and because wealthy families are most likely to send their children to the best available schools; Bernstein [1970] contends that children from middle-class homes are likely to find themselves in white collar managerial roles while the working class child is likely to follow parents' manual occupations-making generations move in cycles through time. The general consensus in school is thus, teachers' perceptions and expectations exert a direct causal influence on how much children learn.

Nonetheless, it can be argued [especially by humanist psychologists] that personal feelings seem more important than the intellect in determining the quality and meaning of personal life. As Rogers [1951] espoused that the ideal conditions for emotional growth are respect, empathy and genuineness. And in concurrence, Giddens [1999] argued that, the ideal relationship is characterised by mutual respect, a capacity to take the emotional perspective of the other and by genuineness. The processes are therefore a two way process involving dialogue and listening whereby emotions are not judged, are taken seriously and through the process of dialogue, the person learns to uphold self worthiness and is helped to make meaning.

In concurrence, Hough [1994] contends that, ‘this organismic ‘self ’is present from birth and consists of the basic force which regulate each person’s physiological and psychological growth’ [p.38]. Hough further asserts that, the central and most important aims of the organismic self is to grow, to mature and to achieve self- actualisation. Erickson [1994] calls self-actualisation ‘Ego’.

2.18. Summary

In summary, Chapter 2 reviewed literature from varied research areas, which relate to the study. These research areas considered were ethnographic research in education, the curriculum in use in England and Wales’s schools, assessment regimes, special educational needs provision learning difficulties, [Dyslexia] ADHD, language deficiencies, intercultural communication, multicultural education, which focused on the impact assessment, has on these pupils’ self-esteem.

It has been established that problems in assessment and classroom interaction may lead to student and teacher attrition, discouragement, feelings of failure and even exacerbated prejudice that could in turn lead to low self-esteem and social mischief by some pupils. However, there is no consensus on how this phenomenon may affect pupils’ performance let alone what really this phenomenon truly is as there are claims and counter claims on its effects.

Nonetheless, it was established that high self-esteem positively correlated with scholastic attainment and is based on the individual’s evaluation of the discrepancy between self-image and the ideal self and depends upon the extent to which the individual cares about this discrepancy Rogers [1980]. However, Reasoner [2006] postulates that a healthy self-esteem stems from quiet confidence in one’s potential that require strong feelings of self-worth and competency. Importantly, he espoused that a healthy self-esteem is developed from within and that children just cannot be handed self-esteem.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEWPART TWO:

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Meeting the curriculum of all learners

Khera [2004] gave a hypothetical situation regarding forest animals that decided to start a school. The students comprised of: 'a bird, a squirrel, a fish, a dog, a rabbit, and a mentally retarded eel. A board was formed and it was decided that flying, tree climbing, swimming, and burrowing would be part of the curriculum in order to give a broad-based education. All animals were required to take all subjects. The bird was excellent at flying and was getting As but when it came to burrowing, it kept breaking its beak and wings and started failing. Pretty soon, it started making Cs in flying and of course in tree climbing and swimming it was getting Fs. The Squirrel was great at tree climbing and was getting As, but failing in swimming. The fish was the best swimmer but couldn't get out of water and got Fs in everything else. The dog did not join the school, stopped paying taxes and kept fighting with the administration to include barking as part of the curriculum. The rabbit got As in burrowing but tree climbing was a real problem. It kept falling and landing on its head, suffered brain damage, and soon couldn't even burrow properly and got Cs in that too. The mentally retarded eel, who did everything half as well, became the valedictorian of the class. The board was happy because everybody was getting a broad-based education [Khera, 2004:23].

3.1.0. Introduction

The above story by Khera [2004] illustrates how assessment can dampen learners' spirits, with some following the dog's decision not to partake in the activities. It goes without saying that assessment should aid learning rather than put out the flames in them.

However, most educators take assessment as testing and grading: scoring outcomes in performances in exams and assigning course grades to students. Schools typically use assessment as a way to inform students about how well they are doing or how well they did in the courses they are taught [Hodgen and Marshall, 2005]. Nonetheless, an emerging vision of assessment is that of a dynamic process that continuously yields information about student progress toward the achievement of learning goals. Among the many reasons for carrying out learning assessment, is the premise that assessment shapes children's identities and their perceptions of appropriate behaviour and responses to assessment interactions in profound and subtle ways.

However, In order to appreciate the relevance and provisions of current assessment regimes, there is need to explore first the curriculum that informs the assessment processes.

3.1. The Curriculum

In recent years, there has been some movement towards alternative forms of academic assessment to conventional written examinations, Child, [2001]. This desire to evolve has necessitated the advent of curriculum in England and Wales. Hirst, [1968] cited by Child [2001] defines curriculum as ‘programmes of activities designed so that pupils will attain, so far as possible, educational ends or objectives’ [p. 433], ‘while Neagley and Evans propose that the curriculum process is all of the planned experiences provided by the school to assist pupils in attaining the designated learning outcomes to the best of their abilities’ [ibid, p. 433].

Conversely, Vygotsky argues that, in order to fully develop children, the curricula should be designed such that children are immersed in activities that emphasize interaction between learners and learning tasks. In this instance, curriculum delineates topics, concepts and skills to be taught, learning tasks and outcomes for a particular key stage/grade or age level. This makes it easy to administer standardised tests so as to check on progress as observed by Ashby and Sainsbury [2001]. For example, writing about the introduction of curriculum in England and Wales, Ashby and Sainsbury [ibid] argue:

Since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989, pupils have been compulsorily tested at two points in their primary school careers. At the age of seven, the end of National Curriculum key stage 1, they are assessed by means of tasks and tests that, in recent years, have covered English and mathematics only. Then at eleven, the end of key stage 2, children take tests in English, Mathematics and science. The results of these assessments are expressed as National Curriculum levels and these are based, in most cases, on a numerical score [p.1].

As can be seen from Ashby and Sainsbury’s [ibid] statement, the aim for the National Curriculum is to evaluate, diagnose, monitor/ check and counter balance and inform with a view to improving and raising attainment results in core subjects being offered. It is envisaged that high attainment in these core subjects would lead to better study and understanding of other important subjects. Hargreaves, [1988] argues that there is the school curriculum, which comprises of all learning and other experiences that schools plan for their pupils in each phase of education and the national curriculum then sets out the requirements to be taught in each

subject. Nevertheless, for Boaler [1997] the Education Reform Act [ERA, 1988] introduced the idea of a National Curriculum for adoption by schools. Further, Boaler [ibid] espouses that, as a result of the imposed curriculum, schools ‘—appear to be responding to a set of policies, emanating directly and indirectly from the Education Reform Act [ERA, 1988], that have forced them to turn their primary attention away from equality and towards academic success, particularly for the most able’ [p. 576].

In 1998, the [NFER] National Foundation for Education Research was commissioned to undertake a research on target setting in England and Wales. Their aims were:

- To collate various approaches to target setting where steps to level 1 and between levels 1 and 3 are being developed [to include consideration of baseline data];
- To design assessment criteria with steps leading to levels 1 and between levels 1 and 3 which schools can use to set targets for their pupils;
- To pilot the assessment criteria as widely as possible;
- To undertake case studies of schools setting targets and reviewing support in this process from the LEA
- To refine the assessment criteria following the pilot.

The above aims indicate a deliberate biased pressure aimed at raising standards of performance in education in England and Wales and that assessment is an integral part of this drive. These aims too, are directed at answering questions on curriculum and assessment and have led to so much educational research aimed at reviewing alternative curriculum and assessment models.

The Tabberer and Le Metais research, [1997] observed that, ‘curriculum and assessment are not readily understood outside the context of the national aims for education and the curriculum’ [p.28]. However, on the contrary the England and Wales Curriculum Assessment Authority QCA, [2001] contend that the National curriculum is balanced and broadly based. The authority argues that it promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and prepares children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. For instance, a closer look at The English Curriculum currently operational in English and Welsh schools reveals three strands. These strands have three components: oral

language, written language, and visual language. As can be appreciated, these strands tend to favour those who are articulate and conversant with the English language. Conversely, Apple [1979] argues that somehow, politics and values keep entering into curriculum deliberations, creating difficulties not easily dealt with under the rubrics of management ideologies. Apple [ibid] contends that the content of the curriculum continues to be a source of social conflict.

However, curriculum strands are multifaceted clusters of content and skills to be mastered at each key stage. These bring together learning to spell, correct use of syntax and writing legibly. In addition, the Curriculum Assessment Authority [QCA] [ibid] contends that it includes religious education for secondary pupils, as well as sex education which prepare students for adult life outside schooling days. The QCA however, further argue that although the curriculum does not constitute the whole curriculum for schools, it applies to all pupils aged 5-16 in maintained schools. As it stands now, English and Welsh schools have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their particular needs and circumstances.

The report also compared English and Welsh curriculum with other countries and established that, some countries have controlled curriculum while others favoured the national or federal systems e.g. Canada and USA. Where as some countries regulate their curriculum and assessment frameworks, such countries as New Zealand and Hungary have national monitoring of performance by pupil samples. Nevertheless, in England and Wales, education model defines knowledge and skills, minimum levels of attainment at certain stages, the Singapore curriculum defines topics, skills learning tasks and activities and learning outcomes. Compared with other countries, it appears, UK pupils are subjected to assessment from the on set of their education right through their primary education and into the secondary stage.

Firstly, they have the baseline assessment covering basic speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and personal and social development. Then pupils are subjected to Key stage tests or other forms of assessment as discussed earlier. The Tabberer and Le Metais report [1996] noted that cross-curricular themes that were not associated with statutory delivery or public assessment were being implemented internationally.

Although there are differences between countries' curriculum and assessment frameworks, there are some commonalities in the aims and objectives. The most commonly articulated aims were in the areas of developing the capacity of the individual, promoting equal opportunities, preparing young people for work, providing knowledge, skills and understanding to mention but a few. But, one does not see these commonalities catering for strugglers in learning, since the focus is now on high-stakes.

3.2.0. Assessment

3.2.1. Definitions

There are numerous acceptable definitions of assessment. For Ysseldyke [1995], assessment is defined as:

...the process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about students. Assessment by teachers is a judgement or observations of students having difficulties acquiring or retaining behavioural or academic skills. Or it could be that the student needs assistance eliminating difficulties [p.5].

And for Chid [2001], assessment is defined as,

‘an omnibus term which includes all the processes and products which describe the nature and extent of children’s learning, its degree of correspondence with the aims and objectives of teaching and its environments which are designed to facilitate learning [p. 357]

Child [2001] contends that assessment can be in the form of observations, conversations [formal or informal], tests and class or public examinations. Informal assessments are teacher initiatives during normal class learning and formative judgements, while formal assessment is often made at times set aside specifically for the purpose of testing such as in examinations. However, assessment should be designed to improve learning and achievement.

Similarly, the Scottish Office Education Department [1991a] argue:

Assessment is an important and integral part of the learning and teaching process. [p. 4]...Assessment occurs mainly on a day-to-day basis...Assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching involves attention to four concerns: clear teaching and learning, aims, motivation, previous experience and present abilities, effective tasks and flexible teaching methods. [p. 12]

Thus, according to Scottish Office Education Department [SOED] [1991a], ‘feedback should ‘help pupils to identify what they have learned, what they still have to learn and their next steps in learning’ [p. 16].

3.3. Purposes of Assessment

Brown [2001] argues ‘purposes of assessment are to give a ‘license’ to proceed to the next stage or to graduation; to classify the performance of students in rank order; to improve their learning’ [p.2]. Garfield [1994] aligns herself to this notion of assessment so long as if ‘the gathered information is consistent with learning goals and is used appropriately to inform instruction; can enhance students’ learning as well as document it’ [p.1]: and adds, ‘rather than being an activity separate from instruction, assessment is now being viewed as an integral part of teaching and learning and not just the climax of instruction’ [ibid, p. 1].

However, cognitive disabilities, social and political differences have a significant impact on the chances of realising these goals and many current trends in assessment have unintended; negative side effects. For instance, it is claimed that the ‘high stakes’ approach and other highly competitive systems can de-motivate those who do not get high grades.

Such is the premise that, there seems to be discontentment with the current traditional assessment measures which appear to be failing to adequately/holistically assess significant learning gains and thereby tending to undermine curriculum, instruction, and policy decisions [Garfield, 1994]. Conversely, Ecclestone [2005] argues:

Recognising some of the tensions in principles and practices might enable practitioners and qualification designers to achieve their good intentions for assessment. An understanding of tensions also illuminates the limitations of particular assessment systems, which makes it important for institutions of particular assessment systems, which makes it important for institutions to consider how to achieve positive educational experiences within the constraints and contradictions of external requirements and increasingly prescriptive assessment models [p.76].

Consequently, public educators have sought to redesign new forms of assessment for the purposes of checking how much knowledge/information pupils have acquired during learning/teaching. The driving forces behind these efforts have sprouted from a feeling that

more powerful and effective assessment strategies are now needed to target the intricacies of the knowledge that teachers bring to bear in their teaching [Shulman, 1987] as well as the sensitivity and empathies of innovative teaching practice [Smith, 1990].

Similarly, the chief executive for Teacher Training Agency [TTA] quoted by Millett [1996b] argues:

Everyone is now agreed that the top priority in education is the need to raise pupils' standards of learning...And there is a widespread awareness that in a competitive world, constant progress is necessary just to maintain parity with other nations [p. 2].

However, as the shift is apparent, it can be argued that this movement towards new forms of assessment of pupils' work has been marked, by a calculated move away from the norm of standardized paper and pencil tests of knowledge and skill, to the use of other assessment tools that take on board the entire learning process of the pupils and their feelings about the education they are receiving. As such, more and more calls for more empathetic forms of assessment such as, 'authentic assessment' that attempt to harness the complexities of teaching and learning as they develop over time and across different contexts such as competence and performance and 'value added' are continually being sort [Shulman, 1988; Wolf, 1991; Boaler, 1997]. However, Stake holders continue to search for assessment changes that are evolutionary rather than a revolutionary.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that these perennial, thorny issues of assessment lie at the pinnacle of promoting children's learning by providing a framework in which educational objectives may be set, checked and counter balanced with a view of expressing and mapping pupils' progress. Thus, monitoring it can yield a basis for planning the next educational steps in response to children's needs basing on strengths and weakness manifested. In this light, it can be argued that assessment can provide a point for discussion and if done well can improve instruction and assist in sound teaching practices. For Ecclestone, [2005], 'when used well, it offers motivating ways for learners to describe achievement, to assess the quality of their own work and set meaningful and useful targets' [p. 76].

However, certain subjects of the curriculum present a quandary for teachers. Generally speaking, languages are subjective to teach and so, assessment in these subjects, [for example

English], may be inconsistent, hence a possibility of numerous inconsistencies by assessors due to misleading indicators of the pupils' performance and different abilities. This leads to what Seligman [1995b] calls learned helplessness. Seligman's [ibid] theory on learned helplessness postulates that animals and people learn to give up trying when they experience they have no control over what happens to them. This becomes the learned externalisation of locus of control. And for Westwood [1995], 'children with special educational needs who have negative school experiences remain markedly external in their locus of control, feeling that their efforts have little impact on their progress and that what happens to them in learning tasks is unrelated to their own actions' [p.21].

Sometimes students are unfairly subjected to considerable differences in assessment between teachers with some students judged mainly on individual student's behaviour, attitude or personal situation rather than by set subject etiquette or dictates. In some extreme cases, [overtly] sometimes students are assessed on the basis of behaviour racial, class and characteristics [institutional racism]. This divergence tends to undermine testing validity be it informally or formally done and runs contrary to Rogers' [1980] 'unconditional positive regards'. With this kind of subjectivity, it is possible that some teachers wittingly or unwittingly alter or manipulate assessment answers to manifest performance of certain students who have been predicated to do well.

Conversely though, it is argued by many that, assessment is multifaceted and has many aims such as, information, motivation and selection which are official aims but it also has more 'unseen' aims like control and legitimacy [Garfield 1994; Black and Atkin 1996; Brown 2001]. For instance, it is argued that assessment for selection has a long history in England and Wales, Europe and the world-over [Kvale, 1980; Andersson, 2001]. And for Child [2001], one function of many public examinations is to enable teachers, authorities and captains of industries to select people for certain occupational or scholastic pursuits.

In support, Gardner [2006] contends, 'assessing students is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and that opportunities should be provided for students to take responsibility for their own learning and self-monitoring [p. 195].

Garfield [ibid] then suggests some ways of gathering assessment information whose purposes include:

- Providing individual information to students about how well they have learned a particular topic and where they are having difficulty [feedback].
- Providing information to the instructor about the class' progress towards understanding a particular topic and perhaps what would be additional activities that might be introduced before moving on to another new topic.
- Serving as diagnostic information to instructors about individual students' understanding of these new or old concepts and skills or any huddles being encountered in the learning and grasping these new materials.
- Providing valuable information to teachers about students' perceptions and reactions to the class as a whole, the learning material, the subject matter, or particular activities.
- Acting as an overall indicator of students' success in achieving course goals.
- Assisting students to realize their overall strengths and weaknesses in learning a particular skill, or concept and or course materials. [Garfield 1994]

At this juncture, it is noteworthy to suggest that pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies and those that need a more concerted effort to master concepts find it hard to be engaged in the learning process. With league tables and credibility at stake, it is only logical to assume that such pupils will not be fully engaged in the learning process and will be left behind due to external pressures.

Ecclestone [2005] contends 'the pressure of external targets can make teachers and students adopt a low risk approach, thereby minimising engagement in order to 'get through' the requirements' [p.76]. However, the argument about league tables is not about their worthlessness and or fit for purpose but rather, the unnecessary and unbalanced pressure it places on schools and teachers. League tables give school authorities a picture of how their school is performing against other schools, 'classroom practice can be perceived as a 'key measure' of policy implementation' [Gardner 2005, p.185]. Conversely, 'there can be no

sound analysis of what makes schools effective without taking into account the market context in which they operate' [Slee et al., 1998, p.58]. The major question however is: is this a true picture of the school and do the results of the league tables have meaning to the intended audience? Moreover, Slee et al., [ibid] further argues:

A general concern about current definitions of effectiveness is that there is no sense that any relevance is accorded to where students come from, the nature of neither their life experiences nor their prospective destinations [p. 131].

Slee et al., [1998] argue that the pressure from league tables has led to the formation of Effective Schools Movement the [ESMs]. [ESM] is defined as: 'a regulator in the education market is the antithesis of empowerment it professes to offer' [Slee et al., 1998, p.21].

Conversely, Slee et al., [ibid] argue 'the emphasis on 'school effects' and differences masks the social justice issues of concern to those teaching in urban contexts' [p.24]. While for Hamilton [1996] in Slee et al., [1998]:

The [EMS] is shaped not so much by the inclusive education values that link democracy, sustainable growth, equal opportunities and social justice rather than by a divisive political discipline redolent of performance based league tables and performance related findings [p. 24].

Moreover, Slee et al., [ibid] argue, 'school effectiveness is anchored tightly into the broader issues of competitiveness and efficiency which frame and contextualize much current public policy and practice' [p.128].

Nevertheless, Strand [1997] in a detailed empirical study of results in schools in England and Wales at Key Stage 1, reported a concerted attempt to measure the progress of students in 1995 in terms of value-added analysis. As Strand [ibid] sees it, evaluation of schools in this manner is argued to be important in identifying effective practice and in initiating change. Strand [ibid] concluded that while this valued-added analysis identified differences between schools in the progress made by their pupils, there were still some ways to go to explain the differences.

This is contrary to Madaus, [1988]; Harlen [2001, 2004] and Black et al [1996] who argue that the National Curriculum for England and Wales does not appear to notably categorize the learning concepts into hierarchal levels of difficulties which present problems for both the

teachers and pupils. Nonetheless, the authors seem to acknowledge the difficulties involved in trying to design conceptually acceptable assessment steps that are reliable and yet cater for all levels.

However, regardless of the specific purpose of an assessment procedure, incorporating an assessment program by the teacher offers a way to reflect about what everyone is doing and to find out what is really happening in the class. It provides the teachers, pupils and authorities with a systematic way of gathering and evaluating information for use to improve knowledge, not only of students in a particular course, but the general knowledge of teaching in general. By using assessment to identify what is not working, as well as what is working, teachers can help students to become more aware of their own successes in assimilation, as well as become better at assessing their own skills and knowledge [Strand 1997].

Assessment can assist individual teachers and pupils to obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well learning has taken place. The educators in turn use this information to redirect their teaching, help make students' learning more effective and have meaning. But, it is not a hide and seek game, as Wiggins [1992] cited in Garfield [1994] espouses that, any type of assessment used to assign student grades, should recommend that the scoring rubrics be used, some model papers, and exemplars of good performance be shared with students in advance. These samples help provide students with insights into what is expected as good performance, allowing them to acquire standards comparable to the instructor's standards of performance.

Other assessment information such as minute papers or attitude surveys need not be given a score or grade, as suggested by Wiggins [1992], but can be used to inform the teacher about student understanding and feelings, as input for modifying instruction. Because assessment is often viewed as driving the curriculum and students learn to value what they know they will be tested on. It is suggested that teachers should assess what pupils value as a counter measure and always remember that children learn differently as pointed by Fisher [1995]. Fisher [ibid] argues that some children are audiles who learn better by their ears, others are vesiles who prefer using eyes while others are tactile who prefer using touch for their optimum learning.

Nevertheless, Fisher [1995, p.148] notes, skills and strategies are best taught in relation to specific curriculum subject areas. First we need to determine what students should know and be able to do as a result of participating in learning. This information should then be translated into clearly articulated goals and objectives [both broad and narrow] in order to determine what types of assessment are appropriate for evaluating attainment of these goals. One way of thinking about the main goals for a course is to consider what students will need to know and do [focussed approach] to succeed in future courses or jobs. Hence, William and Burden [1997] postulated, ‘what teachers know about a subject has influence on how they teach, if they have to know the content before scaffolding’ [p. 103].

Wiggins [1992] argues that we think of students as apprentices who are required to produce quality work and are therefore assessed on their real performance and use of knowledge. However, Garfield [1994] hints: ‘Another way to determine important course goals is to decide what ideas you really want students to retain six months after completing your statistics class’ [p. 4]. As such, one cannot help but provide a tool to check progress [successes and failures], because without which stake holders will demand its inception. Therefore, in any teaching/learning institution, there ought to be some form of assessment however controversial and the onus will be to the teachers, standards regulators and other stake holders to improve on its effectiveness.

It can therefore be argued that the need for assessment arises from the desire to check the learning process so as to support teaching and learning and to improve the quality of education being offered. As such, it is a little wonder that assessment can take several deferent forms for various purposes, depending on the prior need and purpose of the programme.

However, Ecclestone [2005] contends there are confusions arising from distinctions in cognitive psychology between behaviourist perspectives; humanist perspectives and cognitive perspectives. Ecclestone [ibid] argues:

...behaviourists...emphasise extrinsic motives based on goals, performance rewards and short-term goals; humanist perspectives that offer a hierarchy of intrinsic motives...innate desire to learn and cognitive perspectives that emphasise learners’ tendencies to adopt preferred learning styles...’ [p. 77].

Basically though, there are two types of assessment, assessment for learning and assessment of learning. These two are further divided into significant purposes; Formative, Diagnostic and Summative and Evaluation.

These key terms are summarized below.

Figure 3.2. Assessment key terms and purposes

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE
Formative	Assessment, that promotes learning by using evidence about where students have reached in relation to the goals of their learning, to plan the next steps in their learning and know how to take them. Includes diagnostic assessment- to assess the progress and development to knowledge and skills during the process of learning.
Diagnostic/ Remedial	To locate particular difficulties in the acquisition or application of knowledge and skills. The range of methods stretches from informal analysis to standardized methods using specific tools designed to pinpoint the source of difficulty.
Summative	Summative assessment [assessment of learning] provides a summary of achievements at a particular point-provides information to those with an interest in students' achievement: mainly parents, other teachers, employers, further and higher education institutions and the students themselves. Assessment serves as an evaluative purpose as predictors of future performance.

Child [2001] of all the forms of assessment referred to, 'children are supposed to benefit from the most formative methods..., the intention is to optimise feedback to pupils, pointing out strengths and weaknesses and guiding their subsequent work' [p.358].

Conversely, Nuttall, [1989] observed,

--the way in which the task is presented, the presenter and the perceived significance of the task to the student- factors which might be termed the 'context' of the task in a broader sense — can all have a major effect on the performance of the person presented with the task [p.273].

Consequently, Nuttall concludes ‘assessment [like learning] is highly context-specific and one generalizes at one’s peril’ [p. 273]. Thus, it can be argued that assessment has the potential to intervene [by either making or breaking spirits] in teaching/learning and the curriculum. As echoed by Black and Atkin, [1996], assessment practices in schools have the ability to instil in young persons a positive or negative judgment and value which may be difficult to alter.

With the progressive world clamouring for changes in educational assessment both within the fields of measurement and evaluation, the current and traditional forms of assessment provide a method for assigning numerical scores to determine letter grades pleasing mainly the would be employers. Black and Atkin [ibid] argue that current regimes rarely reveal information about how students actually understand; reason and apply their knowledge to solving real life problems. Assessment can have a positive or negative effect on pupils. Thus, assessment biasness can destroy pupils’ future hence the need for empathetic teachers. However, it can be noted though, that pupils need to contribute to the process of their learning so as to assist teachers to help them.

It can be argued that the current assessment regimes do not break the vicious circle of failures. As such, the need for proper and appropriate assessment instruments and procedures cannot be over emphasized. Responding to this need, [Messick, 1984; Wood, 1986] both in Nuttall [1989] assert, ‘modern educational assessment is beginning to strive to permit those assessed to show their best performance and to take account of the factors that might prevent the best performance from being demonstrated’ [p. 273].

Conversely, Nuttall’s [1989] observation appears to have been superseded by the advent of league tables since more time appears to be devoted to how pupils will fare in an examination which some would call ‘coaching’. However Garfield [1994], postulate that the term ‘assessment’ is often used in different contexts to mean different things to different people. Garfield [ibid] contends that ‘assessment is taken as testing and grading: scoring outcomes in performances in exams and assigning course grades to students’ [ibid p.1]. Garfield further argues, ‘we typically use assessment as a way to inform students about how well they are doing or how well they did in the courses they are taught’ [ibid, p.1]. Even so, an emerging vision of

assessment is that of a dynamic process that continuously assists to check and counter balance information about student progress toward the perceived achievement of learning goals.

Conversely however, Harlen [2005] argues, ‘when testing is influencing what goes on in the classroom, little use is made of formative assessment to help learning’ [p.210]. It is postulated therefore, that the current reform movement in educational assessment tries to engage with learners and forces teachers to take cognisance of affects of assessment more broadly than being a means to an end and ‘--using test results to assign grades and rank students’ [Garfield 1994, p. 2]. As such, Harlen [2005] warns, ‘it takes a good deal of support - and courage- for teachers to turn round their practices from being test-oriented to being learning-oriented’ [p.210].

However, Black and Atkin [1996] espouse that assessment is multiple and that it intervenes in the educational system in many ways, especially summative assessment. Importantly, Black and Atkin [ibid] argue that, it is misleading to speak of 'assessment' in the singular, but rather look at it as a product influenced by many variables and a uniform activity perfectly controllable by a single means. For Brown [2001], ‘purposes of assessment are interconnected to summative and formative assessment, and that summative assessment contributes to the final marks’ [p. 5]. Brown [2001] postulates:

Key principles of effective assessment and the common weaknesses of assessment systems are primarily concerned with linkages between outcomes, the design of assessment tasks, criteria, marking procedures and feedback [p. 2].

Further to this argument, Brown [ibid] notes a number of key principles of assessment that educators need to take cognisance of and argues the following:

- Assessment shapes learning so if you want to change learning then change the assessment method;
- match the assessment tasks to the learning outcomes;
- match the criteria to the task and learning outcomes;
- keep the criteria simple;
- be fair, reliable and valid in your marking;
- Provide meaningful, timely feedback. [Brown 2001]

However, Garfield [1994] conversely suggests that assessment:

--is often a final verdict: it can determine categorical decisions about students or sanctions upon them; and it often shapes the judgments of parents, teachers and policy-makers. It links the world of learning with the society outside. The positive or negative value that it attaches to a young person may be hard ever to alter. There is no such thing as simple assessment of a student's practice of a discipline, or of a student's acquisition of knowledge in a discipline, or even of a student's awareness of acquiring such knowledge. It has to embrace the whole work of learning and it has to relate to the whole work of teaching, and then to assess the effectiveness of this combined work. [p.4]

Nevertheless, Garfield [ibid] discusses efforts being made by all stake holders to take stock of gains achieved in the assessment fields and argues: 'there have been efforts in the revival of interest in the mechanisms by which students' affective responses to learning tasks moderate knowledge acquisition and skill development' [p. 1].

By taking cognizance of the emphasis placed on levels of academic achievements in schools, it becomes clear that the manner by which students assimilate knowledge through the learning process and ways and means they are assessed has become a world wide primary concern for many educationists and policymakers alike. Years of increased testing and sometimes, consequences of poor test scores, [e.g. GSCE and 'A' level results in England and Wales in 2004]- many educators have begun to critically look at the machinery /measures put in place to monitor students' performances and evaluate learning programs.

3.4. Why Undertake Assessment?

There are a number of worthy reasons why it is imperative that assessment is carried out, some of which are listed below. These were derived from Angelo, [1991]; Ysseldyke, [1995]; Chickering and Gamson, [1987] published works.

- Steps can be taken to provide appropriate help and support before any difficulties that are present become more compounded by feelings of anxiety and sense of failure. Where the difficulties are mild, early interventions may largely overcome the problem, while in more severe cases; the sooner the pupil receives help, and the more effective that help is likely to prove.

- The Assistant Master and Mistresses Association cited by Pumfrey and Reason [2001, p. 235], postulate that, because these pupils' weaknesses are sometimes matched by strengths in other areas of learning, it is easy for their difficulties to be overlooked. They may be thought as being lazy, or lacking in perseverance.
- Assessment and identification could lead directly to more widespread access to the range of sources.
- To prevent an accumulation of learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties by overcoming learning apathy and lack of motivation.
- So that pupils receive the appropriate teaching and additional support required for those in difficult circumstances.
- Those found to be with greater difficulties will be withdrawn to a unit for small group teaching at a school that makes special provision, where skill development is directly related to curriculum load.

From the list of reasons for carrying out assessment above, the critical question that arises is, 'is the assessment genuinely used to reflect on teaching or does it construct pupils' deficiencies?' The answer to this question is not clear-cut as there is evidence for either argument.

However, Angelo [1991] argues firstly that assessment is what educators can do in order to demonstrate to themselves that they actually do what they say they do and that it is our source of in-process feedback. As opposed to grades, assessment decomposes the curriculum [or an assignment, class, or course] into component parts and makes those parts visible. Secondly, assessment satisfies the demands for accountability by external agencies. Angelo [ibid] further contends that assessment is non-judgmental in the sense that it focuses on learning, which is the outcome of many influences, including teaching style, student motivation, and time on task, study intensity and background knowledge. Conversely, Ecclestone, [2005] argues 'the design of assessment system and their implementation are profoundly political and social in underlying purposes, trends and effects' [p.76]. From this argument, it is evident therefore that, no one element can be reasonably singled out for praise or blame for a particular learning outcome as postulated by Angelo, [1991]. For McGivney [2003] Education is a very

expensive commodity which demands that those who provide it realise that there are obstacles that hold some pupils back. Conversely, child [2001] argues, ‘inconsistency in expectations and demands of parents and teachers can give rise to disturbing and insecure feelings among children’ [p.55]. It follows therefore that teachers need to strike a balance between pupils’ motivation and the need for achievement and affiliation to provide a coherent background.

Therefore, given the immense costs of education, if learning institutions do not use assessment to provide accountability, then it will be very difficult for them to be judged by the public. To provide the much sought answers, the incumbent government uses objective- type test assessment [such as the multiple-choice examinations] and continuous assessment, orals and practicals. At this juncture, I will discuss some of the assessment regimes that are in place in English and Welsh schools, such as grade-related criteria and the Standard Assessment Tasks [SATs] which include rating scales and checklists.

3.5.0 Types of Assessment Regimes

There are several ways to gather assessment information and it is often recommended that multiple methods be used to provide a richer and more complete representation of students’ learning. As Garfield [1994] argues:

What all types of assessment have in common is that, they consist of a situation, task, or questions; a student response; an interpretation [by the teacher or one who reviews the assessment information]; an assignment of meaning to the interpretation; and reporting and recording of results. [p. 5]

Even so, the selection of appropriate assessment methods and instruments depend as suggested by [Garfield 1994; Brown 2001] on the purpose of the assessment: why the information is being gathered and how it will be used. Garfield [1994] argues that if the purpose of a particular assessment activity was to determine how well students learnt some important concepts or skills, a different instrument or approach would ideally be used than if the purpose was to provide quick feedback to students so that they could review material on a particular topic.

To have a better understanding of assessment regimes currently in use in English and Welsh schools, a summary table will be used followed by discussions on identified assessment models as follows.

FIGURE 3.1. A TABLE TO SUMMARISE TYPES OF ASSESSMENT REGIMES

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT	IMPACT ON LEARNERS	IMPACT ON INSTITUTION
formative or diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -encourages critical reflection and engagement with problems in subject disciplines and in social and occupationally related problems. -offers learners oral and written ‘critical conversations’. -critical and responsive learning through reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -radical transformation -support teachers in continuing professional development. -valuing all learners.
classroom assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -learners receive continuous assessment and are integrated into the learning cycle –that is providing the basis for planning and monitoring own progress. -receive feedback on teaching and helps learners to set new targets. -provides students with information and insights needed to improve learning effectiveness. -encourages students to view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities. -learner efforts are used to assessing own learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -promote learning autonomy. - widen students’ scope to take greater learning independence. -build social capital for teachers [learning, working, supporting and working together]. - increased inquiry and cooperation between staff.
norm-referenced assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -students are expected to score highly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -performance orientation; assist learners to comply with performance goals.
criterion referenced assessment outcome-based systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -claim to encourage learners’ potentials -promotes learner autonomy. -gives learners access to outcomes and criteria. -encourages learners to engage more actively with assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -makes teachers and institutions to be more accountable to learners

On the contrary Brown [2001] contends that assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students. Brown further argues ‘it is a major concern of those who learn, those who teach and those who are responsible for the development of assessment’ [p.3].

3.5.1. Formative / Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning/formative assessment is defined by OECD [2005] as: ‘frequent, interactive assessments of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately’ [p. 21.]. The key ingredients of assessment for learning include peer and self assessment, feedback to support learning and effective questioning [Gardner 2006]. However, Gardner [2006] argues that there are differences between Assessment Reform Group [ARG] [2002a] definition [of assessment for learning/formative assessment] that emphasises the use of assessment information by the learners and the OECD definition which stresses the adjusting of teaching in light of the assessment.

the QCA [2004] put forward the argument that, the balance that any teacher strikes between Assessment for Learning [AfL] and pupils’ individualism appears to be a matter of personal choice and of the impact of external influences, including national educational policies, and not one that is necessarily grounded in the current state of knowledge about the nature of learning and assessment and how this is best applied in schools/colleges. This means that: what, how and when the individual child is taught is left at the digression of the individual teachers however biased.

Conversely, Black and William [1998] identified the need to ensure appropriate teacher development as crucial to the success of [AfL]. Students too need to acquire assessment skills [specifically group] in areas such as verbal expression, sensitivity, turn-talking and listening.

For Pajares [1992], teachers are generally influenced by their beliefs, which in turn influence the way they teach, or closely linked to their values or views of the world and to their conceptions. These have a greater influence on the way they plan their lessons or the kinds of decisions they make on general classroom practice. It is in this light and having looked at the

mechanics involved in the assessment for learning that I wonder: How may formal and informal assessment impact upon the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties learning in mixed ability classes? Even if, teachers are able to identify these pupils, does it follow that they are sure about how to support them?

As the introduction of decentralized continuous assessment in learning has led to the introduction of new and varied learning and assessment strategies, there is need to evaluate their effects on pupils. On the surface, there seem to be some deficiencies in the support which might involve individual Education Plans [IEPs] as well as in the target settings and making classrooms generally friendly to such pupils. For instance, despite the notable support for the use of school leavers' portfolios, in England and Wales schools, it can be argued that, not much is known about the effects of this kind of assessment on students' learning, more so, for those children with learning difficulties and language deficiencies, learning in mixed ability classes. For instance, it has been suggested that children with dyslexia may have difficulty with the metacognitive aspects of learning [Turner and Chapman 1996], which implies that they need to be shown how to learn, the connections and relationships between different learning tasks which essentially mean that the emphasis should not be on the assessment for learning but the process of it which calls for their thinking skills to be improved.

In light of the general observations by Pumfrey and Reason [2005] who argue that 1 in 3 boys and 1 in 5 girls are dyslexic, how then does the teacher improve these pupils' potentials in say, thinking skills, meta-cognition, encourage them to participate in class debates, discussions and group work if a good number of them have language and learning deficiencies and there are league table issues to contend with? This will surely pose some challenges that might include other aspects such as culture shocks for these pupils and loss of self-esteem.

Bair [2001, p. 179] says that 'implementation without Formative Assessment is like trying to negotiate a mine field blindfolded'. Formative assessment can easily involve one or more assessment activities. It treats pupils differently there by according both the teacher and the pupil a chance to plan their plan of action that is acceptable to the two parties. It in co-operates diagnostic assessment which brings out the salient aspects in teaching/ learning situations. The

teacher and student become active participants in the assessment process and they all benefit from the exercise. Finally, formative assessment has far less problems than those presented by criterion referencing. Rudd and Davis [2001] argue that Formative assessment prevents incorrect and surface interpretations. They assert that it permits feedback and corrective action if performance is sub optimal and suggestions for improvement. They also reiterate that comments from teachers /assessors should benefit students and should set a dialogue between teacher and learner. ‘Self evaluation now sits alongside and has been embraced by external inspection as a major mechanism for monitoring and raising standards of achievements in schools’ [ibid].

By contrast, formative assessment does not give normative information, [for instance, whether a pupil can manage what is normally managed at that age or not]. There are possibilities that the method may restrict assessment to skills for which criteria may easily be staged depending on what criteria are formatively assessed and how data is used. Reliability of this formative assessment is typically unknown and choice of items may be arbitrary and misleading. It therefore seems incredibly difficult to strike a balance between Formative and Summative assessments. For example, Denvir [1987] cited by Murphy and Moon [1989] draws a battle line by equating the diagnostic assessment to the ‘cup and jug’ theory, [which assumes that the child’s head is an empty vessel that needs to be filled with knowledge from the jug which happens to be an adult/teacher]. This is in total contrast to Harrison [1989] contention of the diagnostic testing. Surely, for any meaningful teaching/learning to take place, the teacher should be aware of the difficulties, strengths and the level at which the struggling pupil is operating. This information would form the basis for learning and can only be obtained through diagnostic testing.

However, on the contrary Harlen [2001] reports that, the Assessment Reform Group [ARG] members ‘have for some time been concerned that some policies and practices in relation to Summative assessment may not only be preventing greater attention to assessment for learning and may have unwanted effects on pupil’s motivation for learning [p. 3]. Therefore, it is worth noting that, assessment should be supporting learning rather than cause tensions in the learning processes.

As a motivational gesture, there is need to set up deliberate biasness towards reporting individual achievements and these should be reflected in the final assessment as well as satisfying demands for the public accountability. Rowntree [1988.] observed that,

Despite many assumptions to the contrary, assessment is not the same thing as grading or marking. Just as tests and examinations are possible means of assessment so grades and marks are possible outcomes. Assessment should also be necessary pre-condition for diagnostic appraisal, ascertaining the student's strengths and weakness and identify his emerging needs and interests. In truth it is the practice of diagnostic appraisal [not grading that enables us to claim we are teaching [p. 4].

By and large, it follows therefore that National curriculum ought to inculcate the idea of authentic assessment as proposed by Funderstanding [2001]. This will induce the need for schemes of work that emphasise the need to identify clearly the objectives of a lesson. Under this assessment, it would be mandatory to share the objectives of the lessons with the pupils in their learning making teachers accountable for the short comings for their teaching methods. The teachers would be required to explain clearly the reason for the lesson activities in terms of the learning objectives, share the assessment criteria and help pupils understand their failures and achievements. This stands attempts to show pupils that learning is a democratic process and is not a hide and seeks game. As Crooks [1988] argues that pupils will have to be shown how to use assessment criteria to assess their own learning. This would, [I hope] create a sense of belonging in children's education as postulated by Harlen [2001].

Nevertheless, the QCA [2001] is advocating for Assessment for learning, which they assert to involve classroom assessment to improve learning. It differs from Assessment of learning that measures what the learners know or can do. Much recent research by QCA [ibid] 'indicates that effective formative assessment is a key factor in raising pupils' standards of achievement'. Central to Assessment for learning is that it:

- is embedded in the teaching and learning process of which it is an essential part;
- shares learning goals with pupils;
- helps pupils to know and to recognize the standards to aim for;
- provides feedback which leads pupils to identify what they should do next to improve;
- has a commitment that every pupil can improve;

- Involves both the teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on pupils' performance and progress.
- Involves pupils in self-assessment.

Hargreaves [2001] sums it up when he suggests that 'reports should provide commentary on pupils' performance in last years' tests and highlight implications for teaching and learning.

However, it should suffice to say that, change in one part of a system has a significant bearing in all parts of that system. Therefore, when educational reforms are developed, it should be considered important to carry out feasibility research on how different parts of the system will interact as suggested by Harlen and James [1996]. Research on this view of reform, termed 'systemic research' conducted by Harlen and James [1996], considers the teacher and teacher development to be a significant factor since the teacher is at the centre of and mediates the systemic change. Bearing in mind that any changes that will effect change may also alter the pupils' future for ever, insights into appropriate interventions need to be implemented gradually through empirical studies where the many variables can be explored. According to Harlen and James [1996], this review assumes that the importance of education and schooling is to bring about learning with understanding [learning with an interpretative process or deep learning], that may be deemed life long learning.

3.5.2. Summative Assessment

Summative and evaluation are outcome or achievement oriented whereas informative and diagnostic are concerned with learning. The Summative assessment is good for evaluation, selection, and curriculum control and for having an overview of accumulated knowledge for certification purpose. Therefore, as argued by Harlen [2001], it is indisputable that, used as Summative assessment 'in the form of tests and examinations it is a key source of motivation' [p.1]. This notion is based on the premise that there has been gradual increases in test scores yearly in England and in some states in USA [Harlen, *ibid*]. On the contrary, sceptics such as Koretz, [1998]; Linn, [2000]; Kohn, [2000], all beg to differ as they attribute the successes to at least 'to greater familiarity of teachers and pupils with the tests rather than increasing learning [p.3]. This too has led other critics such as Madaus et al., [1992] to suggest that the

ripple effects of test motivation exacerbates the gap between higher and lower achieving pupils as it turns to widen the gap.

Ironically, a more recent article in the Metro dated [16/03/07] read:

A-Level and GCSE, exams have become too easy, the Government's exams watchdog declared today'. Standard in English, music and psychology have fallen in recent years, according to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The questions were predictable and pupils were allowed to gain better grades while doing less work, the watchdog claimed' [the Metro 16/03/07].

As can be noted, Summative assessment has so many disadvantages that could lead to abuses. It has detrimental effects on those who judge themselves as unlikely to be good enough. There are high chances of pre-mature surrender as the candidate sees it as a sheer waste of time to pursue something he/she will never achieve. The likelihood of the system serving the interest of the selectors and not the learner are high. Because of this, the minority who may hijack the cause and needs of the majority may affect curriculum choices for all. If Summative assessment becomes the norm, it may serve only the interests of teachers and schools rather than the learning needs of children. It could also have a telling effect or influence on those not selected for the benefit offered by the purpose of the assessment. This could lead to poor motivation and disengagement from teaching/ learning tasks. Because of these weaknesses, abuses such as teaching to the test [Ecclestone 2003], taking scores too literally, and misunderstanding the meaning of the scores become the order of assessment. Comparing these scores obtained on different tests could lead to measuring different skills there by making standardisation different and meaningless.

On the contrary, more recent research by QCA [2001] contend that Summative evaluation is used by teachers to find out what changes they might make to teaching methods and styles, course organisation, context and instructional activities in order to improve the teaching process. Summative evaluation is not only done after production or completion of a phase. It is typically about comparative measurements done to assist decisions of its use, for example, what people think about it, what is learned etc [ibid].

3.5.3. Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment is one method used by learning institutions for collecting feedback early and often, on how well students are learning what they are being taught. The purpose of classroom assessment is to provide learning institutions and students with information and insights needed to improve teaching effectiveness and learning quality. Teachers then use feedback gained through Classroom Assessment to inform adjustments in their teaching. For Queensland Studies Authority [2005] [QSA], assessment ought to ‘be continuous and on going and be integrated into the learning cycle –that is provide the basis for planning and monitoring student progress, providing feedback on teaching and setting new targets’[p.195]. Ideally, learning institutions should share feedback with students and use it to help them improve their learning strategies and study habits in order to become more independent, successful learners. Classroom Assessment is one method of inquiry within the framework of Classroom Research, a broader approach to improving teaching and learning [Angelo, T.A., 1991].

However, Chickering and Gamson [1987] espouse that there are mainly seven principles for good practice in assessment:

1. Encourages contact between students and learning institution and teachers
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. Encourages active learning
4. Gives prompt feedback on performance
5. Emphasizes time on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

3.5.4. Authenticity’ In Assessment/ Self-Assessment

One of the many assessment methods being advocated for by ‘assessment for learning’ is authentic assessment. Authentic assessment requires students to work collaboratively, apply learnt skills and concepts to solve real life problems. Assessment tasks often include ability to demonstrate analytic skills, ability to integrate what students have creatively learnt, ability to

work collaboratively, written and oral expression skills. Wiggins [1993] argues authentic assessment is:

...engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively. The tasks are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field [p. 229].

As can be appreciated, pupils with language deficiencies will inevitably fail to impress, not because they do not understand what is expected of them, but because they lack the necessary tool needed to do the task. The teacher too is trapped as s/he cannot do anything to assist and has targets to meet and prepare for the coming league tables with which the school's performance will be judged.

Feuerstein [1980] attributes underachievement to lack of proper mediation. He argues that if all adult/child interactions were learning experiences it would narrow the divide between high achieving and low achieving individuals. Recognition of the importance of 'mediated learning' causes teachers to move from the 'provider of knowledge' to 'learning facilitator' model, as the students become more self-regulating, independent and creative leading to 'self-assessment'.

Newmann and Wehlage [1993] claim that 'authentic assessments' help students create 'discourse, products, and performances, that have value or meaning beyond success in school' [p.8], as well as Feuerstein [1980] whose notion and belief is that anyone can become a fully effective learner; that peoples' cognitive structures are infinitely modifiable [i.e. can achieve full extent of their learning potential with effective mediation]. However, Wiggins [1989] cited by Garfield [2001] argues that the first two of these characteristics as criteria for 'authenticity' assessment should be reflective of the scholarly work of professionals on the ground and to show active engagement, exploration and inquiry on the part of the student. The argument of authenticity which contends that, it is contextually embedded and rich with intellectual opportunity for the participant, intimately paralleled by Dietel et al., [1991]. They contend that, these alternative assessment regimes called 'authentic assessment' or performance assessment have incorporated a wide variety of strategies such as open-ended questions, exhibits, demonstrations, hands-on execution of experiments, computer simulations,

writing in many disciplines, and portfolios of students' work over time. And so, it is argued by many that these terms and assessment strategies have led the quest for more meaningful assessment tools that better capture the noteworthy outcomes we anticipate students to achieve and counterbalance the kinds of tasks which they will need to accomplish in order to assure their future success.

For Ecclestone, [2005], these issues are embedded in motivation to learn whether intrinsic or extrinsic [which I believe to be the core of authentic assessment]. Furthermore, Ecclestone suggests, 'instead of viewing motivation as an individual concern, it is perhaps more helpful to regard psychological factors, individual and group learning histories and social conditions as equally influential' [p.78]. Ecclestone, [ibid] argues that, motivation and achievement in formal learning programmes are both affected by:

- Whether learners attribute achievement to factors outside their control [such as innate ability, difficulty with particular tasks and the effects of luck];
- Intrinsic factors within their control, such as effort;
- Learners' perceptions of job and social prospects in relation to the effort needed to succeed in formal learning; and
- Learners' ideas about 'acceptable' behaviour within learning programme [p.78].

Conversely, while 'performance-based assessments' [as further argued by Dietel et al, 1991], continue to gain support among educators and other stakeholders, many uses of performance based assessment suggest competency based models of testing where assessors focus on the frequency of certain teaching/learning behaviour but lack the means to address the intricacy of the teacher's decision making processes. Several studies have subsequently highlighted the distinct role that such factors can play in the learning process [e.g. Mathewson, 1994]; lays particular emphasis on those associated with student engagement levels.

Therefore, it can be appreciated that there are many variables involved in underachievement e.g. family breakdown, schooling disrupted by illness, or blocks to the individual's accessibility to mediation. The individual may be passive in their approach to the environment-receiving information but not actively using or generating information. Able

students may be insufficiently challenged by the learning experiences on offer to them. Low expectation, feeling of inadequacy, low self-belief may result, which may need to be replaced by self-confidence and self reliance.

Therefore, learning with understanding is actively understood and internalized by the learner and makes sense in terms of a learner's experience of the world. Learning is not simply a collection of isolated facts, which have been memorized. It differs from rote learning in that it is linked to previous experience and can be transferred to new situations. What is known and understood will therefore, change with new experience and as new ideas and skills are presented to help make sense of it. Harlen and James [1996] characterize learning as:

- progressively developed in terms of big ideas, skills for living and learning, attitudes and values;
- constructed on the basis of previous ideas and skills;
- applied to contexts other than those in which it was learned;
- owned by the learner in the sense that it becomes a fundamental part of the way he or she understands the world;
- simply not ephemeral knowledge that may be memorised for recall in examinations and subsequently forgotten.

There is a further dimension to learning, which is highlighted by the disciplined inquiry approach in the England and Wales reviewed by Gipps and MacGilchrist [1999], who note that things are easier to learn if they have a meaning to the learner. Gipps and MacGilchrist [ibid] contend that meaning makes learning easier because the learner is aware of the position and placement of things in the mental framework and in turn, meaning makes knowledge useful because the prose and cones are already part of the understanding. This is little different to Vygotsky's [1984] concept of zone of proximal development and skilful mediation. This is incorporated in socio-cultural views of learning where learning is a process of knowledge construction. As Rouse [2001] reiterates Einstein's maxim 'learning is experience, everything else is just information' [p.8]. Rouse further argues, 'what we know, feel, learn and think is shaped by how we know, feel, learn and think' [ibid]. If the fore going sayings are anything to go by, then Vygotsky's [1984] theory on how culture shapes and impinges upon pupils'

knowledge and future learning is greatly strengthened. Conversely, Vygotsky [ibid] espouses that teaching is not seen as a direct transfer of knowledge but an intervention in a continuous knowledge building process.

Other social constructivists such as [Williams and Burden 1997; Watson, 1991] recognise that much of learning is of a social nature and focuses on an individual acquiring knowledge-in-social construct. In congruence, Williams and Burden [1997] argue ‘humanistic approaches emphasise the importance of the inner world of the learner and place the individual’s thoughts, feelings and emotions at the fore front of all human development’ [p. 30]. Therefore social views of learning see knowledge as a result of total immersion in culture, something cohesive and holistic, which then provides scaffolding for later learning. Vygotsky’s [1934] notion of internalised speech is one such example where language and culture have a major roll to play in constructing meaning in learning. For, Vygotsky’s [1934] notion was based on the premise that language is a cultural tool that involves mediation and therefore thought is a social activity for construction of meaning. The implications drawn from this theory of learning are that emphasis should be placed on dialogue in the classroom and that pupils have potential to achieve with support what they may be incapable of doing alone. Rouse [2001] reminds us that, ‘every learning situation deals basically with the same steps: sensory input, integration, assimilation and action. Sensory motor integration facilitates each step of the process by waking up the mind-body system and bringing it to learning readiness’ [p.9]. This reminder is important especially when teachers want to administer effective scaffolding. For this reason, Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development that describes this potential for learning has been taken up and linked to the idea of teaching as a process of ‘scaffolding’ understanding through skilful mediation. This would involve mainly two areas of consideration:

- assessment of the students’ abilities and problem solving skills
- assessment of the teaching strategies

This view of learning recognizes that features such as gender, class and culture help to shape our schools, colleges and society. But the reality is that, more often than not, women, ethnic minority groups, and the very poor are seen as located unequally in the social formation and

education systems. Even so, it can be argued that the knowledge they bring and the practices, which shape them, are seen as being unequally integrated into teaching and learning. It should be noted that, if learning is a life changing enterprise, teaching and learning ought to include not only subject knowledge and practices, but also recognition of broader social relationships.

From this point of view, [as argued by McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993], any concept taught must be concerned with what is taught, how it is taught and how it is learned and with the nature of knowledge and learning. Thus, according to Gipps and MacGilchrist [1999], ‘knowledge-in-social-construct’ can be seen as the knowledge that is produced, negotiated, transformed and realized in the interaction between the teacher, the learner and the knowledge itself. Nevertheless, Nuttall [1989] contends that there are significantly interrelated factors that affect performance under conditions of assessment which are: ‘motivation to do the task and interest in it [influenced by the personal experience and the instructional value of performing it; the relationship between the assessor and the individual being assessed and the conditions under which the assessment is made; the way in which the task is being presented, the language used to describe it and the degree to which it is within the personal experience of the individual being assessed [p.271]. Seemingly, Nuttall’s [ibid] perspective is that in reality, pupils’ competencies are modified by numerous factors such as assessment cues, feelings and expectations.

It is with these arguments in mind that one wonders how the current assessment regimes accommodate all pupils and their individualisms. With this view in mind, it seems appropriate to explore efforts being made towards achieving this goal.

To promote effective learning, Harlen and James [1996] argue that what is needed are learning experiences that:

- are well matched to the existing point of development of the ideas, skills, attitudes and values;
- have continuity with, and build on, previous experience;
- relate to current interests and experience;

- are perceived by learners as relevant, important, stimulating and valued for themselves, rather than simply for their usefulness in passing tests and examinations.

3.5.5. Norm-Referenced Assessment

Jones and Bray, [1986] argued that ‘assessment which is norm-referenced is widely used in schools and in public examinations’ [p.95]. According to Child [2001] norm-referenced testing, ‘employs the distribution of scores for each age group using representative samples, and they are then rescaled using a convenient mean and standard deviation. ‘It compares the performance of an individual with that of a representative group from which ‘norms’ of performance have been derived’ [p.249]. Interestingly, Child, [ibid] argues:

The distribution of the scores on either side of the mean is then usually manipulated so that about 70 % of the scores fall within the range from 85 to 115 [i.e. 15 points on either side of the newly created mean] will tail], ...the distribution of scores on either side of the mean will tail off in a regular and symmetrical fashion [ibid].

As can be appreciated, one striking feature of norm-referenced measure system can dampen one’s effort if his/her efforts count for little because scores have been manipulated [whether based on raw score or on value added measure. Why, because the rules of the normal distribution, the curve, the graph should be observed. But, is this the truth about one’s effort? It is evident however that those less gifted individuals will be frustrated by the system in the interest of the so-called ‘normal distribution graph’.

Conversely, Asby and Sainsbury [2001] argue that the England and Wales National tests are intended to give information to teachers, for use in planning teaching and learning, to the Government, Local Authorities [LEAs] and the public in general about standards in education nationally and locally. Asby and Sainsbury [ibid] however, do not discuss how this information helps teachers to plan pupils’ work. Nevertheless, they [ibid] further argue that there is a strong accountability purpose underlying the testing system and point out that since 1997; Key stage 2 results have had an even higher profile, in that they are used to measure progress towards the Government’s targets in literacy and numeracy. And also assert that norm-referenced assessment is a screening device, separating sheep from goats, for finding out who is good, bad or indifferent by comparing them with others. Ysseldyke, [1995] concurs:

When a large domain is assessed, a student's performance is typically interpreted by comparing it to performances of a group of subjects of known demographic characteristics [Age, sex, grade in school and so on] [p.107].

It follows therefore that norm- referenced tests are for comparing pupils in classes or school with norms of their age and for measuring progress. And thus, 'norm- referencing has to do with discriminating between individuals in a group by comparing all their scores' Child, 2001, [p. 250]. Importantly however, Child, [ibid] argues that these tests are not really designed to answer questions about the child's level of performance in a particular task or to help in the diagnosis of performance.

For Ecclestone, [2002] norm-referenced systems-'based on the enduring idea in the UK that assessment must select those learners with innate ability for limited places in education and good jobs [p.2]. The idea of the normal distribution/ normal curve on a graph will assist to shade light on the argument. Normal curve 'a distribution of events occurring randomly, with the largest single number of cases at the mean, large numbers of cases close to the mean, and progressively fewer cases as we move further away from the mean' [Jupp, 1996, p.187].

Nonetheless, Child, [2001] argues:

..the fact is that, there is no right way of drawing a graph, you scale it so that it makes the point you want to make...treat the graphic presentations you come across in published reports as illustrations of points, not as proof of them; the proof-if proof is possible-lies in the data themselves, not in how they are drawn' [p.191].

This assessment system is very subjective in that it punishes the low achievers. What this entails is that, if the initiator of the test anticipates a certain percentage to pass a particular test, the results will be manipulated to reflect that desire.

3.5.6. Criterion- Referenced

On the other hand, criterion referenced or outcome-based assessment tests 'are primarily designed to assess the specific skills a pupil has' [Ysseldale, 1995, p. 488]. It is useful in determining those skills the pupil does not have, and to relate the assessment to curricular content. In other words, criterion-referenced assessment is tied to instructional objectives and individual items are designed to assess mastery of specific objectives. From Ysseldale's [1995] argument, one can safely assume that, criterion-referenced tests are concerned with

measuring how much pupils have learnt. This assists the teacher to evaluate his/her teaching objectives and to diagnose difficulties. As such, teachers can use these assessment strategies to formulate teaching programs. Therefore when assessing, assessors should be clear as to why they are assessing. Conversely, Ecclestone, [2005] argues that, supporters of criterion or outcome-based assessment argue that it:

- Is democratic and motivating because it publicly defines outcomes and criteria for assessing achievement;
- Enables learners and teachers to negotiate learning process and evidence that might compromise achievement and progress;
- Promotes learner autonomy in the form of choice over assessment activities and processes;
- Makes standards of assessment more valid and authentic by specifying the outcome and criteria that comprise the required knowledge, skills and attributes; and
- Offers a basis for merging vocational and academic pathways and credit based qualifications [p.90].

However, the results of criterion-referenced tests can then be used in a Summative way to evaluate individual teacher and school performance, as in the publication of school league tables, build ‘images of individual learning targets processes and activities and evidence of achievement’ [Ecclestone, 2005, p. 90].

3.4.

3.6. Valid Assessment and Reliable Assessment

In the light of problems with valid and reliable assessment, some argue that assessment should focus on the pupils’ emotional and affective aspects as well. This may entail paying particular interest is the concept of test validity that captures these essential characteristics and the extent to which an assessment actually measures what it is intended to measure, and permits appropriate generalizations about students' skills and abilities. It is envisaged that, good assessment ought to give feedback to students about their learning and progress; as well as give feedback to teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching and curriculum planning.

It follows therefore that, good assessment information should provide accurate estimates of students' performance so as to provide teachers or other decision makers with appropriate information to make learned decisions. Harlen [2004] postulates that, according pupils with opportunities to realize their accomplishments and to recognize shortcomings, but keeping within sight of the fact that assessment may influence students' learning in a positive or negative way is a starting point.

Nonetheless, by focusing on more subtle cognitive behavioural and emotional display of student engagement in specific learning tasks, behaviourists Skinner and Belmont [1993] discuss 'engagement and disaffection' in school, and refer to the intensity and emotional quality of children's involvement in initiating and carrying out learning activities. They assert that:

Children who are engaged show sustained behavioural involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest. [Skinner and Belmont 1993, p. 572]

However, on the negative side, Skinner and Belmont [1993, p. 572] also discuss the opposite of engagement, known as 'disaffection'. They argue that, disaffected children are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges, as they, [children] can be bored, feel depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even be rebellious towards teachers and classmates.

In this light, Gougis [1986] contends that, if students feel that the school environment is alien and hostile toward them or is not supportive of what or who they are, they will not be able to engage with learning as effectively as they might have done if self worth was not an issue. As Gougis argues, it is a little wonder to note that the stress and anxiety that accompany this lack of support cause their mental attention, energy, and efforts to be atoned between protecting their psyches from attack and attending to academic tasks. Conversely, Gougis [ibid] warns, 'stress adversely affects students' daily academic performances by reducing their willingness to persist at academic tasks and interfering with the cognitive processes involved in learning' [p. 147]. Furthermore, Gougis postulates that, learning is a tough undertaking that works better

when students are made to feel secure and are given an empathetic ear [ibid]. Similarly, Piaget and Vygotsky argue, that learning is a search for meaning that is built upon pre-existing knowledge and is often realized in a social environment rather than something that simply takes place ‘in the head’ of the individual. It follows therefore that, any meaningful assessment covers the totality of learning covering diverse areas. Assessment for learning is one method that has the structure that can cover this kind of assessment requirements.

3.7. General Issues in the Literature

From a teacher and remedial tutor standpoint, assessment is dynamic and on going in any learning /teaching situations. As such, educators are concerned with fundamental learning experiences of pupils. Therefore, emphasis is focused on gauging the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the school and national goals rather than just preparing pupils for exams. It follows therefore that, when using tests to assess pupils’ progress, it is crucial to have good correspondence between tests and the curriculum i.e. context and face validity and valuator. If teachers’ goals are clear, choosing the mode and purpose of assessment basing on the strengths and weaknesses of current procedures will be a lot easier.

‘Since the influence of testing on curriculum and instruction is now widely acknowledged, educators, policymakers, and others are looking up to alternative assessment methods as tools for educational reform’ [Dietel et al, 1991]. Paralleling this notion, Garfield [1994], further contends that the current reform movement in educational assessment encourages teachers to think about assessment more broadly than ‘testing’ and using test results to assign grades and rank students. Even so, the characteristic patterns that emerge from the current regimes of assessment are more congruent with teacher competency testing rather than authentic forms of assessment, despite the use of cosmetic changes.

In English and Welsh schools, the problem is compounded by the practice of placing schools in rank and file order in the form of league tables, what Madaus, [1988]; Harlen, [2004], call ‘high stakes’ generally ‘associated with the status of the school and in some cases directly linked with its financial support or with the salaries of individual teachers [ibid, p. 2]; while for

Slee et al., [1998] ‘in education, including teacher education, league tables have been linked to the fostering of both competition and a market orientation’ p. 130].

However, to achieve these high stakes and accountability, the agents are forced to tighten regulations. It has been argued that by laying emphasis on high stakes and accountability, teachers’ professional prudence is being diminished in subtle yet momentous ways. As observed by Hoggett [1996] who argues;

In virtually all sectors operational decentralization has been accompanied by the extended development of performance management systems. Such systems designed to both monitor and shape organisational behaviour and encompass a range of techniques including performance review, staff appraisal systems, performance related pay, scrutinies, so-called ‘quality audits’, customer feedback mechanisms, comparative tables of performance indicators including ‘league tables’, charter marks, customer charters, quality standards and total quality management [p. 20].

However, it can be appreciated though that, high stakes demands are relevant for most part only to the more able pupils and schools as they can deliver the demands. Also, by focusing on high stakes variables that are predetermined by policy, the salience of teachers’ and schools’ own constructs are eroded.

It is also interesting to know what impact accountability in high stakes testing have on teachers and pupils. Moreover, Madaus [1988] postulates that the impact of these high stakes tests on teachers lead to:

Cramming; narrows the curriculum; concentrates attention on those skills most amenable to testing; constrains the creativity and spontaneity of teachers and students and finally demeans the professional judgement of teachers [p.85]

Apart from informing the stakeholders about the performance of their school, the implication of such practice names and shames the poorly performing schools with the view of improving them as argued by the present Labour government. For Hargreaves [1994], such ‘shame and blame’ discourses generated by successive governments have compelled teachers to operate within a culture of guilt. Conversely, the potential social consequences of and the residue of such action is that, teachers will have a daunting task of identifying individual pupils’ learning

needs and matching them to their preferred learning styles and some schools unjustly labelled as ‘failing schools’. Further to this observation, Slee et al., [1998] argue:

...in blaming individual schools for below average performance, the reasons for the creation of the educational market and the introduction of competition between schools, are related and reinforced. Not only has a culture of blame been created, it has also been used as a rationale for the attention or non-allocation of resources [p.22].

It is apparent that those who advocate for ‘high stakes’ seem to fail to take into account the variances in schools and pupils backgrounds. How then do pupils, teachers and parents whose school has been identified as a failing school feel? This raises yet another fundamental question: are these schools truly failing?

However, it should be noted though that, when teachers and administrators are put under such pressure, the tendency is that they are most likely to devote more time preparing students to do well on the exams ‘coaching’ and so, improve their position on the ‘controversial’ league tables. And Madaus [1988] argues that this teaching to the test is an attempt to restore and enhance the credibility of the policy makers and the public’s confidence in the system and that of the institution. For Corbett and Wilson [1991], the result of the pressure placed upon teachers for their students to perform well on these tests often results in emphasis on low-level skills in the classroom. It is particularly true if standardized tests are also used to measure an educator’s teaching ability or the school’s performance [as is the case with the league tables issue in England and Wales, today]. It is argued that, with curriculum specialists and educational policy-makers alike calling for more attention to higher-level skills, these tests may be driving classroom practice in the opposite direction of educational reform.

On this note, Harlen and Deakin Crick [2003], argue ‘high stakes testing and publication of results are associated with teachers adopting a teaching style that favours transmission of knowledge’ [p. 195]. However, according to Slee et al., [1998] ‘to suggest that the poor performance of a minority of the teaching force is a main cause is clearly untenable, but this is one perspective that is currently receiving wide support’ [p. 23].

In unison, Hargreaves [1982] warns, ‘ability labels carry rich connotations of pupils’ moral worth’ [p. 62]. Hargreaves further postulates:

Those who are designated ‘bright’ know that by that very fact they are being complimented and credited with a valuable attribute. The ‘less able’ understand that they lack the very quality on which the school sets most scores; a sense of failure tends to permeate the whole personality, leaving a residue of powerlessness and hopelessness. [Hargreaves 1982, p. 62]

The above observation by Hargreaves [ibid] is also true of teachers’ feelings when their schools are labelled ‘failing schools’ which could end up ‘setting against each other during internal school evaluation’ [Harlen 2004, p.2]. Hart et al., [2001] argue, ‘the consequences of such irresponsible labelling force some teachers to leave some children behind and maybe blame them for the poor showing of the school’ [p. 24]. As can be envisaged, this issue technically ceases to be a league table concern only but rather a question of assessment and accountability.

Further to Hart et al., [ibid] observation about irresponsible labelling, if something is repeatedly claimed to be true even when it is false, the tendency is that the recipients will in the end believe the notion to be true. However, critical to this entire notion is; it should also be noted that no one takes pride in failing, be it pupils, teachers or the school authorities whose schools are labelled as failing despite the hustles and bustles. It is only logical therefore to assume that, in this instance teachers are bound to cut corners in the name of success and at the expense of pupils, especially those finding it difficult to learn and needing more attention and emulate the elite of the league tables, needless to say that the worst at peril are those with learning difficulties.

3.8. Reliable Assessment

Reliability is another important ingredient in assessment that an assessor should be concerned with. Walkling [1991] define reliability as the extent to which similar results would be obtained if the test were to be repeated under identical conditions with the same individuals. He further argues that different assessors or assessor may also consider reliability as the extent to which an assessment of competence is consistently dependable when carried out with different candidates at different times. In reality, pupils’ competencies are modified by

numerous factors such as assessment cues, feelings and expectations. Other important factors that are likely to affect performance are:

- Motivation to do the task and interest in it,
- The relationship between the assessor and the individual to be assessed,
- The conditions under which the assessment is made and,
- The way and manner in which the task is presented.

This takes into account the language used to describe it and the degree to which it is within the personal experience of the individual being assessed.

One choice in assessment regimes lies between norm and criterion referenced frameworks. On the surface, criteria strategies that are mainly about learning objectives seem to be the most used and encouraged. However, there seem to be some pressure being exerted by Key stage tests. For instance, in England and Wales where externally marked tests are used for league tables, schools are under pressure to improve pupil performance. Pupils are then subjected to multiple-choice tests and mock examinations, which only turn out to be coaching, rather than teaching. In the end, school based assessments tend to lose their worth. As teachers worry more about results, they race to complete the syllabus. There is more superficial and rote learning of items of knowledge which pupils do not retain. This defeats the true spirit of learning that depends on formative assessment. As a result, teachers just imitate external tests but know little about pupils' learning because of immense pressure exerted on them by the community and pupils' expectations. Grading functions are over emphasised leading to marks for filling up schedules taking priority over analysis of teaching and learning. In the end, the product produced out of such assessment techniques cannot survive outside the parameters of the certificate. However, Bhora [1990] cited by Draper [2001] asserts that Formative assessment is a method of judging the worth of a program while the activities are happening and that the evaluation focuses on the process.

From a teacher and remedial tutor standpoint, assessment is dynamic and on going in any learning /teaching situations. As such, educators ought to be concerned with fundamental learning experiences of pupils. Therefore, emphasis should be on gauging the effectiveness of

the curriculum in meeting the school and national goals rather than just preparing pupils for exams. Hence, when using tests to assess, it is critical to have good correspondence between tests and the curriculum i.e. context and face validity and valuator. If teachers' goals are clear, choosing the mode and purpose of assessment basing on the strengths and weaknesses of current procedures will be a lot easier. Clausen [2001] argues that tests are having an impact on what goes on in schools and good tests can support and inform teachers in their work. He contends that it will encourage good teaching practice with coherent, holistic approach to the curriculum, focus on pupils understanding rather than on their memory.

3.9. Personality Considerations

As argued by Cummins [2000] that self-perceptions are so critically important in young people's learning, it is important to be aware that the negotiation of identity, including ability identity, is a part of the agenda of all classroom activities. Classroom interactions will eventually draw up feedback that may or may not be favourable.

Therefore, assessment and curriculum feedback by teachers may impede upon individual pupils' personalities and self worth. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary [1999] defines Personality as; 'the characteristics and qualities of a person seen as a whole; have an artistic/assertive /a likeable / a strong personality. (2) Qualities that make different and interesting'. On the other hand, the Encyclopaedia Britannica [2002] sees personality as 'a characteristic way of thinking, feeling and behaving. Personality embraces moods, attitudes and opinions and in most clearly expressed interactions with others. It includes behavioural characteristics, both inherent and acquired, that distinguishes one person from another and is observable in people's relations to the environment and to the social. As Hart [1998] postulates,

--children judged to be 'bright' are likely to be those who display characteristics which most closely fit the teacher's view [or consensual, culturally situated professional views] of what counts as 'brightness' and this may disadvantage children whose cultural, linguistic and experiential background differs significantly from the teacher's own. [p.157]

The psychological underpinnings of multicultural education explain its emphasis on developing greater self understanding, positive self concepts, and pride in one's ethnic identity. Emphasizing these areas is part of multicultural education's goal of contributing to the personal

development of students, which contends that a better sense of ‘self’ contributes to the overall intellectual, academic, and social achievement of students. Students who feel good about themselves are likely to be more open and receptive to interaction with others and to respect their cultures and identities and above all, are likely to learn better as they are easily motivated. In consensus, Harlen [2001] argues that intrinsically motivated learners are aware of their own roles and duties in learning and are responsible for it. Harlen further postulates that, the evidence is shown by seeking information, setting parameters and learning goals and perseverance as they take full responsibility of their own learning. However, Harlen [2001] further argues, ‘the incentive for learning is found in rewards such as certification, merit marks, prizes or in avoiding the consequences of failure’ [p. 3]. This argument is further justified by claims made about the give-and-take relationship between self concept, academic achievement, ethnicity, culture, and individual identity. It is therefore imperative that students learn how to interact with and understand people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves if they are to survive the dynamism of learning culture.

However, for me to be able to explore the finds of this literature search, I am compelled to search too the methodology of choice- the ethnographic methodology as discussed below.

3.10. Rationale for the Use of Ethnographic Research

Ethnography is noted as gaining recognition and acceptance as a qualitative research methodology in education as indicated by its use in many research undertakings. Many researchers such as Patton, 1990, Cohen et al 2000, 2005, Merriam 1988, Goetz and LeCompte [1984] recommend its use in contemporary research. Davis [1995, p. 429] documents the growing number of ethnographic studies in language teaching and second language acquisition and postulates: ‘An enormous number of ethnographic studies focusing on first and second language acquisition and use within homes, communities and schools have been conducted since the early 1980's’.

I therefore employed ethnographic methodology approach for this research study because ample precedent has been set for using this methodology. As Eisner [1991, p. 229] reiterates argues, ‘qualitative researchers in education typically studies communities, schools, and classrooms in order to understand what makes them tick’. Eisner [ibid,] further asserts that

qualitative research may examine schools from sociological perspectives by including issues of status, gender and social structure and all concepts from the social sciences. These concepts may 'serve as the interpretive heart of qualitative research' [p. 230]. Also Johnson [1992], in her overview of the different research methods employed in second language learning, postulates that there has been a continuing debate on what exactly constitutes ethnographic research.

According to Johnson [ibid], ethnography differs from experimental research in that, the experimental researcher manipulates conditions, while the ethnographer strives to study a culture in its natural setting. She further espouses that experimental research specifies questions in advance, while the ethnographer constantly refines the research questions as they work in the field. It is generally argued that ethnographic research comes out of the academic discipline of cultural anthropology and that it is the work of cultural anthropologists to understand the shared meanings of the participants' behaviour in a culture. According to Spradley's [1979] definition, 'Ethnography is the work of describing a culture...the essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native's point of view' [p. 3]. Spindler and Spindler [1987], further espouse, the idea of ethnography of schooling and define it as the study of 'educational and enculturative processes that are related to schools and intentional schooling' [p. 2]. Concurring with Spindler and Spindler [1987], Woods [1995] defines ethnography as 'a picture of the way of life of some interacting group' [p. 52].

Nonetheless, doing what is entailed by these definitions alone does not qualify one as an ethnographic researcher as observed by Johnson, [1992]. Johnson puts forward a notion that, in order for one to qualify as ethnographic research, the researcher must not only employ the customary field techniques of many visits, long stays at the research site, detailed descriptive field notes and observations, participant observation, and interviewing [Patton, 1990, Glesne and Peshkin, 1992], it must also 'involve holistic study of cultural phenomenon and cultural interpretation of behaviour' [Johnson, 1992, p. 135].

However, as can be seen, the categories of ethnographic research continue to grow as argued by Glesne and Peshkin [1992] and others mentioned above. Nevertheless, Glesne and Peshkin

[ibid] briefly discuss postmodern ethnography and action research and put forward an argument that, postmodern ethnographers concern themselves with the dynamics of power and domination with relationship to knowledge. On the contrary, Johnson [1992] explains that the ethnography of communication focuses on the study of ‘what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately in a speech community and on how such knowledge is learned and used’ [p. 135]. Eisner and Peshkin [1990] argue, ‘where ethnography and education are joined, we find the longest and most secure attachment to qualitative research’ [p. 5].

It is further postulated by Eisner and Peshkin [ibid] that researchers turn to ethnographic research for information: -about the ways students' cultural experiences at home and community compare with the culture of the schools, or colleges/ universities and communities where they study, and the implications of these differences for second language and culture learning. Therefore, it can be argued that , this kind of information is important to researchers as, ‘it helps to explain how cultural assumptions and values can shape interactions, can cause cross-cultural miscommunication and can lead to differing approaches to the learning situations and differing approaches to learning’ [Johnson, 1992, p. 135]. Cohen et al., [2005] however warns: there are several difficulties in ethnographic and natural approaches ‘which might affect the reliability and validity’ [p. 156] and ‘some of which include the definition of the situation, reactivity [the presence of the researcher and how it alters the situation], the halo effect, and the implicit conservatism of the interpretive methodology’ [ibid].

Although many ethnographic studies have been carried out over several years, it is my conviction that my years of teaching experience in normal class teaching and special educational needs provision supplied ample background knowledge and questions that need to be researched using ethnography which to me seems to be the most placed to provide much needed insights about my research questions. Heath [1983] however, warns that ‘...the ethnographic present never remains as it is described, nor does the description of the current times fully capture the influences and forces of history on the present’ [p. 9]. However, Reinharz [1992] discusses the types of data collection that are most frequently employed in ethnography: Contemporary ethnography or field work which ‘...usually includes observation,

participation, archival analysis and interviewing' [p. 46]. Nonetheless, this methodology will be discussed in more detail in the control of the study.

It appeals to me, therefore, that an ethnographic methodology was best suited for a research of this magnitude as it enabled me not only to observe individuals in their ordinary everyday learning settings but to also record their accounts and experiences of what it was they were doing. Separately from the issues of the methodology and the methods, I concerned myself with the issues covering validity and reliability as pointed out by the likes of Merriam 1988, Patton 1990, Hammersley 1992, and Cohen et al 2000, 2005, Denscombe 1998, 2003. The validity and reliability issues are discussed below under appropriate headings.

3.11. Summary

In summary, Chapter 2 reviewed literature from varied research areas, which relate to the study. These research areas considered were: ethnographic research in education, the curriculum in use in England and Wales's schools, assessment regimes, special educational needs provision learning difficulties, [Dyslexia] ADHD, language deficiencies, intercultural communication, multicultural education, which focused on the impact assessment, has on these pupils' self-esteem.

It has been established that problems in assessment and classroom interaction may lead to student and teacher attrition, discouragement, feelings of failure and even exacerbated prejudice which could in turn lead to low self-esteem and social mischief by some pupils. However, there is no general consensus on how this phenomenon may affect pupils' performance let alone what really this phenomenon truly is as there are claims and counter claims on its effects.

Nonetheless, it was established that high self-esteem positively correlated with scholastic attainment and is based on the individual's evaluation of the discrepancy between self-image and the ideal self and depends upon the extent to which the individual cares about this discrepancy Rogers [1980]. But, Reasoner [2003] postulates that a healthy self-esteem stems from quiet confidence in one's potential which require strong feelings of self-worth and

competency. Importantly, he espoused that a healthy self-esteem is developed from within and that children just cannot be handed self-esteem.

The literature search has also revealed that there can be tensions caused by assessment leading to pupil helplessness [Seligman, 1995b]. Assessment can also generate motivation to learn in students [assessment for learning] [Gardner, 2006]. Established too, is the fact that students' motivation is enhanced by the ability to engage with the teacher, to receive feedback that supports the next step in their learning, or drawing up criteria against which they will be assessed. Why then are there tensions between assessment and learning still being experienced by both the teacher and pupil?

Literature search, also established that, if learning/ teaching is to be meaningful, assessment should aim at helping both the teacher and the learner make informed decisions and judgements about the effective the learning has been. It should provide information on the progress and be able to expose strengths and weakness or special abilities of both the teacher and learner. This would assist the parties involved to decide on where to concentrate both their efforts. Teachers ought to be equipped with skills necessary to efficiently use assessment techniques. The excessive use of student evaluation using pencil and paper should be balanced with other forms of assessment such as the informal assessment. However, it should be noted that these informal assessments carry with them very large chunks of bias by both pupils and teachers. The curriculum needs to be structured such that all assessments should start from Formative and progress to Summative as there is clear advantages in doing so. Formative and Summative assessments have an asymmetrical relationship which curtails the opportunity for dual usage.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology and techniques used to investigate how formal and informal assessment may impact upon the self esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and learners with language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English language classes. The chapter starts with explanations of the concepts of methodology and methods. Thus, the research is based on information obtained by using a qualitative ethnographic methodology. Brief overviews of the theoretical underpinnings of the main methodologies that have influenced this investigation are discussed.

Also discussed in this chapter is the rationale for the research instruments, the design of the instrument, the research setting, sampling methods and the collection of data and possible limitations? The research tools include participant observation, interview questions and questionnaires. Finally, issues of analysis, validity and reliability of the instruments adopted are discussed.

Methodology refers to the main approaches or paradigms that guide the manner with which the research is conducted. Methods on the other hand refer to specific research tools, instruments or techniques that a researcher uses to collect data to answer the research question/s. The decision to choose a particular research method is generally determined by its being fit for purpose, the purpose of the research, the availability of time and resources, the research problem, questions and objectives and inclinations or preferences and other practical considerations. Wilson [1996] argues thus:

There is no single best way of collecting data; the methods chosen depend on the nature of the research questions posed and specific questions you want to ask the respondents. The aim of all methods is to obtain valid and reliable data- true answers to questions, not distorted to the methods of collection or prone to chance fluctuation- which can be used as the basis for credible conclusions. The methods differ, however, in how they guard against threats to validity and what price the researchers are prepared to pay, in terms of potential invalidity in one area, to strengthen their claim to validity in another. [Wilson, 1996, p. 98]

Therefore, my decision and choice of methods were influenced by what Wilson [1996] among other writers have argued for. Conversely, Miles and Huberman [1994] contend many qualitative researchers hold the view that no study conforms exactly to a standard methodology but instead researchers adapt their methods of both data collection and analysis to their research focus.

4.1. Choice of Research Methodology

The research drew on an ethnographic approach with qualitative methodology and triangulation as it used multiple systems of data collection that included interviews, questionnaire observations and document analysis. According to McMillan and Schumacher, [1993] the goal of qualitative research is that, 'it is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives' [p.373]. Conversely, May 2002, argues:

qualitative research always involves some kind of direct encounter with 'the world'..., qualitative approaches typically include attention to dynamic processes rather than [or in addition to] static categories, and they aim to discover or develop concepts rather than imposing preconceived categories on the people and events they observe' [p. 199].

For Travers, [2001] 'conducting an ethnographic study offers a rich and detailed account of what happens inside a particular intuition which can address practical questions of interest to managers and practitioners' [p. 180]. Since most qualitative research tends to 'describe and analyze people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs thoughts and perceptions' [ibid, p.372], I felt inclined towards exploring what students feel, believe and experience with regards to the impact of formal and informal assessment on their self-esteem and future impact of assessment from the teachers' and pupils' perspectives. To achieve my set goal, I decided to use an ethnographic methodology.

4.1.1. Rationale for the Use of Ethnographic Research

According to Spradley's [1979] definition, 'Ethnography is the work of describing a culture...the essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native's point of view' [p. 3]. Spindler and Spindler [1987], further espouse, the idea of ethnography of schooling and define it as the study of 'educational and enculturative processes that are related to schools and intentional schooling' [p. 2]. Concurring with Spindler and

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Spindler [1987], Woods [1995] defines ethnography as ‘a picture of the way of life of some interacting group’ [p. 52].

Conversely, Eisner and Peshkin [1992] postulate that researchers turn to ethnographic research for information: -about the ways students' cultural experiences at home and community compare with the culture of the schools, or colleges/ universities and communities where they study and the implications of these differences for second language and culture learning. Therefore, it can be argued that , this kind of information is important to researchers as, ‘it helps to explain how cultural assumptions and values can shape interactions, can cause cross-cultural miscommunication and can lead to differing approaches to the learning situations and differing approaches to learning’ [Johnson, 1992, p. 135]. Cohen et al., [2005] however warns: there are several difficulties in ethnographic and natural approaches ‘which might affect the reliability and validity’ [p. 156] and ‘some of which include the definition of the situation, reactivity [the presence of the researcher and how it alters the situation], the halo effect, and the implicit conservatism of the interpretive methodology’ [ibid].

It appeals to me, therefore, that an ethnographic methodology was best suited for a research of this magnitude as it enabled me not only to observe individuals in their ordinary everyday learning settings but to also record their accounts and experiences of what it was they were doing. Separately from the issues of the methodology and the methods, I concerned myself with the issues covering validity and reliability as pointed out by Merriam 1988, Patton 1990, Hammersley 1992, and Cohen et al., 2005, Denscombe 1998, 2003. The validity and reliability issues are further discussed under appropriate headings [see 4.10] below.

Thus, the reasons that attracted me to an ethnographic approach are numerous. But most importantly, I envisaged producing qualitative data which are considered to be rich in words, Cohen et al., [2005] ‘which may contain the answer to ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions’ [p. 272] and because, ‘qualitative studies are good at giving an overview of some phenomena, or identifying a problem that needs investigating’ [Travers 2001, p. 180].

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I therefore chose to explore and hear how informal and formal assessment affects one's self-esteem 'from the horse's mouth, hence the choice of a methodology that allows me to at least attempt to describe 'what people are doing on the ground' [ibid]. Therefore, by adapting one of the doctrines of postmodernism that identifies with co-existence of multiple truths, I acknowledge that there are truly multiple truths set within frameworks of certain degrees of realism. Foucault, 1980 argues:

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't out side power, or lacking in power: contrary to myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truths, its general politics of truth [p. 131].

With this background, a qualitative paradigm was therefore the paradigm of choice. And in accordance with Strauss and Corbin, [1990] 'qualitative research is the research approach of choice when there is the need to understand the details of complex phenomena that are hard to elucidate with quantitative methods' [p.18].

Nevertheless, I was mindful that, doing what is entailed by these definitions alone does not qualify one as an ethnographic researcher as observed by Johnson, [1992]. Johnson puts forward a notion that, in order for one to qualify as ethnographic research, the researcher must not only employ the customary field techniques of many visits, long stays at the research site, detailed descriptive field notes and observations, participant observation, and interviewing [Patton, 1990, Glesne and Peshkin, 1992], it must also 'involve holistic study of cultural phenomenon and cultural interpretation of behaviour' [Johnson, 1992, p. 135].

4.2. The Research Design

During the preparatory stages of this research, I took into consideration the necessity to select research designs that are appropriate to the context of my study as postulated by Cohen et al., [2000], 'research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose' [p.73]. Since the nature of the research needed breath and depth in the investigation, I chose to employ an ethnographic qualitative approach, in which numerous sources of data were investigated and congruencies between different sources of data identified and interpreted. As indicated before,

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qualitative methods are employed in this research in an attempt to provide overall depth to the study; also, because ‘qualitative methodologies offer more than a set of shared epistemological assumptions. They actually encompass several distinct approaches...’ [May 2002, p. 199]. The research instruments employed for data collection are questionnaires, interviews, observations, group interviews and document analysis.

An analysis of the principal elements can shed light on how the research design has been generated. The argument therefore follows the contours of several successive sets of data and identifies as it precedes the emergence of a number of convergent issues. In the succeeding sections, -although not in sequential order- elements of the research conducted: the selected study sites, the participants [subjects] in the study, the data collection procedures and or the instruments used, ethical considerations and the procedures of administration will be presented and discussed.

4.3. The Participants

The sample consisted of pupils in year seven, eight, nine and eleven, five English teachers and assistant teachers, HoD English department and parents of participating students. It was hoped that results from observations, interviews and questionnaires may illuminate or inform the assessment and self-esteem questions or steer the research in another direction hence the need for pre-analysis at data gathering stage.

The qualitative flexibility and strength of interviews, observations and immersion in the study area, enabled me to take a closer look at the details and particulars, not only of the phenomenon but also of the agents of the phenomenon being explored [May 2002]. By using a qualitative approach, I managed to quickly begin data collection whilst simultaneously carrying out literature reviews [Patton 1990]. However, due to the complexity of the phenomena and the sample size, the process of discovering the emergent issues tended to necessitate considerable amount of time and effort and influenced my decision to adopt the ethnographic qualitative approach.

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Goodenough, [1971] believes that ethnography is what the culture of a group is and involves participant observation, which explains the reason for a lot of field work that I was immersed in. Nonetheless, my understanding of ethnography is that, it is a category of qualitative research with much broader arrays requiring first hand witness by the researcher. For Woods [1995], ethnography is ‘a picture of the way of life of some interacting group’ [p.52]. Nevertheless, in order to qualify as an ethnographic research, it must not only employ the customary field techniques of many visits, long stays at the research site, detailed descriptive field notes and observations, participant observation, and interviewing [Eisner, 1991, Glesne and Peshkin, 1992]. It must also involved ‘holistic study of cultural phenomenon and cultural interpretation of behaviour’ as postulated by [Johnson, 1992, p. 135].

Never the less, this form of inquiry accorded me the opportunity to explore the phenomena under investigation in its natural setting and used several methods to interpret, understand and bring meaning to it as postulated by [Anderson and Arsenault 1998]. The rationale for using this method is grounded on a critique of the qualitative methodology as suggested by Hammersley, [1992] and involved several main stages: participant selection, active interviewing approach [Silverman, [1993], which considers the interview as an on going mutually collaborative and interpretive process; and transcription narrative and discourse analysis. Like wise, this research method enabled me to interact with pupils, teachers, parents and advisory teachers and the data collected was an attempt to reflect as accurately as possible the views of the respondents.

Also central to my choice of an ethnographic research methodology was the community college’s classroom context with its cross-cultural and cross-gender interface that was better suited to a research method which considers its innate inconsistency and complexity. Sleeter [1992], Goetz and LeCompte [1984], among others, maintain that ethnography is among the most suitable approaches for classroom research because the purpose of ethnography is ‘to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities and beliefs of participants in educational settings’ [p. 17]. Ethnography also has several hallmarks that include conducting the research in the phenomena’s natural setting without intentionally manipulating the environment.

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In concession to Goetz and LeCompte [1984] Merriam [1988,] contends thus:

-an ethnographic case study of a junior high school, for example, would take into account the community at large and its cultural context. The history of the neighbourhood, social-economic factors, the community's racial and ethnic makeup, the attitudes of parents, residents and school officials toward education- all would be important components of this ethnographic case study [p. 24].

In the same light, this methodology allowed me to endeavour into typically high detailed rich description of the sample's behaviours and opinions, their perceptions of what is, their values and world views. Ethnography was best suited to achieve this as it allowed for a qualitative focus upon actors' accounts and experience as echoed by Hitchcock and Hughes [1992]. This is in line with the perspective embedded in the belief that humans construct their own reality, and a deep understanding of what is happening can be got by getting under their skin, - constructed in their own environment Hitchcock and Hughes [ibid]. By interacting closely with the participants, the method accorded me the opportunity to become part of the study and to enjoy it as well. That way, I was able to use tacit [intuitive/felt knowledge], as well as propositional knowledge. By using ethnographic study, I had the liberty to continually refine the chosen methods and questions whenever new issues and questions emerged as suggested by [Jacobs 1987, Patton 1990 and May 2002].

4.4. Ethical Issue Considerations

Ethically, participants in a research study must be protected from harm. Ethical issues were treated in accordance with the revised British Education Research Association [BERA] requirements and were treated as important and proper way of conveying and gaining respect from all individuals who directly or indirectly made contributions from the onset of this research study. The BERA guidelines were valuable to me as they highlighted my responsibilities as a researcher. Therefore, to gain access as well as entry to the people, information and school facilities, the following procedures were executed.

First, permission to conduct classroom research was sought and obtained from the principal of the college, an 11-16 year school in the East Midlands area of England and later from the English language HoD to conduct a study amongst teachers and pupils at this community college. A general outline of the study and letters of request were presented for their approval

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[see appendixes A, B, and C]. Importantly, participants were not manipulated into joining the study but joined by invitation and subsequent choice. Steps were taken in this study to protect the participants from harm as follows:

Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects and confirmed in an explanatory consent form. Participants' rights to participation in this study were explained and it was made clear that participants were not obligated to participate and that they were free to pull out at any time if they so wished [see appendix A] in accordance with the revised BERA code of ethics. The nature of the study was fully explained, which included the format, implications and procedures. It was also explained to the participants that this was an ethnographic process and so the length of the study could not be predetermined. As such, the cut off date could not be ascertained in advance. Confidentiality was to be protected through the use of pseudonyms and the changing of personal details where necessary. As such, decided to adopt the procedure of offering blanket confidentiality to gain trust and informants protection as suggested by Hammersley [1993]. Thus, Hammersley [ibid] argues, 'we emphasise that confidentiality is not simply a mechanical procedure but a continuous methodological concern closely related to the values contained and communicated by the research [p.189]. However, de Laine [2000] argues, 'omission of identification information can cause a quagmire during critical analysis...omission of personal identifying information from field notes can affect features critical for analysis' [p.147].

Nevertheless, researchers need to be weary of the problematic nature of anonymity as postulated by de Lee [1993]. de Lee [ibid] argues, that identities can be deduced from descriptions of peoples' roles and their relations to others and from the overall impression of a setting [the description of events, people or places, the surrounding environment in terms of physical proportions, and tone] the accumulation of incidental material or background detail can lead to a deductive disclosure [p.186].

Conversely also, Cohen et al., [2005] argue that the instrument intrudes into the life of the respondent. 'The questionnaire will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent, be it in terms of time taken to complete the questionnaire the level of threat or sensitivity of the

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question or the possible invasion of privacy' [p 246]. Further, Cohen et al., [ibid] espouse that questionnaire respondents are not passive data providers to researchers but subjects not objects of research; that respondents cannot be coerced, into completing questionnaires even though they could be strongly encouraged, they still retain the decision to become involved and when to withdraw from the research if they so wished.

In deciding and planning the suitable methodology to adopt, I took heed of Cohen et al., [2005] who argue, 'in planning a research, it is important to clarify a distinction that needs to be made between methodology and methods, approaches and instruments, styles of research and ways of collecting data' [p.76]. Cohen et al., [ibid] further argue that particular circumstances of the case include the possible disruption to individual participants which could entail negotiating access to people; negotiating ownership of data and negotiating release of the data.

Nonetheless, this method offered the opportunities to check data, through triangulation including peer examination of the findings, respondent validation and flexivity; data collection methods such as observations, semi-structured and open interviews, narrative accounts and documents analysis, diaries etc. Conversely, Cohen et al., [2005] suggest ways and means of carrying out interviews, data analysis and interpretations that I took aboard with kin interest. They [ibid] argue, 'it may be wiser to interview senior people later rather than earlier so that the most effective use of discussion time can be made, the interviewer having been put into the picture fully before the interview' [p.189]. Significantly, Cohen et al., [ibid], argue that it is important to separate conclusions from the evidence, with the essential evidence included in the main text, and to balance illustration with analysis and generations. And as such, the HOD was the last to be interviewed at this community college as I wanted 'the most use of discussion time' [ibid].

4.5.0. Data Collection Procedures

The following section describes the types of data collection procedures used, in line with: [Johnson, 1992; Sleeter, 1992; McMillan and Schumacher 1993; Cohen et al., 2005] who provide lists of acceptable data sources for ethnographic studies, some of which I incorporated in this research study. From their lists, classroom observations, audio taped interviews with

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teachers, students, program directors, documents such as textbooks, worksheets, notes, student compositions, institutional brochure and catalogues, were drawn on in the data gathering process for this research study. My intent was to collect rich data from as many perspectives as possible in order to provide a rich contextual picture of classroom interaction across all areas of classroom interaction cultures and assessment in each lesson observed. And so, the respondents were not too widely distributed over a wide geographical area to minimize incurring prohibitive costs. Each procedure was carried out in the participating classes, taught by five different English teachers. Originally, twenty two different students agreed to participate in the investigation as well as five English teachers and eight parents. However, in the end, only sixteen students took part as four exercised their right to withdraw from participating while two transferred to other schools.

Also worth noting is the fact that, during class observations, other students who ‘were not direct participants’ were present in the observation settings, but were not directly involved in the study though they undoubtedly affected and assisted shape the outcomes; their influence was taken into consideration. Their mere presence, their contributions in the general learning and class rapport, their influences on the teacher and research participants could not be ignored. The sequence, types of involvement and time commitment required of the voluntary participants ranged considerably depending on availability and commitment. I observed and took field notes in four classrooms taught by five different teachers of English language classes twice a week, [Wednesdays and Fridays] from 05th September 2005 to July 20th 2006. English was chosen because it is considered a core subject and an essential gateway to progression in education, training or a career.

My presence was easily accepted by the students, because I had spent a month as a volunteer classroom teacher assistant at the school prior to conducting the research in earnest also, I had to, ‘identify one’ self, where is from, what he is trying to do or find out to build some notion of trust’ [Gillham 2000, p. 53]. Nonetheless, a few sceptical students directly challenged me to explain my actual intent for being there and carrying out a study in their classroom. I then seized the opportunity to fully explain the purpose of my being there and this appears to have been fully accepted as I did not face any hostilities from students.

4.5.1. Classroom Observations

The methods employed for data gathering were verbal/interactive and non-verbal/non-interactive techniques that included participant observations, ‘founded on the principle that only by participating and sharing in the lives of the group being investigated can one achieve a real understanding of what is going on’ Hitchcock and Hughes, [1992, p.30]; as well as questionnaires and various forms of semi structured and unstructured interviews.

So, I worked with pupils within a classroom setting for one or two days a week under the direction of various class teachers in order to experience the processes and outcomes of learning for pupils with borderline learning disabilities. Importantly, I hoped to gain some insight and appreciation of the competencies required, the participation levels and the feedback received. These experiences gained through observations were further intended to enable a deeper exploration of the key areas of the research and help inform the research questions.

Non-verbal/ non-interactive techniques included observations and measures of interactions, proxemics, kinesics, examining class assignments and assessment instruments given in the class and interviewing participants. Observations are an obvious and most direct way of find out about learning is to carry out an out classroom observations. This technique has been well used in both research and assessment of teaching, [Wragg, 1999, p. 2] and is a method that I have used in my previous research. However, this technique can be misused because of the subjectivity of the observer because much observation involves instantaneous interpretations and recording of human interactions. Human interpretations of events is dependent on perception and it’s unique to each individual [Bell, 1999; 157]

Instances of classroom behaviours that could be classified as assessment were recorded as well as taking field notes in classrooms taught by five different English teachers. Included in these notes were my own role and personal feelings about what had been observed. In the settings my presence was easily accepted by the students, because I was able to move in and out of the classroom as a part-time teacher and a volunteer teaching assistant. General impressions, physical aspects of the classroom, classroom atmosphere, teacher effect, pedagogy, group relationships, student behaviour, teacher-student relationship, cross-cultural comments, were

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observed and noted. It is noteworthy to indicate that data was collected with an open mind and was continually examined for patterns leading to theory building from the phenomena and that I tried hard to make notes as concrete as possible to minimize the amount of questionable inferences involved.

It can be argued that observation made it possible to record firsthand behaviour, as it happened hence my liberty to employ it as a data gathering method. Observation of the behaviours and interactions of pupils [pupil to pupil, pupil/teacher] in teaching –learning contexts was undertaken in formal and informal settings in order to discover at first hand the curricular and assessment practices used by teachers.

Judging from my previous experience, observation is one of the many techniques available for data gathering which is vital and acceptable to a qualitative methodology, it is an open learning experience that brings the researcher closer to the multiple worlds inhabited by understudy respondents. ‘As a technique for data gathering information, the observational method relies on a researcher seeing and hearing things and recording these observations, rather than relying on subjects’ self report, responses to questions and statements’ [McMillan et al., 1993, p. 256]. For Merriam [1988] ‘observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study’ [p.89].

In qualitative research, the researcher spends time in the setting understudy, Patton, [1990]. During this observation stint, I was able to make firsthand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in those activities as ‘Participant Observation. Thus, ‘-qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions [ibid, p.10]. Since data based on emotions, experiences and feelings were needed, those observations by Patton were worth towing. Conversely, Gillham [2000] contends:

It is participant observation that is mostly associated with qualitative case study approach to research as opposed to non-participant observation which is mostly associated with the observable and measurable in line with a qualitative approach to research [p. 47].

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Nonetheless, Merriam [1988, p.88] contends that observation is a research tool when it (1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately (3) is recorded systematically and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability. However, sceptics of observation as a data-gathering technique argue that this data gathering instrument is highly subjective and an unreliable nature of human perception; as part of the multi-method case study approach, is time consuming and demands careful planning by the researcher. Therefore, according to [Patton 1990, Cohen et al 2005], would be observers need training, which I undertook in the form of first year tutorials and on-going workshops provided by the University. Accordingly, Patton [1990] postulates that:

Training to be a skilled observer includes learning how to write descriptively; practicing the disciplined recording of field notes; knowing how to separate detail from trivia- and using rigorous methods to validate observations' [p. 123].

For Goetz and LeCompte [1984], what to observe depends on the topic and the conceptual framework.- 'the data that begin to emerge as the ethnographer interacts in the daily flow of events and activities and the intuitive reactions and hunches that ethnographers experience as these factors coalesce' [p. 112]. However, it is inherent that, 'when initiating an observational study, the researcher must first identify appropriate respondents and the activity and setting to be investigated, permission should be obtained from relevant authorities for the group and the situation to be studied' [Yin, 1994].

Nevertheless, a number of researchers cited by Merriam [1988, p. 90] suggest a list of things /elements to take cognizance of in an observation schedule, such as:

- **The setting:** the physical environment, the context, the kind of behaviour the setting encourages, permits, discourages or prevent.
- **The participants:** who is in the scene, how many people and their roles, what brings these people together and who is allowed here?
- **Activities and interactions;** what is going on, sequences of activities? Number of people present and activities 'connected or interrelated from either participants' views or the researcher's perspective' [Goetz and LeCompte [1984, p. 113].

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- **Frequency and duration:** when did the situation begin? How long does it last, whether it's a recurring situation or unique, if it occurs, how frequently? What occasions give rise to it? The typicality of the observed situation.
- **Delicate aspects:** less obvious but important to the observation as argued by Merriam, 1988 and Cohen et al., 2005 are:
 - Informal unplanned activities
 - Symbolic and connotative meanings of words
 - Nonverbal communication such as dress and physical space
 - Unobtrusive measures such as physical clues
 - What does not happen- especially if it ought to have happened [Patton, 1990, p,155]

For Merriam [1988], each participant observation has its own rhythm and flow and that data collection involves three stages: entry, data collection, and exit. 'Gaining entry into the site begins with gaining the confidence and permission of those who can approve the activity' [ibid, p.91]. However, Taylor and Bogdan [1984] advise that the researcher establishes rapport by paying homage to the participants' routines, establishing what the observer has in common with participants, helping out on the occasion, being humble and showing interest in the activity. At the design stages and during the data collection process, I considered, and took heed and incorporated Taylor and Bogdan's suggestions into my methodology. Also taken aboard were Gillham's ideas. Gillham [2000] suggests that, during data gathering, the description of the setting, persons and discussions is of paramount importance. Codes can be used in recording data and the researcher should be clear [Gillham, 2000]. For my part, I tried to build a good relationship with the respondents by showing interest in their activities, and for the ethical reasons, the nature and purpose of the research was explained to the respondents.

4.5.2. Field Notes

It is argued that, field notes paint a picture of our own prejudices and biases professionally and or personally [de Laine 2000]. de Laine [ibid] further argues that field notes, 'can depict the flesh-and-blood human being who is vulnerable and confused by the 'messiness' of methods in the contemporary moment of the science' [p.148]. Thus, the use of field-notes will inevitably

contain information observed, perceived and obtained without explicit permission from participants and yet cannot be verified.

Field notes contain sensory details that usually show rather than tell about other people's behaviour. How others express their feelings in the field might be conveyed in the field notes by direct quotations of the speaker's own words, supplemented with non-verbal expressions [facial gestures, bodily postures and the like] [de Laine 2000, p.147]

Field notes were rigorously recorded in line with Hammersley and Atkinson [1982] who argue: 'recording field data constitute [s] a central research activity and should be carried out with much care and self-conscious organization as possible' [p.146]. I therefore recorded the events experienced principally through watching, listening and interactive with pupils and their teachers. During this phase, I tried as much as possible to look for information that would assist me to understand how pupils' learning was constituted and sustained.

4.5.2.1. Advantages and Limitations

Advantages

- Provides information when others are not effective
- Approaches reality in its natural structure and studies events as they evolve.
- Offers firsthand information without relying on the reports of others.
- Relatively inexpensive.
- Most distinctive opportunity is related to ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation.
- Ability to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone 'inside' the case study rather than external to it. [Yin, 1994, p. 88].

Limitations

- Cannot be employed when case groups or extensive events are studied.
- Cannot provide information about past, future or predictable events.
- Cannot offer data related to frequency of behaviour.
- Offers no control measures regarding the bias, attitudes of opinions of the observer.
- In participant observation the observer is part of the situation that is being observed.

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- Investigator has less ability to work as an external observer and may, at times have to assume positions or advocacy roles contrary to the interests of good scientific practices.
- The participant observer is likely to follow a commonly known phenomenon and become a supporter of the group or organizations being studied, if such support did not already exist.
- A problem with observations of whatever kind is that they are time consuming. [Yin, 1994, p. 89; Gillham, 2000, p.47]

At the same time, I analysed classroom activities by looking at aspects of the academic tasks rather than looking at the differences between subjects and this was in line with Doyle [1983]. As Doyle [ibid] argues, by analysing classroom activities in terms of the non-specific tasks, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the ways teachers structured tasks to enhance student learning and how pupils with borderline learning difficulties and language deficiencies are engaged. Doyle [1983] espoused that there are three aspects of the academic task: the product [such as: an essay], the operation used to generate the product [for example critical thinking, memorising] and the resources available to students such as model essays. My observations took on board some of his suggestions. Some of the advantages of using questionnaires are that they are relatively economical, have standardized questions, can ensure anonymity and that questions can be written for specific purposes. The questions can have open or closed format. In the case of closed questions, the subjects give opinions between predetermined responses, while in open format, the respondents write in any response they want. However, open responses placed a minimum restraint on the interviewees' answers and their expressions, but are much more difficult to analyse.

During observations, interest at the ways with which students acquired knowledge and practiced operations in the process of completing given tasks were taken. As espoused, it is envisaged that, the way teachers introduce and manage tasks, together with the expectations they communicate to students in the form of feedback has a profound effect on what the students feel about their learning and self-esteem.

4.5.3. Interviews

The two research techniques used to ask questions were questionnaires and interviews. Wallace [1998] argues thus: ‘these techniques are usually classified as ‘introspective’ since it involves respondents reporting on themselves, their lives, their beliefs, their interactions and so on and can be used to elicit factual data’ [p.124]. Conversely though, Wallace [ibid] warns that researchers must keep in mind that the only data collected is what the respondents choose to tell, [hence the need for triangulation], [see validity, 4.10]. This factor will be discussed below as a possible limitation of the validity of this research since respondents can choose different responses depending on whether they are answering a questionnaire or responding to a question in public.

However, in order to address Wallace’s [1998] warning, I used hierarchical focusing [Tomlinson 1989]. Tomlinson [ibid] argues that hierarchical focusing acts as a checklist of hierarchically organised topic and sub-topics to be used whilst remaining faithful to the methodology of open-ended interview and exploratory techniques. Thus, the account of both the interviewee’s subjective responses and researcher’s agenda is gained. The interviewer only uses language introduced by the interviewee. For Tomlinson [1989], the purpose of hierarchical focusing is to allow the interviewer to move the interview from the general and open to the specifics of the research agenda. Whether a response was prompted or spontaneous can be recorded on the checklist.

However, McMillan and Schumacher [1993, pp. 250-252] assert that interviews are essentially vocal questionnaires and that the preparation for an interview is the same as in preparing a questionnaire. The structure for a questionnaire involves justification, defining objectives, writing questions, deciding in general what needs to be determined, deciding on the appropriate question format and pre-testing. Nonetheless, the primary disadvantages of interviews are that they can be subjective and that respondents could be unwilling to report on true feelings, or that the interviewer can ask leading questions to support a particular view. Therefore, in order to bolster validity, it was felt not reasonable to rely only on information gathered from observations alone. So I employed face to face interviews to produce better results which

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accorded me the opportunity to witness first hand the reactions and other body languages and cues by the interviewees which are necessary in the data analysis stages.

Like the questionnaire, the interview can also have structured and semi- structured questions [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1992]. So, the instrument designed for this research study, had structured questions that were followed by a set of choices from which the respondents had to choose the most appropriate. However, it is noteworthy to point out that, semi-structured questions have limited choice and the respondents are allowed individual responses, but the questions are fairly specific in their intent. Never the less, since the data was based on sensitive issues, interviews were deemed appropriate.

During the interviews, I strived to make respondents feel free to discuss anything without feeling being judged by me by assuming as natural a stand as possible. I also deemed it appropriate for the students to be in non- threatening, comfortable and permissive environment in small group discussion atmosphere/settings.

Cohen et al., [2005] stress how interviews can yield rich material and illuminate what makes in-depth interviews a rich source of data by arguing:

...interviews bring out the affective and value-laden implications of the subjects' responses by stressing a point for example, this helps the researcher to determine whether the experience shared by the participants has central or peripheral significance [p.290].

In this research, individual interview schedules were in structured and semi-structured format. Semi- structured interviews were favoured for their flexibility that satisfied my desire to probe deeper as and allowed interviewees to develop ideas, and probe wider on issues raised. The sensitivity of the topics prompted me to employ indirect and informal questions to produce frank and open responses. As such, questions that tendered to invite opinions rather than fact yielded the desired data and direction. This direction then accorded me an opportunity to get rich data, which are amenable to content analysis and were likely to reveal themes or patterns that could explain behaviours in context. By using the interview technique, I was able to explore and examine the worlds inhabited by the interviewees. This was achieved by allowing interviewees to use their own words, elaborating points of interest, and developing their own

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thoughts. That way, I was able to discover new things and have insight knowledge about complex issues being investigated.

However, there were a number of issues that needed to be done prior to conducting these interviews. Trochim [2000] contends that there are 'common components' essential to the actual interview which are conscientiously considered by the researcher at preparation stage of the interview schedules and conducting the interviews.

There's the opening, where the interviewer gains entry and establishes rapport and tone for what follows. There's the middle game, the heart of the process that consists of the protocol of the questions and improvisations of the probe. And finally there's the endgame, the wrap-up, where the interviewer and respondent establish a sense of closure. Trochim [2000]

By employing the interview technique, I had the opportunity to come face to face with the interviewees thereby establishing trust and mutual understanding in a relaxed atmosphere before delving into the interview itself. Where possible and having been granted permission to do so by the interviewees, I tape-recorded some of the interviews. Bell [1999, p. 28] argues that tape recording is ideal when one wants to get information about events that would be changed if you were physically present: to get immediate responses to events in the language of participants and that tapes produce good direct evidence that is difficult to question. Finally, I was able to get what was important to the interviewees and heard it expressed in the language used by the interviewees wherever it was reasonably practicable.

By using structured and semi-structured interviews, I envisaged to have faster data analysis, most ideal at the preparatory stage. On the other hand, Kitwood [1997] argues, 'conception of interview is that of a transaction which inevitably has bias, which is to be recognized and controlled by building controls in the research design such as having a range of interviews with different biases'. Further, Kitwood espouses that the best understood interviews are of a theory of motivation that recognises a range of non rational factors governing human behaviour, like emotions, unconscious needs and interpersonal influences. Nonetheless, there are unavoidable features of any interview situation which could be regarded as problematic. Conversely, Cohen et al., [2005, p. 267] postulates that there are about five unavoidable, problematic features of the interview.

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1. Factors that inevitably differ from one interview to another such as mutual trust, social distance and the interview control.
2. Respondents feeling uneasy and adoption avoidance tactics for too deep questioning.
3. Interviewer and respondent are bound to hold back part of what is in their power to state.
4. A number of clear meanings to one will be relative opaque to the other, even when the intention is communication.
5. It is impossible to bring every aspect of the encounter within rational control.

When the interview questions had been constructed, they were piloted and refined in order to make them more easily understood which was accomplished by holding trial interviews with colleagues. Importantly, soon after administering interviews, I tried as much as possible to write up the interview notes covering the physical context of the interview and my impressions that could have been noticed. Subsequently, the gathered data from interviews were subjected to qualitative analysis.

4.5.3.1. Purposes of the Interviews

Interviews are multi-faceted, used to evaluate or assess a person in some respect; for promotional purposes to affect therapeutic change, to test or develop hypothesis to gather data, and to sample respondents' opinions etc. [Cohen 2005]. They [ibid] further argue that research interview may serve three purposes: as a means of gathering information having direct bearing on research objectives, as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships to test or suggest hypotheses and may be used in conjunction with other inceptors in research undertakings. Therefore it can be argued that an interview can be taken as a specific research tool. Gudmundsdottir [1996] concurs with Cohen et al., [2005] by noting that the interview is gradually being seen as an important ingredient in the data gathering stage. Gudmundsdottir goes further, contending that, 'the interview is especially important in the ethnographic and phenomenological research [p. 293]. For Gudmundsdottir [ibid], 'the interview is a form of conversation transformed into a research tool' as a result of deduction of some of the interview's cultural aspects and 'adding new ones considered scientific' [p. 294]. Citing Mishler's [1986] work, Gudmundsdottir postulated, 'in a good interview where there is rapport

between informants and researchers, a shared meaning develops through the dialogue' [p. 295]. Conversely, for Barker and Johnson [1998], 'the interview is a particular medium for enacting or displaying peoples knowledge of cultural forms, as questions, far from being neutral are couched in the cultural repertoires of all participation, indicating how people make sense of their social world and of each other' [p. 268].

4.5.4. Questionnaires

Questionnaire models were also instrumental in the data collection of this research study. According to Elliot [1991], questionnaires are instruments for eliciting other peoples' observations and interpretations of situations and events as well as their attitudes towards them. Elliot [ibid], further asserts that a questionnaire is made up of 'a list of questions one wants to ask other people as a way of checking whether other participants in the situation would give the same answers to the kind of questions one has asked oneself on a checklist' [p.82]. Conversely, Trochim [2000] suggests noteworthy hints to take cognizance of during the construction of questionnaires, which I thoughtfully took aboard. These consisted of the following:

- Determine the question content, scope and purpose.
- Choose the response format that you will use for collecting information from the respondent.
- Figure out how to word the question to get at the issue of interest.

This parallels Cohen et al., [2005], notion which argues that, questionnaires are:

Useful instruments for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse. Questionnaires allow one to quantify peoples' observations, interpretations and attitudes. [p. 245]

Nonetheless, Elliot [1991] argues that questionnaires tend to force people to present their views as if they were quite unambivalently held. Even so, Wilson and Mclean [1994] postulate that the researcher will have to judge the appropriateness of using a questionnaire for data collection and if so, the kinds of questionnaires they will be. On the contrary, Cohen et al., [2005], espouse that there are several kinds of question and response models in questionnaires that include: dichotomous questions; multiple choice questions, rating scales and open ended questions. They also contend that closed questions [dichotomous, multiple choice and rating scales] prescribe the range of responses from which the respondent may choose, that they are

quick to complete and straightforward to code [e.g. computer analysis] and do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are. [p. 248]. However, Oppenheim [1992], contends that closed questions restrict the respondents' liberty to elaborate on their responses, '—they do not enable respondents to add any remarks, qualifications and explanations to the categories and there is a risk that categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be bias in them' [p. 115]. Never the less, open questions enable the respondents to write a free response in their own terms and to be original in their responses but, are difficult to code and classify [Cohen et al., 2005]. For the clarity, pilot [snap] questionnaires were issued to determine awareness and willingness to discuss pertinent issues on curriculum, assessment and general schooling matters. This model enabled me to get distinctive features of my client group.

4.6. The Rationale for Using Interviews and Questionnaires

Because of the diversity and individualism of the interviewees, the triangulation process was necessary to improve both the face and content validities. I used structured and semi-structured: open and closed questions to elicit information at various stages of the interviews. The questions for the questionnaires and for the interviews were based on the observations, the literature review with some emanating from responses by pupils, teachers and parents. The rationale for using closed and structured questions is grounded on the premise that, during the literature review process, certain questions arose from interactions with print and some from class observations and a concerted response representative of the sample interviewees was called for. I also had to re-interview some of the pupils and teachers to get clarification on issues that arose from either the teachers; parents or pupils' interviews.

I could not have managed to contact the entire population of interest or relied on observations alone without questionnaires. It was also assumed that questionnaire data are easier to analyze if enough thought was put in the design and construction of the questionnaires prior to using them. They are versatile in that I managed to use the same questionnaires with different groups making them reliable. Bell [1999] argues that questionnaires are a good way of collecting certain types of information quickly and relatively cheaply. Questions can also be open ended there by giving interviewees flexibility to express themselves freely. Because of my choice to

use interviews and questionnaires, at the preparation stage the methods allowed me to consider a number of steps. These included identifying suitable interview subjects, developing interview schedules and deciding on the place and time for the interview as argued by Yin, [1994].

4.7. Reliability and Validity of Instruments

It is argued that the concept of validity and reliability are multi-faceted and a touchstone of all types of educational research [Cohen et al., 2005, Hammersley 1993, Patton 1990]. And Sapsford and Jupp, [1996] argue, ‘As with other research data, we must always be concerned about the validity and reliability of observations’ [p.88].

Tomlinson [1989] contends that major problems to the validity of data gathered from research interviews are presented by:

- The active and idiosyncrasy of human understanding and language and;
- The potential social influence of the interviewer.

Thus, in pursuit of the researcher’s own interests they may miss the interviewee’s construal and reactions particularly through questionnaire use. Then again, over emphasis on the interviewee’s perspectives may fail to do justice to the researcher’s own agenda. As such, it is advantageous and an issue of validity to do both [Tomlinson 1989].

Reliability deals with the consistency of a measure across different testing externally or within itself internally. It is the extent to which the instrument yields similar results at all times when used under constant conditions [Bell, 1999]. Validity on the other hand deals with the question of whether the measuring instrument measures what it was originally intended to measure [Cohen et al., 2005].

Conversely, Hammersley [1993] argues, ‘consideration of validity takes us to the interface between the findings of the study and the reality from which they were extracted, and, essentially about truth conditions’ [p. 178]. As such; validity becomes an important ingredient and a key to effective research. For Patton, [1990], ‘the validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill sensitivity and integrity of the

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researcher' [p. 11]. However, Cohen et al [2005] contend that reliability is necessary but insufficient condition for validity in research; were as, reliability is a necessary pre-condition of validity. Nonetheless, for [Nuttall, 1989; Patton; 1990, Dennis, 2001], there are several different kinds of validity. 'If a test achieves what the originators intended it to achieve, it is a valid test, it ought to be noted that there is a connection between the validity and the reliability of a test or examination paper' [Dennis, 2001, p. 366].

Nevertheless, Cohen et al., [2005] argue that threats to validity and reliability cannot be eliminated completely, 'rather the effects of these threats can be attenuated by attention to validity and reliability throughout a piece of research' [p.105], and 'there will be several ways in which they can be addressed' [p. 104]. For Maxwell [1992], qualitative researchers need to be cautious not to be working within the agenda of the positivists in arguing for the need for research to demonstrate concurrent, predictive and convergent, criterion related, internal and external validity. Rather, Maxwell [ibid] argues for the notion of 'authenticity' while Mishler [1990] also cited by Cohen et al., [2005] prefers using 'understanding' as a more suitable term than validity in qualitative research. Nonetheless, to me, it all boils down to a question of semantics since authenticity and understanding appear to be sides of the same coin. For Hammersley [1992], validity in qualitative research replaces certainty with confidence in our results and that, as reality is independent of the claims made for it by researchers; our accounts will only be representations of it [pp. 50-1].

To account for validity, Cohen et al., [2000] contend that in qualitative data, validity could be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness of objectivity of the researcher. Well, in this research, I attempted to improve validity through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data. Cohen et al [2000] postulate that, in qualitative data the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias, 'validity then should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state' [p.105].

4.7.1. Internal Validity

I strove to account for internal validity by taking heed of some of the advice espoused by [Merriam 1988, LeCompte and Preissle 1993]. Internal validity was accounted for by providing explanations of particular events, issue or sets of data which attempted to actually sustain the data i.e. [accuracy of the description of the phenomena being researched]. LeCompte and Preissle [1993] argue that in qualitative research, internal validity can be addressed in several ways by using, low inference descriptions, multiple researchers, participant researchers, peer examination of data and using mechanical means to record store and retrieve data [p. 338]. Nonetheless, LeCompte [p. 323-4] argue, ‘in ethnographic qualitative research there are several overriding kinds of internal validity. These include: confidence in the data; the authenticity, cogency, soundness of the research design, credibility, auditability, dependability and confirmability of the data’ [p. 108].

4.7.2. External Validity

External validity, as Cohen et al., [2005] argue; refers to the degree which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations, were as Bryman [p.30] writes, ‘external validity is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context. And that the issues of generalization can be problematic as, Eisenhart and Howe [1992, p, 647] cited by Cohen et al., [2005] postulate, ‘it is possible to access the typicality of a situation, the participant and settings to identify possible comparison groups and to indicate how data might translate into different settings and cultures [p. 109]. The validity and reliability issues will be closely discussed in relation to the analysis of data under appropriate sections.

4.8. Procedures for Data Analysis

It is argued that, any worthwhile research should generate some meaning by way of theory contribution or discoveries [May, 2002]. This goal is achieved through rigorous analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the research field. For the purpose of this research, the data analysis was an ‘ongoing activity’ [Bryman, 2004, Creswell, 1998] [see p.168]. Bryman and Burgess [1994] argue, ‘in designing a project, considerations need to be given to the end-point and the concepts and theories that will be used in data analysis’ [p.3]. However, there are no standard set processes or operations to follow in the data analysis [Bryman and Burgess 1995].

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Literature on qualitative research methods provides fertile grounds for a variety of examples that may assist researchers in planning their research studies.

Schurink [1998] argues that there are three general strategies of data analysis, which can be used in qualitative research namely constructing typologies, analytic induction and the grounded theory approach. The data analysis for this research followed the 'Qualitative Research Guidelines' by Merriam 1988, Patton 1990, Davis 1995, Taylor and Bogdan 1998, Elliot 2001 and Cohen et al., 2005. Taylor and Bogdan [1998], postulate:

Because qualitative data analysis is an intuitive and inductive process, most qualitative researchers analyze and code their own data. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative usually lacks a division of labour between data collectors and coders [p141].

Coding is defined as: bridging together and analyzing all the data bearing on major themes, ideas, concepts, interpretations and propositions [ibid, pp. 150-1]. Coding can be done in varying ways, by assigning symbols or numbers to different coding categories. 'As you code your data, refine the coding scheme; add, collapse, expand and redefine the coding categories' [Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.152]

The process of data analysis is dynamic and creative [ibid, 1998]. For this research study, I employed 'an analytic inductive approach involving a Spiral process [Creswell 1998] of data collection, analysis [taking and utilizing the descriptive language the respondents themselves use' [Davis 1995, p. 622] rather than using a priori categories Cohen et al., [2005]. Data was descriptive and presented in terms of the respondents' situation and through their eyes [from the native's point of view rather than researchers' as suggested by Cohen et al., [p. 106].

For Lincoln and Guba [1985], the interpretive research design must be drawn from an ample number of data sources for triangulation of that data. The data must be emergent rather than preordained: because meaning is determined by context to such a great extent:

Because what will be learned at a site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is also not fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shadings cannot be known until they are witnessed' [p. 208].

However, it must also be noted that data analysis in a qualitative research is a creative process which differs from researcher to researcher, with no fixed rules or formulae, 'there is no one

right way to go about organizing, analyzing and interpreting qualitative data' [Patton, 1987, p. 146].

For the interview and participant observation, analysis began during data collection phase. May [2002] argues thus, 'although analysis begins the first time an interviewer sits down with a participant, it takes a new and more directed form after all interviews have been collected and transcribed' [p.216]. As such, I constantly analyzed the emergent information with a view to modifying and creating further questions for the research. During the familiarisation stage, I read the transcripts and field notes, listened to the tapes and made notes on recurrent themes. That way, I was able to take note of what had emerged in relation to various issues and also tried out emergent ideas basing on experience settings and firsthand data.

This view assisted with narrowing down the research focus of the study. As this was the preliminary analytic analysis [Bogdan and Biklen, 1982], it was then followed by yet another analysis after the field work. This time, Codes or labels were attached to small segments of the data and concepts were then generated [Miles and Huberman, 1994]. I employed a coding system that included descriptive and interpretive, explanatory and astringent codes to make sense of the data. Basically, my main concern was to understand the settings and stories told by the samples in their own terms through description as postulated by Taylor and Bogdan [1998]. Taylor and Bogdan [1998] argue, 'data analysis is the most difficult aspect of qualitative research...it is not fundamentally a mechanical or technical process, it is a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing' [p.140]. 'Concepts are used to illuminate social processes and phenomena that are not readily apparent through descriptions of specific instances' [ibid, p.144]. After this phase, I then moved on to concept and proposition stage/exercise.

4.9. The Catchment Area

Highfields is an inner city area of Leicester, England and is on a hill southeast of the city centre. The area was developed between the late 19th Century and the start of the First World War and contains many fine Victorian townhouses [now usually subdivided into flats], as well as areas of redbrick terraced housing. The city's workhouse was formerly situated in the area,

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on the site now occupied by the Community College. Highfields has a large ethnic minority population, and has traditionally been an area occupied by recent immigrants to the city. It contains Leicester's synagogue, an African-Caribbean Centre, and several mosques, madrassas and Islamic community centre. Many recent Somali immigrants have settled in the area. Highfields has in the past been an area associated with crime - and is known as the city's red light district. Leicester City Council defines a **red-light** district as a neighborhood where prostitution is a common part of everyday life. In recent years some of the establishments associated with criminal activity have been closed, and the police have adopted a hard-line policy on properties used for the sale and consumption of drugs, in collaboration with local residents' associations.

[Source: Leicester City Council, 2005]

4.10. The Research Settings

These classes to which I carried this research are free of charge as no tuition fees are paid towards education by either parents or guardians. The classes are taught between 0845 hrs and 1500 hrs Monday through Friday. The settings involved the classes taught by five different teachers. The principal allowed me to sit in on the teacher orientation at the beginning of the 2005/6 first term, when I requested permission to carry out research at the college and to launch the data gathering in earnest. Having been granted permission by the school authorities, the English HoD introduced me to the English department's teaching staff at a meeting during the beginning of the term [September, 2005]. She then requested the group to consider allowing me to be in their classes during teaching and also volunteering to be interviewees for the study. Five teachers volunteered to help serve as participants in the study at that meeting as well as putting up with my presence during lesson deliveries. The principal was informed and I was allowed access to the classrooms. These classes fell into four different levels [i.e.] years seven, eight, nine and eleven, some practicing assessment for learning [two] and the other doing assessment of learning.

These classes were observed on Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout term (1), (2) and part of term (3) of the period 2005/6 except for the period 15/11/05 to 25/11/05 when I was

hospitalized. During my visits to the school, I spent the whole day at the school observing and gathering data as well as went to all English classes taught by the five teachers during the research period.

4.11.0. Selection of Participants

I used purposeful sampling [Merriam, 1998] to work with a group of twenty two students from Year 7, 8, 9 and 11. In purposeful sampling, a researcher must ‘determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied’ [ibid].

The participants’ differed in several categories, which included nationality, educational competence levels, and socioeconomic status. The participants I interviewed were from 6 different countries. Their ages varied from 11-16 years and many were still striving to become proficient in the English Language. The researcher’s goal was to choose pupils identified by teachers who presented borderline learning difficulties but were not certificated, appeared to be de-motivated or unenthusiastic for an in-depth ethnographic study. The teachers from the classes, and their respective students, were included as participants in the study in each setting. The consent forms and the participant’s role were explained to each student /participant and with translations of certain segments into one’s mother language for some participant pupils with the assistance of other students whose command of English was more proficient. Many explanations were given in English, the second language of the researcher. Each participant interviewed, signed the consent forms [see Appendix A], approved by my supervisor and Director of Research studies at the University of Nottingham school of education.

4.11.1. The Teachers

This section gives a picture of the teachers in the study, a sense of their teaching experience, individual backgrounds, schooling, philosophies and cross-cultural experience. In the study in each setting, the principal of the community college will also be interviewed with the aim of providing more complete background information on the programs to supplement the classroom observations. The consent forms and the participant’s role was explained to each student participant and with translations of certain segments into understandable language were there might be need seemed apparent. Each participant who was going to be interviewed,

signed a consent forms [see Appendix A], approved by the Nottingham University Director of research, school of education or director of faculty of education.

4.11.2. The HoD

The purpose of the HoD's interview was to provide more privileged information, detailed background and context about the school, types of teachers and the calibres of pupils in the catchment areas. A list of possible topics that include: scope, background, history, future goals and current concerns for the future of the school was considered. The information gathered from the interview, was enhanced the researcher's understanding of the colleges' culture of the research setting. The HoD appeared genuine in the answers she provided. She sounded knowledgeable in the subject areas, was very supportive and sincere.

4.11.3. The Students

There were five pupils from year seven, two boys and three girls who were all Moslems but from three different countries. Of the three girls, one seemed mostly to be in trouble with the English teacher. I will call this girl 7A and the others girls 7 B and 7 C respectively. At face value, one could argue that 7A was a trouble-maker and a 'care free' someone who is bent on disturbing learning. She had a strong voice and was quite vocal. She always wore boots with frills. In most cases she was either excluded or spent her time quietly sited. Sometimes, the few occasions she talked she mumbled and tended to swallow her words. However, during interviews, she showed sheer determination, a strong will and provided informed answers. Her teacher had described her as a trouble maker who could end up in serious trouble and needed divine intervention.

The other girl, 7 B is a tall girl of Somali origin and is a friend to 7A but less controversial. She appears much taller than most girls of her age group. 7B appeared to have language problems that manifested during oral lessons. However, her reading ability appeared to be well above average. Girl 7C seemed very calm and much quieter than the other two. She appeared to need more help than the other two and is soft spoken. 7 C chose to sit at the back of the class, and worked quietly.

4.11.4. The Parents

I experienced great difficulty in initially getting parents of the pupil sample for interviewing. I either had students who did not want their parents involved lest they would pull out of the research exercise or parents who were willing to participate but did not understand English. Where this was the case, I only relied on their child to translate the research question to the parent and vice-versa. In the end, I managed to interview only three parents; one British White working class mother, one Somali origin mother [un-employed] and one Zimbabwean employed mother.

The White mother is aged 43 years and the Zimbabwean mother 46. I could ascertain the Somali mother's age as she felt it was inappropriate to give out her age. However, her son believed she could be about 41 years old. The Zimbabwean had been in this country for a little over seven years while the Somali mother thought that she had been in this country for eleven years.

4.12. Statement of the Problem

Teaching in England and Wales and indeed world over, is currently facing a number of curriculum challenges. The context of England and Wales is interesting as, since 1988, different governments have introduced policy changes with the hope of improving state education. In attempts to deal with an increasing number of youngsters, who leave school with no qualification at all, the government may have instituted complicated changes to the educational requirements that may have put the name of the school before the child and as a result, schools end up using assessment regimes that may be impacting on the pupils' self esteem.

As schools grapple with attempts to improve the general pass rate, the system demands perfection in ways that may unwittingly force teachers to pay homage to the emergent need that sustains the availability of bread and butter [i.e. avoiding the 'failing school' label] that carry 'close the failing school threat'. As such, the guiding philosophy seems to be that teachers will 'coach' pupils how to pass rather than teaching them learning to learn. Literature, on the contrary, suggests that the way children are taught and assessed has a direct impact on

how they feel about learning. This thesis [dissertation] therefore, will focus on how a school assesses the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties and learners with language deficiencies learning in mixed ability English language classes.

4.13. Documental Review

Documents are an important and valuable source of information for a study of this kind. These may include letters, agendas, and memoranda, written reports of events, minutes of meetings, administrative documents, proposals, newspaper clippings and other articles appearing in the main media [Yin 1994, p. 81]. These help to corroborate and strengthen the evidence from other sources, identify and locate the relevant documents needed for the case being studied. I looked at an array of documental evidence that included students' written work, marks schedules and teacher written reports. These were compared against performance, teachers' comments assisted in fine tuning and formulation of further research questions.

4.14. Summary

The detailed description of how this study was conducted to achieve the research aims has been covered. Qualitative research involves analysis that yields findings or hypothesis that are not arrived at by statistical methods. Rather, qualitative research uses an inductive form of reasoning that develops concepts from patterns from the data. In turn, concepts are in the form of themes, designs and categories and data is presented in words.

CHAPTER FIVE: MEETING DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

5.0. Introduction

This chapter attempts to explore and explain data collection challenges and how these were solved. Also covered in this chapter are descriptions of individual samples and the researcher's Positionality and reflexivity as well as attempts to explain I negotiated the research.

5.1.0. Outline of the Research Stages

The ethnographic approaches used in this case study involved triangulation of methods namely; observations, questionnaires, documental evidence and interview methods. A brief outline of each method used is considered appropriate as it shows how such methods work. But first, I feel there is also need to distinguish between ethnography and participant observation as Bryman [2004] argues.

Bryman [ibid] argues, 'many definitions of ethnography and participant observation are very difficult to distinguish' [p.292]. In this research study, ethnography is taken to refer to a methodology in which the researcher met the following conditions:

- Spent a considerable length of time at the research site;
- There were regular observations of behaviour of a selected participants of the research setting;
- Questionnaires and interviews were administered to informants on issues arising from observations that were amenable to observation;
- Documental evidence were gathered about the participants;
- Attempts were made to develop an understanding of the culture of the group's and sample's behaviour within the context of their culture and setting;
- Recorded a detailed account of the participants setting, analyse and interpret the data using systematically planned procedures. [Silverman, 2006; Bryman, 2006, Richards 2005; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998]

Please note the distinction in this instance is that participant observation is a method or a research tool for gathering evidence while, ethnography is seen as a methodology.

5.1.1. Data Triangulation

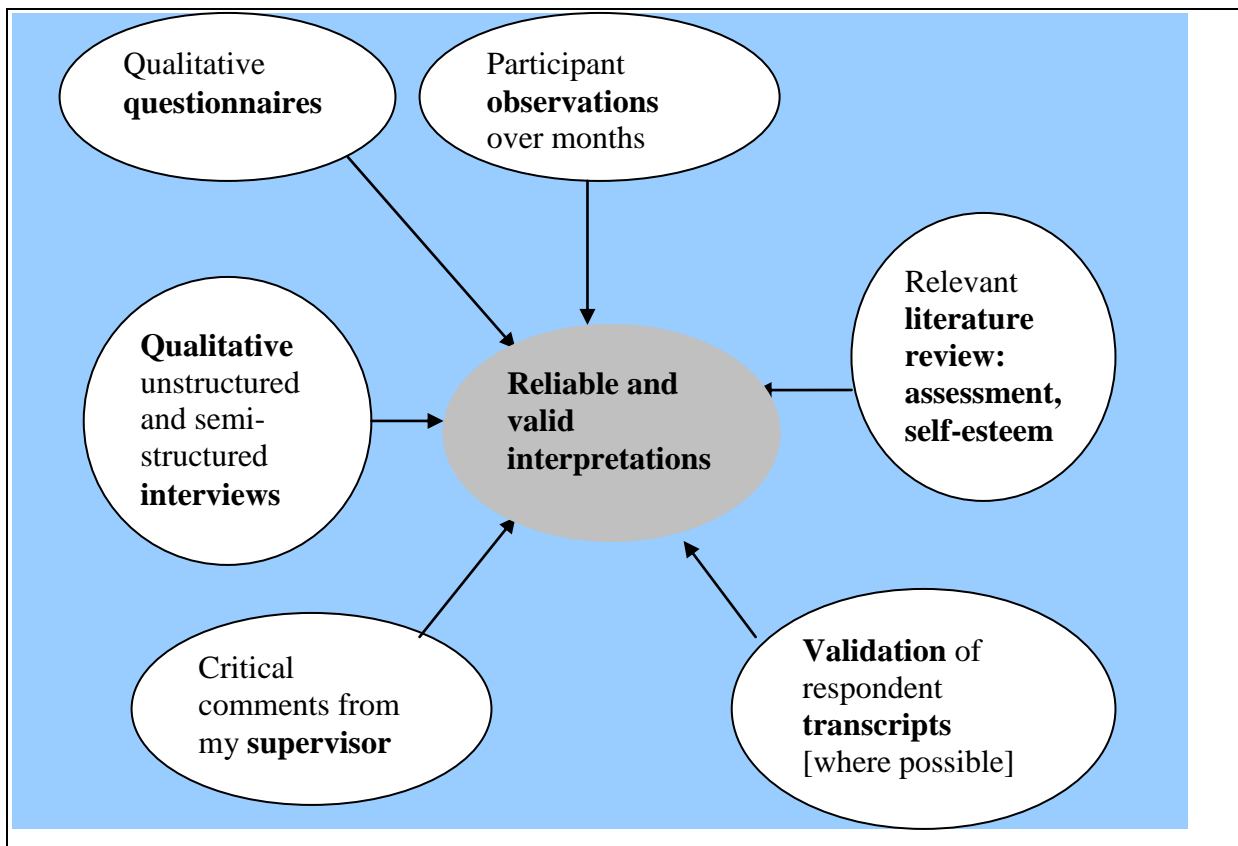
Triangulation from this perspective should be understood as a strategy that attempts to add rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to this research study [Silverman 2006].

Silverman [ibid] argues:

Triangulation usually refers to combining multiple theories, methods, observers and empirical materials to produce a more accurate, comprehensive and objective representation of the object of study. The most common application of triangulation in qualitative research is the use of multiple methods [, p. 291]

One of the best ways to improve data reliability and validity came from the following methods [see table 5.1]: a literature review of self-esteem, self-concept, learning difficulties, and assessment, curriculum and language deficiencies. The questionnaires, observations and interviews produced three sets of data that needed different methods of interpretation.

Table 5.1. Triangulation of Data Leading To a Reliable and Valid Interpretation



The above diagram [table 5.1] depicts the stages that I took to improve reliability and validity interpretations of the research process.

5.1.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using an Ethnographic Methodology

One of the advantages of using an ethnographic study is that, ‘close scrutiny of how people do what they do provides an explanation of what those people do and why they do it in the way they do’ Hart, [2000, p.46]. Conversely, Nardi [1996] noted that, in an ethnographic study a number of varied techniques such as interviews, observations, video, and historical materials should be used to collect data. Also, ‘ethnographers orient themselves to codes of conduct as they are lived rather than reported upon...Modes of engagement are enhanced by empathy’ [Eipper 1998, p.6].

Adversely, this means that data produced by this method is voluminous and will take a lot of time and skill to analyze especially when observations were not structured ‘analysis in ethnography and other qualitative research remains clouded in mystery’ [de Laine 2000, p.26].

Therefore to de-mystify the analysis, I used various tried and tested ethnographic approaches that provided guidance and practical suggestions that I took on board. These included a systematic data collection and analysis [Silverman 2006; Richards 2005; Bryman 2004; Denscombe 2003; Keats 2000; Taylor and Bogdan 1998] among others. This shows that, there is growing evidence of qualitative research interest and so are a number of points of departure. The increases bring with them so many different methods of data analysis, suggesting that; various possible data analysis approaches should be evaluated before they are selected for use. Therefore, I argued here that, the selected approach was appropriate to the nature of the study undertaken. I need also emphasize that in this instance, Creswell’s [1998] ‘Spiral’ approach was effective in managing a large volume of data because it provided a clear and concise approach that suited the kind of data that I was dealing with.

5.1.3. Participant Observation

Observation is one of the oldest and most frequently employed techniques for collecting data in the field of educational and social research. It is employed in the framework of quantitative as well as qualitative research [de Laine 2000]. Participant observation refers to research ‘that

involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected' [Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 24]

For Sapsford and Jupp [1996] 'the aim of carrying out observation is the production of public knowledge [empirical and theoretical] about specific issues...which may influence the behaviour of those who access it' [p.57]. Conversely, according to Atkinson and Hammersley, [1998] the observer has no influence over the situation being observed and can employ structured or unstructured observation. 'Observation takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers- 'a thick description'; everything observed is recorded, studied and analysed: including the setting, participants, dialogue, events and the observer's behaviour [actions], perceptions and feelings' [Johnson, 2005, p.2].

According to Johnson [ibid], observation is used as part of a broad approach to research, usually referred to as ethnography [ibid] and assumes the presence of the observer in a particular situation and collecting data about the activities in the setting under study. Information is recorded first hand 'without having to rely on the retrospective or anticipatory accounts of others...making observational data often more accurate' [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996, p.59]. Johnson, [2005] argues that the observer is concerned with context, processes, patterns of behaviour and their meaning as relating to a particular, natural setting; 'phenomena are observed without any intervention other than the observer's presence' [p.2].

However, Sapsford and Jupp, [1996] warn of the several ways observational data can be threatened. 'First, there is the possibility of reactivity- both personal and procedural' [ibid, p.88]. Personal reactivity occurs when subjects behave differently during observation sessions. In this research study, I was interested in process and meaning; how things happen, the patterns of behaviour of the sample and the possible effects of their interactions in the learning process.

For [Sarantakos, 2005, Foster, 1996], the crucial research instrument is the observer, who collects data mostly by means of his or her sight, but also by means of other senses.

Conversely, Cohen et al., [2000] argued that observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from live situations.

Generally however, observational studies are defined by a spectrum of observation and follow clear contours as shown below. This research study followed closely the suggested spectrums noted in figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2. A perspective summary of observational studies

Defined by a spectrum of observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete participant • Participant as observer • Observer as participant • Complete observer
Defined by a spectrum of participant influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple observation [no influence] • Contrive observation [active manipulation]
Defined by a spectrum of data collection procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured observation • Systematic observation
Structured observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher uses explicitly formulated rules for the observation and recording of behaviour • Rules inform what is observed and how noted • All people observed for same length of time using the same rules • Rules are articulated in an observation schedule or coding scheme • Aims at systematic recording so that it is possible to aggregate the behaviour of all those in the sample in respect of each type of behaviour being recorded.

Source: [Bryman 2004, pp.-165-168]

In this research study, all the observations took place at the school during deliveries of normal English lessons. The data that was generated in this study was converted to written texts as transcripts as early as it was reasonably practical, usually immediately after the observations [same day] see data collection section. However, at this juncture, it is worth noting that the observations used a non-structured schedule. The participants were followed during their normal English lessons from September, 2005 to July, 2006.

5.1.4. Documentary data

In ethnographic research, documental evidence can be a source of valuable information. Weiss [1998] noted that documents are ‘a good place to search for answers as they provide a useful check on information gathered in an interview’ [p.260]. Weiss [ibid] further postulated that when other techniques fail to resolve a question, documentary evidence can provide a convincing answer. Conversely, Hammersley and Atkinson [1995] contend that ‘it would be hard to conceive of anything approaching ethnographic account without some attention to documentary material in use’ [p.156].

I relied on some documents to provide me with secondary data. For this purpose, I used pupils’ written work, teachers’ comments and pupils’ marks schedules and reports. This provided me with background information about the teachers’ written comments and expectations about particular children and a basis for interview questions. The school reports provided me with pertinent information on the overall performance of individual pupils and what is generally expected of the sample pupils.

5.2.0. Sampling

Denzin and Lincoln, [1994] postulate that many qualitative researchers employ purposive and not random sampling methods. In this instance, a purposive sampling was used for this research study [Silverman 2006]. Mason [1996] defines theoretical or purposive sampling as: ‘a set of procedures where the researcher manipulates their analysis, theory and sampling activities interactively during the research process, to a much greater extent than is statistical sampling’ [p.100].

Therefore, at design stage, I decided to look for schools that were most likely to provide samples from diverse backgrounds that were amenable to the research context. So, I looked for schools that would provide a broad sample to choose from. These were state schools that did not administer entrance examinations for pupils. Considering the research topic, it was not helpful to involve samples from ‘grammar schools or private schools’ where pupils are usually enrolled on the strength of their performances. This was inline with Denzin and Lincoln’s [1994] observation on sampling choices.

Denzin and Lincoln, [ibid] contend that researchers ‘seek out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur, [p. 202], while for Silverman [2006], ‘sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is, or should be, theoretically grounded [p. 307].

5.2.1. Choice of the site and samples

In this research study, the site and subjects for this project were considered on the premise of their relevance to the research question and or theoretical position. ‘Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation’ [Mason, 1996, pp. 93-4].

The research study was carried out using students, teachers and parents of an urban community college in Leicestershire, England. The research interests focused upon the impact of formal and informal assessments on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties in mixed classes. The students who partook in this research study were from years 7, 8, 9, and 11, and were considered to be struggling in their learning. The other sample of the study were the English language teachers who were all from the English department of the college as well as the HoD of the department and three parents of the pupils who agreed to take part in the study. The samples were selected on the premise that they showed some form of distress in coping with learning challenges, manifested some unwarranted behaviour and seemed to be feeling low and unhappy and were assumed to have low self-esteem.

5.2.2. The sample for the observational phase

A total of twenty-one [21] pupils, 11 boys and 10 girls, including 5 teachers and 1 HoD were observed for eight months during delivery of English lessons. The pupils and the teachers were all from one school. Below is a breakdown of the participants per category.

Figure 5.3. Breakdown of samples

Year	Boys	Girls	Teachers	Parents
7	3	4	1 male	
8	2	2	2 females	
9	3	1	2 females	1 female
11	3	4	1 female	2 females
Total	11	11	6	3

Teachers for these grades [years] were interviewed to determine children perceived as manifesting learning difficulties, failing to engage with learning or showing signs of ‘low self-esteem’ and language deficiencies. This initial stage helped to kick start the observational process. Later a few more pupils were added to the list by the researcher. The final list of pupils in the research study was not made available to the participating teachers. Pupils in different grades were observed simultaneously during normal lesson deliveries. The conceptual way for recording behaviour used ‘incidents’ approach as suggested by LaPiere [1934] in Bryman [2004].

We can observe and record observations for quite long periods of time. The observer watches and records more or less continuously. We can record in terms of incidents...This means waiting for something to happen and then recording what follows from it [Bryman, 2004, p.166].

5. 2.3. Rationale for Purposive Sampling

I chose to use this approach over others because it is ideally suited for this research study because of the following flexibilities:

- As new factors emerged, I had the flexibility to increase the sample in order to say more about them if I chose to;
- The approach allows the researcher to focus on a small part of the sample in early stages of the research, using the wider sample for later tests of emerging generalisations.
- Unexpected generalisations in the course of data analysis lead the researcher to seek out new deviant cases. [Silverman, 2006]

5.3.0. Practical Issues Regarding Data Collection

It is imperative that the practical issues that underpinned data collection for this research project are clearly spelt out. I feel that this is necessary for a number of reasons. Most importantly, there are connotations of validity and reliability issues entailed in the data collection process as well as some limitations that the study might have had, also implicated in the data collection phase. The other importance of examining practical issues is that data collection in qualitative inquiry is negotiated between the researcher, the participants and other key people involved in the process of data collection, hence the need to inform the readers.

The practical issues I raise illuminate the strenuous process of qualitative data collection and the rewards that followed the empirical research experience. Therefore, the practical issues addressed in the subsequent sections that follow, put the data collection in perspective. In this section, I aim to tell the reader the problems I encountered and how I negotiated a solution.

5.3.1. Negotiating and Gaining Access

Bell [1999] argues that no researcher should demand access to an institution, an organisation or to materials. And Wellington, [2000] postulates that the business of access can seriously affect the design, planning, sampling and carrying out educational research. Conversely, Vulliamy et al., [1990] observed that:

In research settings there tends to be a hierarchy of consent, whereby those in positions of power grant permission for research to be done on individuals lower down the hierarchy and this can lead to understandable resentment which can only be overcome by researcher's very careful management of their role [Vulliamy et al., 1990, p.4].

Therefore, the problem of access required that I planned the research well in advance to minimise difficulties with gaining access to the research site, to participants and the setting of the study. Participants themselves could deny access to the researcher for practical reasons, e.g. time or potential participants have something to protect [Cohen et al, 2000]. In addition, I had to be mindful of the methods of data collection and their suitability and 'fitness for purpose' in relation to my potential participants.

Bell [1999] argues that permission to carry out an investigation must always be sought at an early stage. And so, the process of looking for an ideal school(s) began about a month earlier. I also thought it was feasibly easier to be accepted into Leicester City schools particularly in schools I had been acquainted with before as a supply teacher. I had hoped that if I was granted permission, this would minimise the degree of resentment as postulated by Vulliamy [1990] referred to above. Another consideration I made was to cut or minimise travelling costs as well as losing time on travelling. I decided from the onset to conduct the fieldwork phase of the research in Leicestershire where my family resided.

5.3.2. Meeting the Requirements

It is true that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. For my journey, that first step involved ironing a few practical issues with my initial supervisor; which included obtaining an enhanced CRB clearance check. The clearance check is mandatory to anyone who is going to work with children or vulnerable adults. Basically, a CRB is a criminal records check of would be teachers, social workers or carers who intend to work with vulnerable individuals for criminal records. This done, I then sat on doing the field work.

5.3.3. Meeting the Gate Keepers of the Community College

Having worked at the community college before, I was knowledgeable of who the principal of the college and the HoD English were. The only nagging feeling was whether the gate keepers still remembered me since a considerable time had lapsed between my last time at the college and now. I also had a pretty picture of the times the college opens and closes and knew the names and telephone numbers of the gate keepers [i.e. the college telephone, email address and the college web address]. And so, while I ironed out a few technical issues such as obtaining a copy of the research ethics, obtaining a valid CRB record and having my research questions looked at by my supervisor, I decided to call the community college to request audience with the principal. Upon presenting my story, the principal saw no need for a face to face meeting and so referred me to the HoD of the English department where my focus was.

I was mindful that researchers need to ensure that not only ‘access is permitted, but in fact, is practicable’ [Cohen et al, 2000, p. 98]. So, I called the HoD and made arrangements to meet with her just before schools opened in September of 2005. Time was set for Wednesday the 5th

of September, when the department held its departmental meeting. I arranged to arrive an hour earlier so I could have time to brief the HoD on my research plans and proposals. At this stage, I feel the need to indicate that I was polite and respectful during my discussion with the HoD and other members of the community college who came in to meet me [Vulliamy, 1990].

Having met this requirement, I was then introduced to the rest of the departmental staff during beginning of term meeting the same day. At this juncture, I was given the floor to explain my research and its aims, following which, teachers volunteered to allow my presence during lesson deliveries for the length of my study. Four female teachers and one male teacher agreed to assist with my research. The HoD also invited me to use her class as well bringing the total number to six teachers. The research participants came from years 7, 8, 9 and 11.

The next stage involved meeting the student participants and it was agreed that, at least a week would lapse to let 'things settle' before I addressed them. This gave me time to draw up all ethical documents that were deemed necessary for conducting an empirical research study [see the appendix section for details]

5.3.4. Participants- the Teachers

This section attempts to paint a picture of the six teachers in the study, a sense of their teaching experience, individual backgrounds, philosophies and career experiences. Their teaching experience ranged from three years, to forty three years. All six teachers volunteered to participate in this study. Due to the anonymity stance adopted, pseudo initials were used to identify individuals for purposes analysis. Mr BT is a mature and experienced teacher who has taught for five years. My assessment of Mr BT is of a temperamental but caring individual. Ms Bn is a single teacher and mum who is nearing retirement age. Ms Bn has vast experience and claims to have done nothing but teach all her life. Ms Bn claimed that she was knowledgeable to dealing with misbehaving pupils. Both Mr BT and Ms Bn had experience in teaching heterogeneous classes. However, my feeling was that Ms Bn found it difficult to deal with such pupils. To me, she was not assertive and seemed partial when dealing with perennial offenders. Ms Bn considered herself as an experienced teacher who should be respected. She felt that those pupils who did not produce good work, 'simply don't care...it all boils down to

attitude'...I expect them to at least try in the classroom'. Ms Bn argues, 'I don't like a student to come in and just occupy space'.

Ms Cn. is in her early thirties, a degreed English teacher who seemed very assertive, firm and impartial. The other lady teacher was Kl who taught year eight. Ms Kl seemed to be a disciplinarian, a tough talker a no nonsense teacher. Girl pupils hated her and openly accused her of being racist. 'We want Ms Kl fired. She is a racist' they claimed. This is despite the fact that Ms Kl is Moslem and those who accused her of being racist were also Moslem. However, the deference lay in their nationalities. Ms Kl is a British Moslem while the pupils are foreigners

The other teacher taught year 11 and was the only teacher who was trying to incorporate assessment for learning in her style of teaching. According to D's teaching philosophy, teachers should, 'do the best they can to assist students to progress in their learning ability, to help them discover ways to continue learning'. I believe that teachers 'should have the right to teach in their own way, from their own personalities, and from their own experiences. For me, this teacher presented herself as an appreciator of diversity and a non-authoritarian with a casually forgiving attitude. She avoided confrontations with students hence; there were very isolated cases of in discipline in her class. Pupils were always occupied or maybe because students were mature and were studying for their year 11 exams.

Ms KK who is also the HoD presented herself as a hard working individual and a good leader of high integrity. She contends that, teachers should 'feel confident about what they are doing, be open to be ready to embrace new ideas, believe in what they are doing and realize that different approaches are needed because students are different'. For Ms KK, 'teaching requires psychological work, especially where students are experiencing a lot of frustration, and failures'. Teachers should always 'give students something they can cheer about too, something to encourage them to believe that they can achieve'. Ms KK believes in handling prejudices and conflicts directly and explicitly in individual classroom although it is not always the case. As a result, Ms KK claims administrative work is more taxing than teaching pupils.

5.4. Limitations of Being a Foreigner

In this section I discuss some of the political dilemmas and limitations of being an outsider, first, as an African researcher and secondly as a foreigner undertaking research in a Western country. I acknowledge that the research is limited by my gendered and foreigner perspective. Other limitations include being a conspicuous outsider whom some students and teachers were suspicious of throughout the duration of the research. The research was also limited by the fact that some teachers appeared to present good impressions of their expertise and thus painted a picture of themselves as such. Pupils too, tried to make the teachers' lives more difficult than usual because of the presence of 'a foreigner'.

Vulliamy et al., [1990] argue:

Qualitative research methodologies are often viewed as posing particular problems of political acceptability, because they tend to probe sensitivities which can safely be avoided or buried in the apparent neutrality of numbers [Vulliamy et. al., 1990, p. 22].

Vulliamy et al., s' [1990] statement haunted my memories when I negotiated access to the research site and participants involvement in the research study. As established in the literature review [chapter two], the education sector is a politically contested arena. And so, the political dilemmas of carrying out international research demand that I make my political and value position explicit [Hall and Hall, 1996; Vulliamy et al., 1990; Said, 1993]. It is one of the criteria for measuring the successes of political regimes. And therefore, public condemnation of the quality of education being provided by the state is an overt condemnation of the political establishment of the time.

Thus, my political value position as a researcher is paramount in the construction of knowledge [Denzin 1989]. Therefore, a non judgemental, non partisan position underpinned the thinking and writing of this thesis. The following quote explains why it is crucial that my value and political positions are understood.

I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure [Said, 1993, p.xxiv]

Said [ibid] states that the author's writing are shaped by the society in which the writer is immersed. As a foreigner I was a conspicuous outsider and there were obvious limits to the extent to which I could 'blend into the fabric of the system I researched' [Vulliamy et. al., 1990, p. 211]. There were however, notable changes in some teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards me when they understood who I truly was and doing at 'their school' [an independent researcher]. My previous involvement with the school as a supply teacher helped to lower the temperatures. However, even up to the end of the research, my presence was not wholly approved of by some teachers within the department.

Similarly, Choksi and Dyer [1997] while carrying out a research in Indian schools noted that teachers' perceptions of researchers were that of outsiders who had probably come to look for problems since primary schools were rarely visited by anyone except inspectors, whose visits were associated with fault finding. 'Teachers did not really understand why we were there, asking all those questions, and were suspicious of us' [Choksi and Dyer, 1997, p.275].

Therefore, with this in mind, my main challenge with teachers and pupils was building up trust. For Mason [1996] trust is to do with honesty, ethics and politics. I was, to the best of my knowledge truthful and honest with the teachers and pupils about my reasons for doing the research [a PhD]. Therefore, developing and sustaining this trust was critical to the research since the teachers had no way of knowing how I would use their narratives upon leaving their school.

My interpretations were based upon specific observations which both pupils and teachers presented me with. During the early days, the teachers presented me with the image of hardworking, tolerant professionals which was sometimes more accurate than at other times. Pupils too were quick to notice this sudden change in teachers' behaviour of being lenient and tolerant to mischief. Thus, from the contradictory and multiple truths, the ideal 'self as teachers and pupils' were presented. Synopses and individual analyses of the teachers' characters will be discussed under appropriate headings.

5.5.0. Data Collection Procedures

‘Data is seen not as something ‘out there’ to be collected or captured but as something created through a social process’ [Hall and Hall, 1996, p.42]. Hall and Hall, [ibid] further contend that, in ethnography, data is generated through social interaction between the researcher and participants, ‘so that the research itself is a creative process which you will be part of’ [ibid]. Thus, Wellington [2000] argues, ‘qualitative research leads to one major consequence: qualitative research produces large amounts of data! Data are lengthy and, by definition, verbose, i.e. mostly in the form of words’ [p.133]. Conversely, ethnographic research and qualitative inquiry rely on the collection of data specific to an activity as it is ‘stretched over the social and situational contexts’ [Spillane et al., 1999, p.7]. Since this chapter is on participant observation, emphasis will be on field notes. So, in the following sections, the means of data collection and rationale is examined.

5.5.1. The Field Notes

May [2002] argues that field notes and research journals are not a new phenomenon. They have long been used ‘to record the feelings, emotions and personal identity work that can come with prolonged research engagement’ [p.314]. This observation assisted me with my fieldwork and note writing. Furthermore, May [ibid] asserts that field notes are private texts and are rarely shared in their raw form...‘quoted field-note extracts are usually tidied up or edited’ [p.318]. This is equally true of this research study as quotes and extracts are used in the data analysis rather than the entire field notes.

For Bryman [2004], ‘these should be fairly detailed summaries of events and behaviour and the researcher’s initial reflections of whatever is observed or heard’ [p. 306]. Like wise, I jotted down notes of events however brief every time something interesting cropped up. Later on, at the end of the day, sat down to write full vivid and clear field notes that included location, the numbers of the samples involved, the activities observed, date and time of the observations. These were then word processed and safely stored in the computer.

The first of my field notes exhibit descriptive notes of the identified sample per class followed by step-by-step accounts of individual samples. Reactions or behaviours by the non-participant

students, the ones I would call ‘silent participants’ [students who directly or indirectly contributed to or influenced the overall behaviours of the samples] are not detailed but mentioned in passing. It has been noted that there is no clear step-by-step method to carrying action research in practice since every study is unique. There exist many structured approaches but no unified approach. The current study was informed by the suggested approaches in figure 2.1 as discussed by Hart, [2000] [see p.116 of the thesis].

5.5.2. Practical Approaches to the Participation- Observation Method

According to Morrison [1993], observations enable the researcher to gather data on the physical setting, the human setting, the interactional setting and the programme setting. Other advantages include providing information about the environment and behaviour of those who cannot speak; sees what participants cannot see and provides information about those who will not take part one way or the other. Also, data from observation can be useful check on and supplement to, information obtained from other sources [triangulation].

Nonetheless, like any other research method, the observation method has its own limitations as a research tool. According to Sapsford and Jupp [1996] sometimes, the observation method is rendered useless because, ‘the social norms surrounding the event or behaviour do not usually permit observation...because the behaviour deliberately avoids observation’ because of various reasons [p.59]. Also, because ‘people may, consciously or unconsciously, change the way they behave because they are being observed...behaviour may be inaccurate representations of how they behave ‘naturally’ - reactivity [ibid]. And, since the observer has the final say of what is to be observed what needs recording, ‘it must therefore be emphasised that observations can never provide us with a direct representation of reality...what the observer obtains...are constructed representations of the world’ [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996, p. 59]. Prior knowledge can also bias the researcher and on the financial side, time consuming and costly as compared to other cheaper and broadly used methods such as interviews and questionnaires [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996].

5.5.3. Note Taking and Interpretation

Data collection procedures for this phase of the research study looked at what was ‘happening in situ rather than as second hand’ [Patton, 1990, pp. 203-205] and were influenced by ethnographic paradigm with triangulation as a way of increasing validity. The tools selected for data collection in this phase were unstructured classroom participant observations and participant critical log schedules [with free flowing-text produced by the researcher] as suggested by Taylor-Powel and Renner [2003]. These tools were appropriate for data collection as they provided answers to the research questions, which were provided by way of descriptive accounts that resulted from watching and listening.

Patton [1990] noted that observations enable researchers to understand the context of the programmes, to be open-ended and inductive, to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations and to move beyond perception-based data, and to access personal knowledge. However, ‘it should be noted that field notes are not ‘raw’ data, since they come encoded with the author’s conscience, understandings and interpretations’ [de Laine 2000, p. 148]. The reality of fieldwork is that involvement covers not only being an observer, but also being an actor, author, teller and writer [ibid].

It has been postulated that carefully and systematically recorded observations of ‘slices of everyday life’ generate richly detailed accounts of practices rarely obtained through interviews alone, and can provide deep insights into social practices, events and processes [Lankshear and Knobel, 2004]. In comparison with the other techniques of data collection, the main advantages of the observation method are that I had direct data collection since I was a participant observer in the situation under study; that data were collected in the natural setting; through participant observation, I managed to acquire data which cannot be obtained with other techniques; also through participant observation, I could manage to verify the validity of responses ‘since observing the situation, the researcher finds out whether people do as they say’ [Bryman, 2004, p. 167].

5.5.4. The Early Days of Observations

At this juncture, I must point out that during the first days in the fieldwork, I was very uncomfortable and was at first not so sure about my footing. So, I decided that my first encounter with the participants was going to be just for acclimatisation to the new roll as a researcher. I was rather overwhelmed by the amount of information that I received within a very short time which gave me a rough picture of what was coming. I however, used this window of opportunity to brief and inform the participants the purpose of my observation, and roughly how long I would be attending their classes. I also used this time to fuse into the system and to learn the groups' culture and tried to become a member of the classes that were being observed. As I became accustomed to the research setting, I took opportunity to identify the kinds of behaviour prevalent.

For this study, I adopted an ethnographic or unstructured observation as it is characterised by flexibility and minimum pre-structuring [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996]. 'The origins of less-structured observation lie in anthropology and in the application of its ethnographic approach to the study of communities and groups in industrialised societies' [ibid, p.61]. This approach minimised the influence of preconceptions as I approached the observation with a relatively open mind. I focused on pupils' behaviours, reactions and attitudes as they interacted with the teacher and with other students.

Of particular interest to me, were their reactions to feedback and comments from fellow students as well as those from the teacher. During the activities or individual work times, I assumed the roll of teacher assistant. This roll accorded me time to get very close to and interact with my samples without telegraphing my intentions but remaining relatively unobtrusive. That way, I managed to move from one sample to another without disturbing and alerting individuals that they are being watched or targeted all the time. The observation aimed to provide support to the data generated by interviews and critical incident log entries, in some instances. I need to make it clear though, that my consent and relationship with pupils was that of a 'student researcher'. The assumed assistant teacher was just a convenient way of thanking the teachers and pupils for accepting to partake in the research study, as well as a way of getting closer to the sample without prejudicing my welcome.

The observation focused on the classroom, particularly the way the student teachers taught their lessons. I produced a descriptive account as a result of watching and listening to student teacher's lesson sessions. During the 'teething' days of the participant-observation, I found it difficult to jot down my observations and comment at the same time. So, I decided to use symbols on the margins that represented actions and then after the observations wrote down the comments. This assisted me to keep abreast with observations. Later, I thought that tape recording would be used as a back up although, I continued with jotting down my comments reactions and feelings.

5.5. The College Hallways

The community college consists of a three winged; two storey building that forms a capital letter 'Y' from a bird's eye view. Hallways are too narrow, noisy and often crowded during inter lesson changes. A lot of activities [pleasant and unpleasant] such as chit-chats, bullying and shoulder nudging are observed in these hallways when pupils move from lesson to lesson. The most vulnerable pupils get caught up in the unpleasant hallway activities such that they are almost always late for their next lesson. Those caught up in the 'hallway activities' sometimes end up in deeper trouble with the next teacher, leading to detentions and sanctions met by the unfortunate pupils.

5.6. Reflexivity and Reflectivity

As a researcher, it is imperative that I put myself in the picture by explaining how I gained access to my participants, and explain the research process by giving full insights in the nature of reflexivity [Hall and Hall, 1996]. Reflexivity means: 'the self-awareness researchers should have developed throughout the study about how they influenced the results' [ibid, p. 42]. 'The researcher affects the researched...the researcher influences, disturbs and affects what is being researched in the natural world, just as the physicist does in the physical universe' [Wellington [2000, p.41]. Sometimes researchers' bias can influence the outcome of researched work hence the need to inform the readers how the researcher's and the researched were affected by this researcher bias. This stands calls for the researcher to be reflective [Wellington [2000].

Accordingly, Wolcott [1995] argues:

I regard bias as entry-level theorising, a thought-about position from which the researcher as inquirer feels drawn to an issue or problem and seeks to construct a firmer basis in both knowledge and understanding [p.186].

Thus, according to Wellington [2000], being 'reflective' is part of a more general approach to research process; how it was done and why, and how it could have been improved. 'reflection is an important part at every stage, i.e. in formulating questions, deciding on methods, thinking about sampling, deciding on presentation and so on' [p.42]. Therefore, at this stage of the research, I am obliged to reflect on my researcher effect; how my gender, race or age might have affected the way I interacted with the participants.

According to Wellington [2000] reflection is:

an important part of every stage, i.e. in formulating questions, deciding on methods, thinking about sampling, deciding on presentation and so on...these reflections and evaluations should be put into print in reporting the research and going public' [p.42].

Accordingly, Hamersley and Atkinson [1983] espoused that 'reflexivity requires explicit recognition of the fact that the social researchers and the research act itself, are part and parcel of the social world under investigation' [p.234]

5.7. Positionality

According to May [2002 p. 185] the researcher usually listens to a story or makes an account but has no place to intervene or do anything with the account except to produce an academic narrative. This means setting boundaries to guard against intrusive feelings. Conversely, Mouton [1996] postulated that the researcher could become a source of inaccuracies because of the nature of the researcher's characteristics and orientation

With regards to this research, I having experienced the plight of pupils who experienced failure in learning, I was weary of a strong possibility that I could easily identify with the data being presented by these pupils. This would lead me into sympathising rather empathising with the pupils. To guard against this possibility, I brought to the research study a genuine, open interest in the participants' narratives.

5.8. Example of an Observed Lesson

Date: [Tuesday]: 05/10/05

Time: 0840 hrs. [Day 3 of participant observations]

Class: Year 7 No. of students 28 [14 boys and 14 girls]

Class teacher: Mr BT

As this was my first day to start the research observations in earnest, I got to the classroom about 5 minutes earlier since I wanted to observe how the participants would come in and settle. I sat on a chair provided me, in the far corner at the back of the class where I had been authorised to sit by the class teacher. Pupils sat in five rows made up of twin setters; one behind another facing the board. There were no mixed pairings in this class.

In the corner directly opposite the one I sat, were the class teacher's chair, table and computer desk. On a television bracket above the teacher's table, were a set of television and video player. Anxiously, I jotted down the class information and anything to go with the observations that I intended to carry out which included: the topic, time of observation, the number of pupils and the date.

Just then, there were noises, squeals, laughter and a bit of stampede and rushing and suddenly dead silence. I looked up and saw Mr. BT by the door just staring at the mischief makers. 'You are a minute late and yet you can't make for that by being silent! Now, leave all your noise behind and walk in quietly'. That was Mr BT, the class teacher. Pupils entered in single file and the language assistant followed them immediately.

Mr BT immediately called the register. There was trouble after [B1] [pseudo name] said 'present' in place of another [B2] who was busy conversing with another boy about a pen. Mr B did not take it lightly. He ordered B1 to shut up, stand and remain standing until he finished role calling names for the register. In the mean time, the class assistant had moved to B2, pleading with him to pay attention while the register was being marked. When it was done, Mr

BT then gave them a bit of lecture on the need to pay attention when the register was being called as well as walking quietly and quickly for his lessons.

‘Coming late to my lesson will not be tolerated and speaking when I am marking the register will be asking for trouble’ he said. Then turned to the standing Mohr-A, warned him before letting him sit down. B1 was asked to remain behind after the lesson. The whole saga lasted 11min. There are about five pupils in this class whose handwriting is unreadable; behaviour of the other two is bad and sometimes destructive and so focus was on them and how the teacher would engage/assist them to learn. I would contend that the class was structured in order to split perennial trouble makers.

Then Mr B. thanked those who paid attention before he wrote ‘Speech Marks’ on the board and then asked, ‘what do you understand by ‘Punctuation marks?’

Answers came from all four corners, ‘correct and wrong answers’. Then the assistant teacher shouted: ‘you are not a bunch of primary school children, you all know that we raise our hands, don’t you?’

‘Now let’s be orderly and raise our hands if we want to give answers’, said Mr. BT. ‘Yes, - B3’.

Th. is of African origin and one of my research subjects in this group. ‘When I am writing sentences,’ he answered.

‘Writing what sentences?’ probed Mr BT.

B3 was quiet for some seconds then, - ‘writing sentences about someone or something’.

Mr B. ‘Okay, let’s start from the beginning. What do you find at the start of a sentence?’

There were no answers and so Mr. BT. had to rephrase his question. ‘When do we use capital letters?’

A number of hands shot up and Mr BT. pointed to an Asia girl who answered, ‘At the beginning of sentences!’

Right, where else? Asked Mr BT. - 'think of names'.

Peoples' names shouted X, a boy of Somali origin. This time neither Mr. BT. nor his assistant cautioned him for speaking out of turn. 'Good!' what else? Remember what we did on Monday. How about pets' names and cities, remember? What do you put at the end of a sentence? Mr BT. asked, pointing to a girl of Asian origin. 'A full stop,' she replied calmly and with a very low voice.

The language assistant chipped in by asking her to speak louder, but it made no difference as she did not increase her volume. Then Mr BT. repeated the answer she gave for the benefit of the rest of the class.

This recap took about 15 minutes. Mr BT. said, 'I want you all to take your books, re-write the following sentences putting the correct punctuation marks, capital letters and full stops.

I then, stood up and went around observing and offering help to pupils who appeared to be struggling. I took a peep at Th.'s work. He was not writing and had not even written the date yet. I moved on as I wanted to see when he would start writing. About six minutes later, he still had not started writing. Instead, he was in a bit of a mess with his pen, that appeared not to be writing and so he was trying to fix it. When the bell rang, he was among the first ones to pack their books.

Mr BT. then called for order and said 'those who have not finished do that work as your homework. Now put your chairs behind your desks and wait. Only those who are quite will go. There was dead silence and everyone was behind their chairs. Mr BT. then asked them to leave.

I thanked Mr BT. and went on to my next participant observation lesson.

Taylor and Bogdan [ibid] argue, '...qualitative data analysis is an intuitive and inductive process, most qualitative researchers analyze and code their own data... Data analysis is a dynamic and creative process' [Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.141]. The research design for this thesis however, provided for a triangulation of data collection methods that included

participant observations, interviews, administering questionnaires and documental evidence. 'Interviewing and observation share a set of conceptual and practical tools for arriving at theoretical conclusions' [May, 2002, p.216].

This lesson extract is an example of many classroom events and practices that were conducted over and over during my stay at this community college. I must also concede here that, while my main focus was on the participants, I found that my field notes also had more of other students other than participants.

Comments on participant observations

*...As far as participant observations have gone so far, I've observed quite a bit of some pupils' passivity during oral lessons and not so much effort from some of the teachers to try and involve these pupils in class deliberations. **What is this telling me?** A lot about teachers leaving struggling pupils 'to their own devices', pressure on teachers to complete the task before hand, uncertainty among teachers on how to deal with such pupils at this level.*

Researcher's log 24/07/2006

5.9. Making Sense of the Data

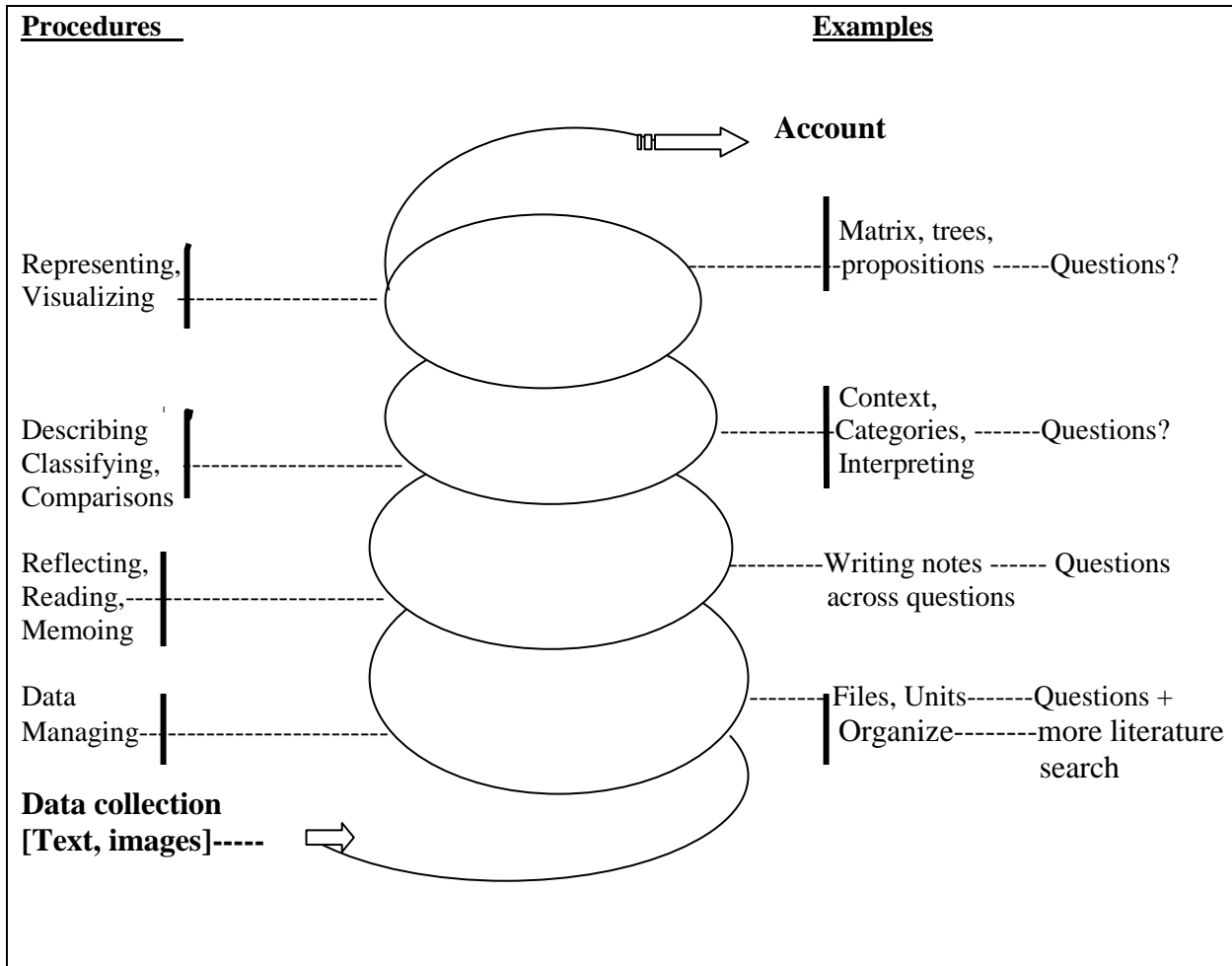
In an effort to make sense of the whole field notes database, I employed analytic procedures that 'conforms to a general contour...the contour is best presented in a spiral image...a data analysis spiral' adapted from [Creswell, 1998, p. 142]. I also consulted the researcher's log for cues in an effort to understand what is concealed by the emergent data. One such log informed that:

'Yesterday I interviewed a participant girl who prefers to sit in the corner to avoid participating and being noticed and wants to be left to her 'own devices'. These are pupils who teachers have said are affected by very low self-esteem. Questions need to be asked to establish teachers' understanding of self-esteem, these will provide some incite into teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards pupils' self-esteem.

[Researcher's Log, 14/05/06]

Below is a diagrammatical representation of Creswell's [ibid] spiral image, [figure 5.7].

Figure 5.7. The Data Analysis Spiral



Source: [Creswell, 1998, p.143]

This approach was instrumentally important during simultaneous data gathering and analysis stages for organising data to be meaningful. For instance, I sorted data into 'files and categories' with common themes then reflected on these themes to make sense of the stories being told. This action led to questions being asked and answers sort for leading to directed observation culminating into a spiral projection as shown by Creswell's [1998] diagram over leaf. However, for the full analysis followed, [see chapters four and six respectively].

CHAPTER FIVE: MEETING DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

Thus Creswell [1998] writes:

Data management, the first loop in the spiral, begins the process. At an early stage in the analysis, researchers organize their data into files folders, index cards, or computer files. Besides organizing files, researchers convert their files to appropriate text units. [e.g. a word, a sentence, an entire story] for analysis either by hand or by computer. Material must be easily located in large database of text [or images] Creswell, 1998, p.143].

This experience, although tedious, proved to be very helpful as I managed to keep focused. The whole process proved valuable during the final analysis stage.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS, QUESTIONNAIRES, INTERVIEWS WITH PUPILS AND DOCUMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe and present the analysis of the participant observation phase of the research study as carried out within a qualitative methodology that I have adopted in my endeavour to shed light on the perceived impact of formal and informal assessment on the pupils' self-esteem, which is the main focus of the research. Also presented within this chapter are questionnaires, and interview analyses of pupil participants as well as the documentary evidence gathered. Thus, this chapter which is pupil focused discusses and expounds on the data acquired from audio-taped interviews with the pupils, [transcribed by the researcher] participant observation phase [recorded by notes], documentary evidence such as school reports and teachers' comments and the questionnaires administered to:

- Identify potential pupils to approach for further investigations and or probing purposes.
- For breadth of information that gives a bigger picture before depth study
- Provide a group from which to draw the participants for my next phase [i.e.] interviews.

As stated in chapter four, this research adopted an ethnographic 'in depth case study' qualitative methodology with method triangulation that used participant observation, questionnaires, interview methods and documentary evidence. According to Marshall and Rossman [1989], case studies 'examine the bounded system of a program, an institution, or a population' [p. 44] with the purpose being 'to reveal the properties of the class to which the instance being studied belongs' [Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p.371]. This research study closely resembles Marshall and Rossman's [1989] picture of case study as it aimed to investigate the effects of assessment on pupils' self-esteem through an ethnographic means.

Also discussed in this section are the procedures for the participant observations as well as justification of the actions taken throughout the process. The analysis of the observation

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results, which are intended to evaluate the reliability and the validity of the participant observation method are considered vital as ‘reliability is a necessary precondition of validity’ [Cohen et al., 2000, p. 105]. The way the ‘reliability and validity’ concepts for this research were met is also discussed under triangulation [see figure 5.1].

In this analysis, pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Girls were allocated G1, G2, etc; boys B1, B2 etc while for teachers, initials were used since they were not too many. For line numbers during coding, 1-5, 10-15 etc to every line of the transcripts from which quotation can be located.

6.1.0. Statement of the Study’s Questions

At this juncture, there is need to present the conceptual frameworks and the research questions in order to keep the researcher focused on the topic under investigation [Miles and Huberman, 1994] argues, ‘...conceptual frameworks and research questions are the best defence against overload’ [ibid, p.55]. Miles and Huberman’s [ibid] argument will assist with keeping this research focused and on track. In an attempt to provide answers to the research questions, rigorous and responsive data from journal of experience will be extensively used as well as revisiting literature reviews.

6.1.1. The Research Question

An Investigation of the Impact of Formal and Informal Assessment on the Self-Esteem of Pupils with Borderline Learning Difficulties and Language Deficiencies In Mixed Ability English Language Classes.

6.1.1.1. Sub -Questions

1. To what extent do teachers consider the impact/effect of formal and informal assessment and feedback on pupils’ self-esteem?
2. How do poorly performing pupils deal with failure, negative comments and unfavourable assessment comments?
3. How do poorly performing pupils deal with positive praise or comments?
4. What are the teachers’ perceptions with regards to self-esteem of their poorly performing pupils?

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5. What are teachers' perceptions of assessment comments and their effects on pupils' self-esteem or behaviour?
6. What is the evidence that facilitates the justification for the use of self-esteem to describe pupils' personalities?
7. Do teachers have a clear sense of what they mean by self-esteem and its implications?

6.2.0. Outline of the Stages Used To Gather Data

6.2.1. Revisiting the Literature

The questions for this segment of the research study require research methods that enable access to the samples' views on psychological and educational experiences, some of which are abstract to the pupil participants [see literature search chapters two and three]. Therefore, in this chapter I will revisit the literature results in an attempt to do justice to the analysis process. The literature search results will be used comparatively in my effort to analyse and discuss participant observations, pupils' interviews and documentary evidence data. Other factors such as samples' willingness to participate and the methodology adopted, that appear to affect the conduct of gathering evidence will be considered in the analysis.

In line with research ethics discussed in chapter four, I realised that any methods I would use needed to accommodate and minimise potentially high levels of anxiety of the participants and provide friendly atmospheres for conducting observations, questionnaires and interviews. Therefore, an ethnographic in-depth case study approach was adopted. The methodology uses a range of methods [participant observation, documental evidence, questionnaires and interviews] to elicit and build up a true picture of the samples' answers pertinent to the research questions. Importantly also, is the fact that the literature search, [which cut across the methods] informed the questions that guided the research process. The first item that I focused my attention on was to identify differences and commonalities in teachers' methods of lesson deliveries as discusses in the following section.

6.2.2. Note Taking and Interpretations

Impressions and insight that the researcher make during data collection can best be recorded as field notes. I took notes during participant observation, conducted questionnaire and face to face interview to pupils and teachers at my research school, recording interesting issues and

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impressions. Immediately following each contact with participants, I wrote out comments regarding any problems with data collection as well as general observations about the process of data collection. Since data analysis was inductive [Creswell 1998] [i.e. analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection] this process also informed the questions and themes to be explored in next participant observations.

My field notes contained consistent information about the visits to the schools, the participant observations, formal and informal face to face interviews that I made, who was present, the physical setting, social interactions, and what activities took place. The field notes included my insights, interpretations, beginning analyses about what was happening in the setting and what that might have implied. These notes were intended to supplement and triangulate the observational notes, documentary evidence data and interview scripts. The field notes were valuable in capturing nuances in the observed and interview settings. This stage of the research informed the questionnaire stage of the investigation [see an example of journal extracts: figure 6.1].

6.2.3. Participant Observation/Ethnography

The participating six teachers used typically varying methods and approaches to deliver lessons. These approaches are a result of anecdotal evidence gathered between September, 2005 and May 2006. The most common approaches employed were group and peer discussions, lecture method with pupil participation in question and answer format, video watching and discussion and individual tasks or assignments. Occasionally, pairing and group work was used for assignments. Classroom assistants and mentors were sometimes available for particular pupils although this was not on regular basis particularly for Year 9 class which sometimes had two or three assistants.

I began the participant observations focusing on the rapport between teachers and their pupils and tried to infer pupils' feelings, enthusiasms and interests to learning and participation. I used these observations as points of departure to explore emerging themes. For instance, when I noticed that some students never summoned help although they appeared to need it most, I was prompted to know what was going on. The class and lessons observations that included

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teachers and pupils [acting as research participants] offered me the opportunity to observe the participants in their natural learning/teaching process and environment. Gradually, the observations focused on areas arising from literature search and personal experiences of working with pupils who have learning difficulties. This included areas of social interactions, participation in learning, opportunities to contribute to learning and summoning for help.

The observations also focused on contextual data of teachers' accounts of the pupils' attitudes towards learning. Typically, these observations took place between the hours of 0900hrs and 1500hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays on visits to the research site. I sat at the back of the class numerous during lessons and only initiated interaction during group and or individual activities. During the participant observations, I looked for signs of possible distress and tedium [which could be shown by way of fidgeting, lack of concentration, facial expressions movement of feet and fingers] and also engaged in informal interviews, mostly with the pupils. It follows therefore that, the corpus of data discussed in this chapter is drawn from a myriad participation observations.

However, to get meaning from the participant observations I followed Cole's [1996] classroom discourse analysis proposition. Cole [ibid] contends that, one way of analyzing the classroom discourse within school setting is by analyzing the classroom's instructional conversations; their nature, content and purposes, which depict the salient meaning of practices that are central to classroom talk and activities in an attempt to identify what Gee [1996] calls 'identity kit'. Thus, teachers and pupils partly create the discourse by way of interactions, partly constrained by social, historical, cultural and political forces and factors [ibid]. According to Cole [1996] discourse as educational talk embodies three central features:

- it is jointly constructed by participants in connected oral text;
- it is a medium for the negotiation of meaning by speakers within particular social contexts and;
- it is rule governed in order to be held in common with others, but it is also a creative act, with improvisation necessary as conversation moves from turn to turn, topic to topic.

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An analysis of this discourse is crucial in understanding what is really going on in these classrooms. During lesson deliveries, group or individual activities, teachers and or their assistants moved about and conversed with students as they did their activities. It appeared that students called for assistance by way of raising their hands. One striking feature about summoning help this way was that, the same 'extroverted, clever and or talkative' pupils always summoned help. Teachers also wittingly or unwittingly spent more time with these pupils. These observations created a wide range of questions that needed further investigations and probing. [See figure 6.1]. Questionnaires were an idea method for this next phase of the research.

6.2.4. The Questionnaire

Questionnaires provide a high level of controlled, reliable and speedy responses, for the researcher [Smith et al., 1995]. After the participant observation phase I then gathered data for generalisations that informed further investigations with the use of structured interviews: 'structured interviews display a number of features in common' [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.81].

Before conducting face to face pupil interviews, I needed a reliable method to identify which pupils among the large sample and what sort of questions needed to be asked. The use of questionnaires did justice to this need since the method offers breadth in little time [Smith et al, 1995]. This was achieved by administering a number of structured questions covering wide areas pupil participants to provide for full and precise probing. Smith et al., [ibid] argues:

Generally the investigator decides in advance exactly what constitutes the required data and constructs the questions in such a way as to elicit answers corresponding to, and easily contained within, predetermined categories which can then be numerically analysed [p.14].

Thus, the questionnaire method was not used as a quantitative method but rather as a method that gave a reliable bigger and broader picture, providing samples for deeper interviewing.

However, since the questionnaire method is '...said to close off certain theoretical avenues...it deliberately limits what the respondent can talk about' [Smith et al., 1995, p.14]. This was the ideal method for this phase of the research and had been decided in advance. Therefore, after going through the questionnaire answers provided by participants, I then was able to decide which questions and individuals I would need to pursue from the bigger sample. Thus, this

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process provided for the transference of themes from breadth to depth in the form of face to face interviews that ensued.

6.2.4.1. Procedure for Administration

Six teachers and 22 pupils from years 7, 8, 9, and 11 were issued with questionnaires that contained structured questions. The questionnaires contained information about the need and purpose for conducting this research study as well as instructions for completing the questionnaire. The questions for the questionnaires had a set of possible answers to choose from and the participants were asked to fill in the answers on the questionnaire sheet [Smith, 1995]. The participants were prompted to complete questionnaires within specified time to minimise possibilities of pupils giving colluded responses. If colluded responses were provided, the element of control and reliability [Smith et al., 1995] would be defeated.

Talking to pupils and teachers during this process provided personal touch to the whole process and requests for speedy return of completed forms. As a result, all questionnaires were promptly returned especially from all pupils as requested. However, there were instances when some teachers requested to have their questionnaires completed on later dates due to pressure of work. This request was granted without reservation. When all but one questionnaire were returned, I thanked the participants formally. I then took the opportunity to inform the participants of the next phase of the research, which was the administration of interviews.

At this stage, it was crucial that I matched questionnaires answered to the individuals for the purpose of follow up and for probing for clarity later during face to face interviews. This process provided me with a list of questions that needed further clarity and or investigation. For this exercise, I asked the participants to write their initials in the demographics section. I also explained to them why I needed their initials, which was only to enable me to make appropriate follow ups were they were needed, which they agreed to. Thus, this process provided the much needed foundation for mounting face to face interviews.

6.2.5. Interviews with Pupils

In order to gather data regarding pupils' construed effects of formal and informal assessment on their self-esteem, as well as a means of follow up to the questionnaire phase, I drew upon

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interviews to gain insight into their perceived feelings. The interview questions were structured and semi- structured and included questions on the following: pupils' relationships with teachers; guidance and support for pupils experiencing learning difficulties; teaching and assessment strategies and their impact on pupils' feelings and self-esteem; pupils' feelings regarding league tables. All interviews conducted were tape-recorded 'for much fuller record than notes taken during the interview' [Smith et al., 1995, p.21], and also used hierarchical focusing [Tomlinson 1989].

By tape-recording, I had more time to concentrate on how the interview was proceeding rather than laboriously jotting down every word by the interviewee [Smith et al., 1995]. Nonetheless, tape-recording has its disadvantages such as participants refusing to be tape-recorded. Also, transcription of tapes a laboriously long time and is not a complete 'objective' record [ibid]. During tape-recording, 'non-verbal behaviour is excluded and the recording still requires a process of interpretation from the transcriber or any other listener' [Smith et al., 1995, p. 21]. [Hence need to personally conduct the transcribing myself as well as jotting down behaviour cues during the interview process].

Interviews with pupils followed research questions [semi- structured and structured in the form of questionnaire schedules] [see the appendix] that were informed by the literature search, questions generated from participant observation and questionnaire exercises and were drawn from Proforma interview schedules [see Proforma interview and questionnaire schedules]. These semi-structured face to face interviews allowed 'depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity...to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. To achieve this objective, hierarchical focusing technique was employed. [see chapter four for clarity of the approach]

Smith, [1995] argues, 'semi-structured interviews generally last for a considerable amount of time[usually an hour or more] and can become intense and involved, depending on the particular topic' [p.19], so were most interviews with pupils. These followed a research guide where pupils' responses were sort and all these interviews took place in the school, which was a place of preference for all interviewed pupils. 'People usually feel most comfortable in a setting they are familiar with...but ...there may be times where this is not practicable' [Smith

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1995, p.19]. I therefore gave the participants a chance to choose the interview settings and sites before conducting the interviews.

As I was relatively new to the pupils, I attempted to make participants at ease before I delved into the interview. 'It is sensible to concentrate at the beginning of the interview on putting the respondent at ease, to enable him or her to feel comfortable talking to you before any substantive areas of the schedule are introduced' [ibid, p. 19]. I used this opportunity to explain some ethical corners such as consent to participate and participants' rights to withdraw or refuse to answer questions they did not feel comfortable answering. Thus, the pupils' willingness to participate and talk to the researcher and responsiveness to answering questions were viewed as the pupils' willingness to participate. Nonetheless, the participants were continually reminded of their rights to participate in the research study each time we met for interviews.

Also their parents' discussions with them and responses to my request that they and their children participate in this research study was taken as willingness to be participants. During the interview itself, any indications [verbal or non-verbal indications of distress] were taken to mean unwillingness to continue with the interview and were promptly acted upon by the researcher. This was achieved by letting pupils decide how they preferred being interviewed. I also jotted some notes or comments on the margins: 'This way some kind of balance between the interviewer and interviewee can develop which can provide room for negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewee's responses' [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1998, p.83]. The consent process also meant that the researcher gave the opportunity to the pupil samples to express their views concerning continued participation or whether they liked to opt out.

The questions asked were focused on the pupils' perceived experiences with regards to formal and informal assessment and how it affected their feelings towards learning and possible future aspirations. The interview also followed any leads or themes that came up during interviewing. The voices of the participants served as a backdrop in illustrating the impact of formal and informal assessment on the pupils' self-esteem. On reflection, some pupils did not want their parents to be interviewed. They threatened to pull out of the research if their parents

were involved. So, where this was the case, I decided to involve the pupils and leave their parents out. Smith [1995] argues: ‘monitor the effects of the interview on the respondent. It may be that the respondent feels uncomfortable with a particular line of questioning and this may be expressed in his or her non-verbal behaviour or in how he or she replies, [p. 20]

6.2.6. Structured versus Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are a ‘much more flexible version of the structured interview’ [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1998, p.83]. However, for Smith et al., [1995] structured interview formats are controlled, have reliability and speed. Also, ‘the investigator has maximum control over what takes place in the interview’ [ibid, p.14]. The same interview questions and format can be used with each participant and that the ‘the identity of the interviewer should have minimal impact on the responses obtained’ [ibid]. For [Hitchcock and Hughes, 1998], structured interviews are ‘...its systematic approach to data collection’ [p. 83]. Further, Hitchcock and Hughes [ibid] contend that, ‘structured interviews can be a fairly objective affair since the formality involved reduces the risk of researcher/interviewer bias or interference’ [ibid]. The results from structured interviews are easily analysable since they are usually pre-coded.

Conversely, structured interviews have disadvantages ‘which arise from constraints put on the respondents and the situation...can be said to close of certain theoretical avenues’ [Smith 1995, p. 14]. The interview may also miss out on novel aspects of the subject, ‘an area considered important by the respondent but not predicted, or prioritized, by the investigator’ [ibid]. Also, the structured interviews become affected by the need to ask questions in exactly the same format and manner to each participant [Smith 1995].

On the other hand, unstructured questions allow the interview process to be guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it [Smith et al, 1995]. Smith et al., [1995] further argue semi-structured or unstructured interviews:

1. attempt to establish rapport with the respondents;
2. the ordering of questions is less important;
3. the interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise;
4. The interview can follow the respondent’s interests or concerns [p.15].

By using unstructured interviews, the respondent is accorded the expert on the subject and is 'allowed to maximum opportunity to tell his or her own story' [ibid]. For Hitchcock and Hughes [1998] unstructured interviews provide for the opportunity to probe deeper to obtain more meaningful information. Hitchcock and Hughes [ibid] argue that this enables the interviewer to 'move backwards and forwards in the interview itself providing the opportunity to clarify points, go over earlier points and to raise fresh questions, [p.87].

Having undergone through the administration of interviews and the subsequent daunting task of transcribing tape-recorded the social interviews and other data gathered by other means, I then engaged in the process of locating important points for discussion. However, this is not to suggest that analysis had not been going on, rather analysis was ongoing as I formed ideas, developing notions and thought about emerging data and its meanings.

6.3.0. Procedures for the Analysis of the Data

The data analysis followed suggestions from various research authorities including: [Lincoln and Guba 1985; Gee 1992; Smith et al., 1995; Creswell 1998; Richards 2005; and Bryman 2004]. The 'analytic inductive approach analysis/ grounded theory [Smith et al., 1995; Davis 1995] which prescribes to: 'taking an emic perspective and utilizing the descriptive language the respondents themselves use' [p. 622] was largely followed as well as Creswell's [1998] Spiral approach which is a systematic way of data gathering and analysis in a spiral manner. In analyzing [particularly observational data], I looked for what Gee [1992] calls 'Discourse memberships', which is a particular pattern of:

...ways of talking [i.e., discourses], acting, valuing, and believing, as well as the spaces and materials 'props' [that a] group uses to carryout its social practices...that are recognized as constructing opportunities for people to be 'be,' and display being, particular types of persons' [p.107].

However, first data needed to be coded to start the analytical process. 'Coding is the process of defining what the data are all about' [Charmaz 1995]. This process followed a rigorous and responsive approach that accorded the researcher to study the data and 'interact ...and ask

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questions of them' [ibid, p.40]. In short, the analysis of the data followed a grounded theory perspective that allowed studying the emerging data that created a coherent analysis.

According to Charmaz [1995] in Smith et al., [1995], 'grounded theory methods provide a set of strategies for conducting rigorous qualitative research [p. 30]. This approach accorded me a method to use that not only assisted with data collection but also gave me strategies for handling data analysis; [i.e.] 'synthesizing them and making sense analytic sense of them' Charmaz [ibid]. Charmaz [1986] in Smith et al., [1995] further argues, 'using grounded theory methods expedites your research, enables you to develop a cogent analysis and stimulates your excitement about and enjoyment of doing a research' [p.30].

According to Charmaz [1995] in Smith et al., [1995], grounded theories are:

Logically consistent set of data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop theory. ...consists of a set of inductive strategies for analyzing data...help in structuring and organizing data-gathering and analysis. Most fundamentally, grounded theory methods explicitly unite the research process with theoretical development [pp. 30-31].

Therefore, I chose to use the grounded theory due to its provision of rigorous procedures that allowed me to refine and develop ideas and intuitions about the collected data.

6.3.1. Discussion of Data Analysis

It is generally argued that, 'data analysis is probably the most difficult aspect of qualitative research to teach or communicate to others' [Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.140]. However, Creswell [1998] argues, 'analyzing text and multiple forms of data presents a formidable task for qualitative researchers' [p. 139]. However, Smith et al., [1995] argue 'there is no one correct way to do qualitative analysis' [p. 21] hence I had the liberty to use the grounded theory which suited the data collection methods I adopted and the subsequent data.

Similarly, Patton [1990] argues:

The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volumes of information with which they will find themselves

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confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming [p.297]

Data analysis for this research was no exception. However, I found solace in May's [2002] argument that, 'qualitative techniques offer a way to confront the messy 'facts of social life' directly, unmediated by survey instruments, hired interviews or secondary, archival sources' [p. 215]. And so, to start with, data analysis in this observation phase of the study was an ongoing process [Creswell, 1998; Taylor and Bogdan, 2004]. Thus, data collection and analysis went simultaneously. Throughout the participant observations, I kept theorising and tried to make sense of the emerging data as suggested by Taylor and Bogdan, [2004]. This was achieved by way of writing summaries of field notes in my diary that were accompanied by reflective notes [Creswell, 1998]. This gave me ideas and themes to focus on in my next participant observation schedules as well as take information back to informants and so illuminated the avenues that needed probing further.

Analysis for the observational data followed a 'reflexive rationalisation' [Richards, 2005], where much analysis took place in the field as I got more and more immersed and increased contact with the sample; and as I began to understand them, analytical questions also emerged. Thus, I employed inductive analysis: -data analysis took place at every step of the research process [Vidich and Lyman, 2000]. This proactive process helped to inform how I would continue with the observations through the leads and questions generated by data.

Conversely, Lincoln and Guba [1985] suggest that interpretive research design must be drawn from an ample number of data sources for triangulation of that data. The data:

...must be emergent rather than preordained: because meaning is determined by context to such a great extent...because what will be learned at a site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is also not fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shadings cannot be known until they are witnessed [p. 208].

And so, the data analysis procedure that I followed is represented in the following sections which were rigorous and responsive to the emerging issues. As the figure below illustrates, data analysis was simultaneously carried as data gathering went on, hence the forwards and backwards movements shown by arrows in figure 6.1., below.

Figure 6.1.

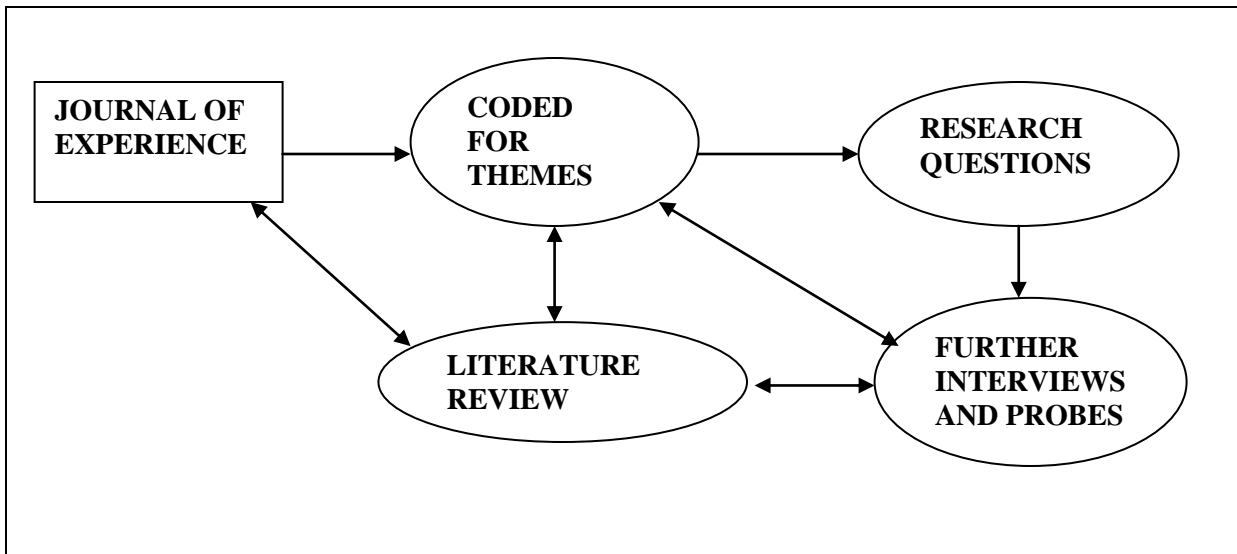


Figure 6.1 is a diagrammatical representation of the data inductive process where journal extracts were coded for themes. Some of the themes necessitated consulting literature search or probing further through the use of interviews. Other themes led to questions being asked which forced me to use questionnaires. These questionnaires were administered as a triangulation and to augment the journal entries. They also assisted with narrowing down the interview questions.

Below are some of the actual journal extracts that were coded for themes which in turn generated either questionnaires or interview questions.

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Table 6.1. An example of Journal extracts, identified themes and generated questions

Journal Extract	Identified Theme	Questions generated	Answers
Year 9 class: 25/01/06: double lesson. Boxer is observed to be very quiet and absent-minded throughout the oral lesson. Later, when it was his turn to read aloud, he refuses.	Refusal to participate in learning activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do some students seem miserable during lessons? 2. Why would some pupils refuse to read aloud in front of other pupils/class? 3. Why do you not fully participate in class activities? 4. What is really going on? 	
Bob: year 9 is observed to be usually late for lessons and does not seem perturbed about it.	Late for lessons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you like school? 2. Do you enjoy learning at this school? 3. What is your favourite subject? 4. What takes some of your time during inter-lesson changes? 	
One day, I dropped a pen and said to myself 'oh! God' then my teacher said I was swearing. When I tried to reason with her, I was threatened with level-three detention. My teacher is so 'bully'. You see, some of these teachers seem nice until you start talking to them.	Diminished Trust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have favourite teachers at this school? 2. Do you find it easy to get assistance if you need it? 3. What is your opinion of the teacher's actions? 	

May [2002] contends that, the purpose of good research design is to create the optimal conditions for making a theoretical contribution and the work remains unfinished until this is accomplished. To achieve this objective, during field work, I developed categories from informants; kept track of the emerging themes and read through my field notes in an attempt to develop concepts and prepositions to begin with data interpretations [Taylor and Bogdan, 1998]. 'The second activity, which typically occurs after data have been collected, entails coding the data and refining one's understanding of the subject matter', [Taylor and Bogdan,

1998, p.141]. In my case, this second phase was delayed until I had read through all collected information [from interviews] to build a picture of the overall data [Creswell, 1998].

6.4.0. Coding

The field and participation observation notes were word processed and saved in Microsoft Word files [transcribing]. According to [Strauss and Corbin 1990; Smith et al., 1995], transcription involves considerable time and energy but must always be systematically carried out in accordance with the demands of the research itself. Line numbering was then used for easy and quick identification of themes or ideas. The next step involved compiling analytical files that attempted to answer the seven research questions. These were then kept according to the sections outlined in Chapter 1 under two main headings 'assessment' and 'self-esteem'. The transcripts were then purposefully open coded according to emergent categories consistently following method outlined in Richards [2005].

According to Miles and Huberman [1994] codes are:

...tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to 'chunks' of varying size or words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one [e.g., a metaphor] [p.56].

'Coding is the first stage to opening up meaning' [Richards, 2005, p. 94]. This initial level of coding involved reviewing the transcripts in order to; 'dissect them meaningfully while keeping the relations between the parts intact' [Miles and Huberman 1994, p.56]. In this process, the naming and categorizing of the data was initiated and hence became an important step that served as a foundation for further analysis of the data.

Markers and highlighters of varying colours were adopted for the coding process. At first, I adapted the 'in vivo coding' Richards [2005]. Richards [ibid] argues 'this term [from grounded theory] refers to categories well named by words people themselves use' [p.95]. The themes were assigned labels or codes close to the terms they represented. However, Richards [ibid] throws caution to using well-known terms from the relevant technical literature as names for categories constitutes a risk in that the terms are already shrouded in analytic meaning,

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which can lead to bias. Nonetheless, this process was valuable as it accorded me additional familiarity with data through which some frames or outline became vivid thereby making the researcher aware of emergent reflections [Miles and Huberman, 1994]. According to Strauss and Corbin [1990], open coding is strategy that uses comparisons to make meaning and is concerned with coding data using a number of inter-related procedures and these are:

- Examining Documentation
- Line by Line Analysis
- Breaking Down and Examining Data
- Identifying Concepts
- Discovering Categories
- Examining Categories and Sub-categories
- Developing Categories in terms of Properties and Dimensions
- Utilizing Coding Assistance [p.154].

Further, Strauss and Corbin [ibid] argue, ‘It is useful to initially identify as many phenomena and concepts as possible because such a strategy helps gain entry into the domain [p.154]. For the purposes of this research study, open coding, selective coding and pattern coding were followed in the data analysis.

6.4.1. Pattern Coding

Preceding the coding of the data [data labeling, writing reflective comments and checking coding, data were pulled into categories], a process referred to as pattern coding [Charmaz, 1995]. Pattern coding is essential in finding supporting and conflicting evidence according to specific themes. Miles and Huberman [1994] argue, ‘pattern coding is a way of grouping those summaries into smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs’ [p. 69]. During this process, analysis and comparisons between cross cases were also conducted. Bold facing was adopted to mark identified themes or categories, with my reflective remarks shown in red and allotted for easy spotting. The researcher’s reflections were intended to provide meaningful clues and interpretations of the data throughout the data examination process. When the quantity became bulky, the information was then sorted into spreadsheet charts and kept on the computer according to the emerging categories [see table 6.2 for examples of emerging themes]

Numbered pages [on the computer] were used to group coded data according to themes [mainly providing an answer or answers to a specific question]. Electronically, data were

transferred on to a new page for an emergent theme. Thus, data obtained from each subgroup were bunched for easier comparison with other subgroups.

6.4.2. Memoing

According to Miles and Huberman [1994] Memoing refers to:

The theorising, writing-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding...It can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages...they tie together different pieces of data into a recognisable cluster, often show that those data are instances of general concept...It is one of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand [p. 72].

I employed the use of Memoing technique as a way of organising further the themes and categories thereby integrating clusters into more general concepts [such as those related to self-esteem, curriculum or assessment etc.] This process took the form of comparisons between categories and concepts and was directed by sub-questions and responses from several participants. Throughout the entire process, there was a deliberate attempt to be rigorous and systematic in the analysis so that, in the event of a problem, I could easily go back without losing sense of the data.

Apart from the line-by-line coding, there are other important steps that I undertook. Below is a table summarizing the step by step open coding procedures that I followed which involved a series of inter-related protocols [Charmaz, 1995]. This important step in the analysis concerns moving categories into classifications of concepts. Concepts are regrouped under a higher abstract order label than the concepts grouped under it. Thus, this more abstract concept is then postulated a category, and sub-categories that expands the main category [ibid].

This process was very tiresome and tedious. However, there were benefits directly linked with this process as the researcher understood better the stories being told by the participants. The other benefit included the opportunity to cross-check the responses with body language [in the form of researcher impressions that were jotted on the margins in the notes] or cues whenever it was necessary to do so. However, there is need to point out here that, these cues are impressionistic, can be subjective, biased and idiosyncratic [Wellington, 2000]. Nonetheless, I tried to remain focused and to be as professional as I could by being as objective.

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A table 6.2. Showing step-by step open coding used in the analysis.

Steps in Open Coding	
1. Breaking down and examining data	The data relating to the research study was examined including field notes and journal entries. This process involved taking to pieces of categories into components the record of the researcher's personal observations and feelings with regard to the participant observational notes, interviews and the interview material.
2. Line by Line Analysis	This process was used to break down and examine the data. Each transcript was analyzed line by line by isolating the focus of the sentence and noting it in the allocated margin of the transcript page on the computer. The core ideas embedded in the sentences were then copied and transferred to a new page and closely examined and noted. Line-by-line coding facilitated the asking of salient questions such as what is going on, what is the meaning of this, etc. Line-by-line coding made me think more about the participants' responses and so painted a rough picture of what is happening in the data. This was a laborious exercise that needed rest during intervals.
3. Identifying Concepts	Going through data, each discrete incident, event or idea identified, was given a name. Here, a name denotes an object of thought and an object of thought is theme. Then discrete ideas, observations or events emerging from the reading of the transcripts, were then named as representing a themes or ideas.
4. Discovering Categories	For the grounded theory, open coding is concerned with the naming and categorizing of the data and is considered a foundation for further data analysis. At this stage, the exercise involved putting tags and classifying identified concepts.
5. Examining Categories and Sub-categories	This process of identifying sub-categories opens up the elements related to the identified categories.
6. Developing Categories in terms of Properties and Dimensions	According to Strauss and Corbin [1990] the properties and dimensions of categories facilitate the identifying of core categories and the development of a well-grounded theory. This exercise was achieved by way of developing the properties and dimensions in a rigorous and dynamic manner. During this step, I tried to identify any properties that I deemed to be associated with a category, e.g. home work, friends, parents and internet use etc.

The table below is an example of line-by line coding that I incorporated in an attempt to make meaning from the data [Charmaz, 1995].

Table 6.3. An Example of line by line Coding

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What is going on?	1. Q- I noted that you seem to favour the back corner of the class. 2. Could you tell me why?
Resistance, solitary confinement, fantasy, out of touch with reality	3. <i>G2- ...to escape from answering things...questions. I sit in the corner to make myself disappear. In the corner...I shut myself from questions...I find security as I am left on my own devices.</i>
Shifting blame, finding scape-goats, trapped	6. Q- [to probe deeper] what do you mean by own devices? 7. <i>G2- I mean in the corner, struggling...quiet ...half the time my work is never checked.</i>
Conditional involvement	9. Q- I have also noted that you seem to participate more if it is group work, why is it so? 11. <i>G2- I will participate so long as I'm not the person to speak. I will always escape from answering questions.</i>
Defeatist attitude, belittlement, bullying	13. Q- why? 14. <i>G2- well, I don't want to give them another reason to be bullied, laughed at and ridiculed.</i>

Although this exercise was tiring and laborious, it was rewarding in that I began to understand better what the participants are communicating as well as assisting with questions to probe further.

6.5.1. Classroom Participant Observation

The observations revealed that varying methods of lesson deliveries were employed by the teachers. Interactive works such as group discussions, individualized activities such as silent reading were sometimes favoured by some teachers. On closer look, teachers who used the more individualized approaches seemed to use them as control devices. These were classes where frequent disturbances occurred and the teachers sometimes appeared overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of pupils with challenging behaviour in their classes. Genuine teacher pupil relation was compromised by large numbers of pupils, thereby depriving pupils the attention they deserve. This seemed to erode and or compromise the quality of educational experience these pupils receive, discipline is lost leading to teachers' unhappiness.

The following quotes depict the responses from sample students as to what they perceive assessment does to their self-esteem. These narratives, by students, illuminate our

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understanding of how some borderline students may feel in English classes. Unfortunately, narratives from students from impoverished backgrounds within the White working class families were not available due to either lack of interest or withdrawal from participation.

It seemed to me that, Years 9 and 11 spent much of their time on revision and preparing for the exams that were due at the end of the year. Please note that, this observation does not claim that there were no teachings going on in these classes but rather, emphasis were put on the how and what the exam questions may appear like, as well as the examiners' expectations. In turn pupils struggling with learning, received very little or no attention from the teachers or their language assistants. This meant that pupils worked individually most of the time or were assisted by peers. If and when classroom assistants were available, they sat next to 'known trouble or mischief makers' mainly to stop them from 'mischief'. Some of the pupils resented having assistant teachers sitting next to them as this sent a wrong message to their peers.

As a matter of protocol, every teacher is obliged to call the register each time another class came in for lessons. This brings the theme of authority manifestation. Traditionally authority emanates from the teacher's assumed advanced knowledge and superior status in relation to the student. This is also reflected by the institutional design in the teacher's power to award grades. Eliason [1995] argues that the role of the instructor cannot be underestimated in a classroom as it purports to promote diversity. However, let me hasten to say that sometimes, the teacher's power to award grades can be a source for conflict as pupils compare and discuss marks and teacher's comments. This observation will be discussed fully under documentary evidence.

Nonetheless, in summary, the themes that emerged in the analyses of participant observations, are marked with an asterisk, those identified from interviews are marked with a '#' and those from documentary data are marked with '+'. The themes are:

- Authority, Treats and Intimidation by teachers *
- High self-regard/assertiveness particularly by Moslem girls #,
- Disrespect/resistance or oppositional culture to the system/authority by pupils *,
- Resistance to Participate in Class Activities *,

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- Refusal to participate in class activities*, #,
- Passive class participation*, #,
- Interest and Enthusiasm for Learning *, #,
- Unfair Practices *, +,
- Resistance *, #, +,
- Ridicule, Bullying and Racism #,
- Broken Trust and Social Bridges *,
- Lateness and truancy*,

In this section the themes will be discussed as they occurred in each data source and the searched literature will be consulted for critical analysis purposes.

6.5.2. Authority, Threats and Intimidations

According to Gee [1992] everyone is a member of and displays ‘social identity or primary discourse’, and is always under negotiation in the contexts, practices, and politics of everyday life. Gee [ibid] contends that membership in a discourse may come ‘free’ by being born into it, [e.g. being born Catholic] or may come by default by means of one’s dealings in and with certain institutions [such as being a student]. Gee [1996] further postulates that it is possible that someone can be a member of a what maybe seemingly be taken as socially conflicting or contradictory Discourse: thus

Each of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities. These Discourses need not, and often do not, represent consistent and compatible values. There are conflicts among them, and each of us lives and breathes these conflicts as we act out our various Discourses. [Gee, 1996, p. ix]

Thus, participant students and teachers displayed various Discourses during my tenure of participant observations some of which are discussed in the following excerpts.

During participant observation, the theme of ‘authority threats’ or intimidation manifested in four of the five teachers’ lessons that I observed. In the following accounts, there will be an attempt to present and discuss this theme as observed by the researcher during participant observations and conversations listened to between teachers and pupils as depicted in the following scenarios. In some instances, authority resorted to what some may regard as

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intimidation and or bullying tactics. Which put paid the idea of encouraging pupils to gain control of their own learning. As these themes manifest in behaviour outcomes in this exercise, it is important however, to concede the importance of teachers' characteristics in relation to the circumstances and situational context in which these themes occurred. According to Willis [1977]:

The school is the agency of face to face control *par excellence*. The stern look of inquiring teacher; the relentless pursuit of 'the truth' set up as a value even above good behaviour; the common weapon of ridicule; the techniques learned time whereby particular troublemakers can 'always be reduced to tears' ... [p.65]

Here, Willis [ibid] alludes to the manifestation of the 'hidden curriculum' that carry social implications, political underpinnings, and cultural outcomes of the education activities that are unwittingly hidden in the curriculum. However, Bowles and Gintis [1976] argue that students' social class, race and gender play a significant role in determining the social exposures they have at school. Thus, there is no singular hidden curriculum but 'plurals'.

Further, Bowles and Gintis [1976], postulate that schools function to uphold the capitalist system because of particular social relations which occur in schools, that is:

- the hierarchical division of labour between teachers and pupils,
- the alienated character of pupils' school work,
- the fragmentation in work [and the destructive competition among students].

Martin [1983] defines a hidden curriculum as:

...a set of learning states [from which students learn] as a result of the practices, procedures, rules, relationships, structures and physical characters which constitute a given setting...the teachers' use of language...textbooks and audio-visual aids, furnishings and architecture, disciplinary measures, timetables, tracking systems and curricular priorities... [Martin, 1983, pp. 126-128]

However, Willis [1977] argues that school structures are not that important in understanding this 'hidden curriculum' but pupil resistances. Nonetheless, Bourdieu [1992] contends that, to survive in any social field requires the willingness to play the game which, with its specific stakes, constitutes the field; hence all the shouting, hauling threats and bullying by both pupils and teachers alike.

According to Child [2001], 'bullying is aggressive behaviour, usually persistent, arising from deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress in others...' [p.79]. Further, Child

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postulates 'bullying can be very hurtful to the recipient and the degree of hurt is often not realised by those doing the bullying' [ibid] However, I will also hasten to argue that both teachers and pupils are faced by a dilemma of opposing worlds. On pupils' world there is a counter- school culture where pupils are continuously asking 'how do I please both peers and educational demands' [Willis, 1977]; and the teachers' world which permeates the 'masters of their own curricula [Child 2001], of accountability and authority culture.

The researcher noted that some pupils behaved in a manner that necessitated stern talking and reprimands as the behaviour was construed to be tantamount to insubordination and disrespect for authority. In similar circumstances, Willis [1977] discovers that the lads who are 'learning to labour' are immersed in their own culture, language, ideas, attitudes and expectations that constitute a school counter-culture. For Willis [ibid], 'the rejection of school and opposition to teachers can be seen as 'counter school culture' [p.52]. Further, Willis [ibid] contends that opposition to the school is principally 'manifested in the struggle to win symbolic and physical space from the institution and its rules and to defeat its main purpose: 'to make you 'work' [p. 26].

It seemed as that the way Mr BT instilled order was full of threats and intimidation [see an example of an observed lesson, chapter five.] Ms BT. too seemed to favour intimidation and threat as she always referred naughty and 'mischief makers' to the deputy principal.

However, one disturbing feature about these threats was that the threats were most of the time directed towards a particular group of pupils, which in turn seemed to create a rift between this group of pupils and their teachers. Willis [1977] contends that the teacher's authority needs to be inculcated and maintained on moral not coercive grounds. Thus, 'there must be consent from the taught' [ibid, p.64]. It was suggested then during interviews that these teachers were 'racist'. The words 'Racist teachers' dominated much of the interviews which showered an antagonism that exists between failing pupils from ethnic minority pupils and their teachers.

6.5.3. High Self-regard

After the register calling, generally almost all lessons started with a recap of the previous lesson usually lasting anything between five to ten minutes. This then gradually led to the introduction of a new topic or a continuation of the previous topic. After spending a few more minutes on the topic of the day, pupils were then assigned work to do, usually tasks were written on the board. If pupils experienced any difficulties, they were supposed to raise their hands and either the class teacher or the class assistant[s] would help the individual.

During this period, I used the opportunity to move around the class, getting closer to the participants, conversing and offering assistance. My observations revealed that, those pupils who struggle with their school work hardly raise their hands for assistance, with some getting temperamental when help was offered to them.

One day, during a routine participant observation I approached [B1], a Year seven boy of African origin and offered to assist him get started since he was fidgeting with a pen rather than doing what as was asked to do. Just as I stopped near his desk, [B1] looked me in the face and abruptly said, 'I know what to do; I don't need your help'. I was stunned as I did not expect such reproach from a struggling student. I was quiet for a little while before I asked if he needed a pen. [B1] replied, 'I have a pen, and do not need one, thank you!' It appears that B1's overly high self-regard might be working against him, especially in circumstances where he where he resists assistance rather than embrace it for his own good.

According to Bar-On [1997] self-regard is:

...associated with general feelings of security, inner strength, self-assuredness, self-confidence and feelings of self-adequacy...is dependent upon self-respect and self-esteem, which are based on a fairly developed sense of identity. A person with good self-regard feels fulfilled and satisfied with himself/herself. At the opposite end of the continuum are feelings of personal inadequacy and inferiority [p.18].

By displaying aggression rather than embrace the offer of help, [B1] appears to be accepting who he is and looks set to protect his ego. In the mean time, [B1] made unnecessary disturbances to his neighbours. At the end of the lesson, he had not even completed writing the date. As soon as the bell rang, he was amongst the first to be ready to leave the classroom.

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Subsequent participant observations that followed revealed that [B1] hardly wrote anything meaningful. His hand writing was very illegible and spellings were equally very bad. Further to these negatives [B1] was frequently absent from school. When asked to partake in an interview, [B1] exercised his rights by refusing to participate. He however, moved to another school before the completion of the research study. An interview with his parents was going to be very valuable in understanding his behaviour at home.

In another instance, a year 11 boy [B2] of Somali origin who seemed to have behaviour problems, appeared to distaste outsiders. He showed it by being temperamental to his classmates and teacher. [B2] participated well in oral activities but did not follow any rules. Often spoke out of turn, had had numerous altercations with teachers and had changed class once.

One day on my way to a participant observation session in his class, I was stopped by the HoD who was standing in the department hallway watching the movement of pupils to their next lesson. The HoD was keen to know how I was getting on and whether I needed any help. By the time I walked into [B3] classroom, the class teacher was in the process of marking the class register. [B3] remarked, 'Ah it's you again'. I felt that B3's remarks were unwelcoming. I proceeded to the back of the class where I assumed my position.

Later, I observed that [B3] participated well in oral activities. However, his written work did not match his oral efforts as it appeared to be hurriedly done and rather untidily. [B3] hardly completed the assigned tasks, seemed temperamental and spoke out of turn most of the time. Also, [B3] appeared very confrontational which made him to fall out with friends and classmates especially when he spoke out of turn. Before the completion of this research study, he had been excluded from attending lessons.

On the other hand, the clever pupils who probably needed minimal or no help frequently called for help. The failure to use available assistance prompted me to ask why students shun the services of assistant teachers. Two year 9 girls colluded in the following response:

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‘What! Do you want me to look...‘dumb?’ said the first girl. Yeah! I wouldn’t want to look dumb in front of my friends’ interjected the other. That also would give them another reason to bully you...to be bullied by everyone’ [the two year 9 girls colluded].

Again, the two-thronged culture in some pupils is manifested by the two year 9 girls’ preference to appease peers over teachers.

6.5.4. Refusal to Participate In Class Activities

Empirical evidence suggests that the greater students' involvement and integration in their own learning the greater the likelihood that they will persevere. It is equally true that that involvement influences learning [e.g., Astin, 1993, Ecclestone, 2005]. Conversely, Child [2001] argues:

Where children are physiologically satisfied, where they feel secure and wanted, and where they have the opportunity to grow in confidence, independence and self-esteem through achievement, there is every likelihood that they will go on to seek intellectual satisfactions provided at school [p.81].

It is therefore imperative that, school engagement within and outside the classroom must appear to be healthy to student development.

However, during the participant observation I observed that some students' participation in classroom activities was relatively passive, such that ‘some behaved just like forced accomplices with no obligation or commitment to learning. There were instances when some pupils would openly refuse to participate in learning activities, such as reading aloud. So, in accordance to Nunn [1996] who found that, classroom traits such as supportive atmospheres, are as important to students’ participation as are student and learning traits. In line with Nunn’s [ibid] observations, I too observed that sometimes teachers would not allow imbalances in class participation. These teachers deliberately drew-in non-participating students to provide answers or to read after a few volunteers.

To achieve this, Mr. BT suggested restructuring the learning activities to increase participation and finding subjects that ‘...the strugglers feel comfortable with and those activities they are interested in’. ‘...something there you win ...they participate. I also try to encourage

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participation from quiet students without calling attention to their reticence. This is not an easy practice though'

However, on two different occasions B4 openly refused to read aloud to the class. In one lesson, after a brief recap of the previous discussions about Macbeth's character, Ms BT. read the first paragraph of Act 2 scene 1 of the play and then asked the class to read in turns, one after the other following sitting rows. After the first six pupils [four girls and two boys] had read, B4 did not read when it was his turn to do so. Ms BT. looked up and prompted B4 to read, but B4 blatantly refused to read 'I don't want to read' he said.

'Can't you read or you won't read' asked Ms BT.

I looked at B4 and waited for his response. I noticed that everyone but a few pupils were looking at B4, who seemed to know that other pupils were staring at him. B4 simply smiled and gazed at his book. Shortly Ms BT. rhetorically asked:

'How do you expect me to enroll you for your SATs if you don't show your commitment?'

This prompted me to want to ask a number of questions:

- Can B4 read fluently and is he a confident reader?
- Does B4 care about SATs?
- What is B4 hiding/what is functional about his behaviour?
- Who determines which pupil sits for the SATs and who doesn't?

In the ensuing participant observations, I resolved to pay closer attention to B4's interests and future aspirations. Willis [1977] discovers the existence of a counter culture within the 'working class boys'. The behaviour exhibited some of the participants in this study had signs of similar counter school culture. The participants appeared to be engulfed in competing agendas; confused on whom to please, the teacher or peers. The decisions to openly tell the teacher what he wants to and will not do often proves that B4 has chosen to please his peers instead of going by school culture. This is shown as a sign of toughness, 'being a top dog' within the 'pack'.

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The Catchment area for this community college does not present an encouraging picture as drug related crime and unemployment is rife. Another contributing factor seems to emanate from lack of motivation and trust in the system as there are fewer role models from pupils' areas. As Ecclestone [2005] argues, '...broader conditions, such as changes to occupational structures, local job prospects and communal attitudes to learning, are also important influences on motivation' [p.78]. These observations will be pursued during respective pupil and teacher interviews as part of the interview and probing where clarity from observations was needed.

6.5.5. Passive Class Participation

Passivity was another theme I observed to be prevalent in some student samples during participant observations. It bothered me that some of the sample students were failing to engage with learning. The following journal extract shows a confrontational behaviour that led to lesson disruption.

The following journal extract are comments from one passive student who preferred to sit in the corner during lessons.

RQ- I noted that you seem to favour the back corner of the class most of the time, could you tell me why?

G2 –to escape from doing things...and answering questions. I sit in the corner to make myself disappear. In the corner...I shut myself from questions...I find security as I am left on my own devices.

Q-[to probe deeper] what do you mean by own devices?

G2- I mean in the corner struggling...quiet ...half the time my work is never checked.

Q-I have also noted that you seem to participate more if it is group work, why is it so?

G2- I will participate so long as I'm not the person to speak. I will always escape from answering questions.

Q-why?

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G2- well, I don't want to give them another reason to be bullied, laughed at and ridiculed.

From this narrative, G2 seems to have very little confidence and self-esteem in herself. A major component of successfully achieving high self-esteem is that of maintaining a thread of meaning to one's life –having targets to aim for and goals to achieve [Thompson, 2001]. On the contrary, G2 does not seem to have any goals to achieve in education –at least for now.

However, according to Freud [1942], G2's actions amount to the concept of defence mechanism such as repression. 'Regression is a defence mechanism against unacceptable drive impulses, psychological conflicts and recognition of traumatic experiences' [p.45]. According to Illeris [2004] in learning, the mechanisms of defence can entail rejection, i.e. 'one simply will not let the impulses in question into consciousness [p.104]...the defence aspect deals with the notion that we use distortions when the surrounding world becomes too much for us' [p.107]. Thus G2 chose 'the corner' where she could be 'left to her own devices' so no learning takes place.

In my next participant observation section, I observed that what G2 claimed regarding finding security in the corner was true. This was not the case about her alone but for all who chose to sit in the corner. I resolved to monitor the teachers' movements as they moved the class assessing pupils' progress on my next participant observations. For the majority of the time, teachers went as far as the middle of the class before they either went back to the board or moved onto another activity. So the chances of someone getting stuck in the corner or pretending to be busy and being 'left on their own devices' are much higher than that of a pupil nearer the teacher.

6.5.6. Disrespect for Authority/ manifestations of 2 cultures.

The theme of disrespect for authority/resistance surfaced during some lesson deliveries. There were times when other participating students were too vocal in class which sometimes disturbed the smooth running of lessons. At times, these disturbances overwhelmed the

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teachers which led to these students being excluded from the lesson. I then wondered and wanted to know if teachers were trained to deal with misbehaving pupils [see appendix B].

According to Willis [1977], such opposition to authority is a result of counter-school culture. Thus, Willis [ibid] argues, 'the most basic, obvious and explicit dimension of counter-school culture is en-trenched general and personalised opposition to 'authority' [p.15]. Willis [ibid] further postulates that this opposition is expressed mainly as a style and thus argues:

It is lived out in countless small ways which are special to the school institution, instantly recognised by the teachers, and most ritualistic part of the daily fabric of life for the kids. Teachers are adept conspiracy theorists...it partly explains their devotion to finding out 'the truth' from suspected culprits. They live surrounded by conspiracy in its most obvious –though often verbally unexpressed-forms. It can easily become a paranoid conviction of enormous proportions [p. 12].

Nonetheless, according to Bernstein [1996] many students' sense of involvement in classroom activities and practices lead to a '...realisation that they do not 'fit in' ...and a further realisation that school is not for them' [pp. 50-52]. Given this prospect, the disaffected struggle with teachers and other students for control of classroom time and space and thus counter school culture manifests [Ogbu and Fordham, 1986].

The following field notes extract highlights the counter-school culture referred to by Willis [ibid]. It also gives reason to my skepticism about some teachers' abilities to deal with challenging behaviour in mixed classes.

The class teacher had just asked the class the following: 'How would you describe Macbeth in the first two verses?' There were a few hands that shot up. As the teacher scanned the class, a girl G1 was observed to be chewing gum. The teacher stared at her before she said, 'G1 can you please empty your mouth!' Teacher- brings a bin to her.

'I have swallowed it' she claimed, then smiled. Suddenly one boy 'B5' shouts from the far corner... 'G1, don't waste our time...Just spit the 'fucking' gum'.

The teacher suddenly retorted, 'I will not have you speak like that in my class!'

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Boy -B5–‘why not?’ [stands up and in a rage kicks the cupboard]. Just then, B5 is escorted out of the class by the class assistant. Two other boys join in the frenzy, laughing and throwing crumbled paper at each other. The rest of the lesson time is spent on lecturing the need to stay at home rather than come to school to waste other pupils’ and the teachers’ time.

From this observation, it appears that the boys’ behaviour is a complete subversion of the teacher’s agenda. Rather than be subjected to doing class activities they know they are not good at, they engage in behaviour that will have them excluded for the rest of the lessons. By so doing, the teacher’s strategies play into the students’ hands. Willis [1977] believes that such self-direction and thwarting of formal organisational aims is tantamount to assault on official time and efforts ‘as it regulates a kind of ‘honour’ –displaced, distorted or whatever’ [p.35].

In this instance, the teachers seemed to be under immense pressure from such challenging behaviour and yet there is very little they can do to stop it. Child [2001] argues ‘teachers feel that regulations prevent them from applying discipline in the classroom and that stronger measures must be made available to counteract disruptive behaviour, one critical cause of stress [p. 78-9].

This extract illustrates the brutality of the working situation that is partially re-interpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task [Willis 1977]. Thus Willis [ibid] argues:

Difficult, uncomfortable or dangerous conditions are seen, not for themselves, but for their appropriateness to a masculine readiness and hardness. They are understood more through the toughness required to survive them, than in the nature of the imposition which asks them to be faced in the first place [p.150]

Thus, according to Willis [ibid], such behaviour like the one manifested by G1; and the ‘boys’ harbour the existence of two cultures and competing agendas. In this scenario, both G1 and the ‘boys’ seem to be content on being evaluated by peers. Some pupils will happily take up the position of becoming class ‘clowns’ in an effort to please their peers and as a compensatory behaviour.

6.5.7. Interest and Enthusiasm for Learning

Kelly [1987] contends that people of minority cultures hold education in high esteem because ‘from their perspective, despite the fact that education may not provide equality, it does change the quality of their lives’ [p. 483].

This theme also manifested during participant observation. The often troublesome participants sometimes offered reflective comments on each other’s behaviour. Once in a while, the often known mischief- makers appeared enthusiastic during oral discussions of Macbeth. Interestingly, these so called mischief- makers followed and behaved well, seemed to enjoy mostly the parts where fighting was involved. This behaviour was manifested during video sessions of the same play, suggesting that perhaps these participants benefited more if images are incorporated in the learning. Conversely Fisher [1995] postulates that children learn differently; ‘some are audiles and learn better by use of their ears, others are vesiles who prefer using eyes, others are tactile who need touch for their optimum learning’ [p.4]. As such, there is greater need for a variety of strategies that can activate different facets of children intelligence as is the case with video learning.

After the lesson, Mrs. B said:

For once, -- and -- behaved, they showed some interest, may be because of your presence [referring to my presence in the class]. These boys don’t seem to value education...today it was different, I’m glad everyone seemed really interested.

This is a new experience for me and everyone in the class,’ interjected the assistant teacher.

If this was a new experience for everyone in the class, one would imagine what it is like when there is no peace and the atmosphere is not conducive to learning/teaching. I also wondered why the senior management team had not done anything to improve the situation. My feelings were that challenging behaviour was a big issue.

However, Child [2001] warns, ‘the teacher must be aware, however, of prejudging the capabilities of a child to the point where the teacher consistently underestimates or overestimates them. It is so easy to ‘give a dog a bad name’ [p. 81]. I then wondered if this particular teacher was failing to see any positives in these boys. In line with this observation,

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Adams et al., [2002] observed that: ‘the treatment of young people who require looking after for reasons of criminality and challenging behaviour reflects their position as ‘villains and folk devils’, masking their vulnerability’ [p. 122].

I then noted that I needed to pay closer attention to the boys’ behaviour in my future observations.

A disparity in the way different teachers monitor pupils’ work seem to be causing tensions between teachers and their authority students. The following came up in the discussions regarding homework. In response to a question regarding teacher assessments, [see appendix C], three girls colluded in the following response.

We don’t think that our assessment is fairly done. They consider students...if you are a horrible student; they give you a low mark...and if you are always smiling, they give a higher mark. Some teachers give a very short time to do homework...others a very long time. Mrs—gives you homework on Thursday and expects it back on Friday...but Mrs- is so nice, we like her so much...she is really nice, isn’t she? And if you don’t hand in...she is quite forgetful...which is good, but we don’t add that she is old, she is not old but kind. If we don’t do our home work, she adds another day, but sometimes when she is very mad, she will make us stay during our break time...which is alright.

Sometimes, indecision on the part of teacher can be viewed as a weakness and pupils often capitalise on it. Deadlines have to be met and failure to do so has consequences. Conversely, fairness in assessment and marking demand that teacher follow implicit criteria. Pupils have the right to know what is expected of them. In impression marking ‘teachers should attempt to define what it is that gives a good or bad impression, and award marks according to the level of importance of these impressions’ [Child, 2001, p.381]. Following a laid down criteria builds trust and stimulates participation without fear of victimisation.

Conversely, Duke and Mallette [2004] argue, ‘...in school, social forces operate to provide or limit access to knowledge, the study of oral discourse within the conversations of the classroom is one primary way to witness those forces in participants’ talk and activity’ [p. 50]. And so, thus the salient aspects of talk can be explored through talk. However, such talk and

social justice in education initiatives will not be successful unless they also help to redress inequities in students' opportunities for educational success.

6.5.8. Unfair Practices

The theme of unfairness in dealing with pupils emerged from the participant observations as well as from interviews with some participants. The researcher observed that some teachers seemed to attend to and seemed to pay more attention to particular students during lesson deliveries. This was overtly shown in the comments the teachers gave in praise to the individual pupils, which were encouraging and lengthy. The following are some of the praises that other pupils received from their teacher. Regrettably, some of the praise are contaminated praises, thus to say that the praise is masked by words of dissatisfactions.

A good try --. Your work is quite neat but spoiled by the heavy crossing out. You need more practice with using capital letters for names. Your paragraph layout doesn't look quite right'. 'Excellent comment at the end! This is a good piece of work and I agree with your storyline.

On other occasions in the same lesson, other pupils got single acknowledgments 'good' 'yes' and so on. However, the same theme re-emerged during a group interview with G1, G3 and G5. These participants voiced opinions about teachers whom they perceived to be 'Racists'. This is what the participants said:

It is so boring that Mrs—and Ms—spend so much time with – and – at the expense of others. They think we don't know this...we are not stupid you know. I know why they spend more time with –and --. They are racists...that's why! We want them fired.'

'Yeah, please help us have them removed from this school' retorted G3.

Yeah, Mrs. –is very cruel. She has made many students cry.

How? I asked.

Like...at the start of a lesson, she will say, everyone stand up. Those of you who did your homework sit down...then, she will ask each and everyone standing why they have not done their homework. She will then go round checking everyone's homework. If she finds you seated if you did not do your homework, you would be in serious trouble.... I remember one day, my nana was poorly and I helped to look after her when my mum was not well. I didn't do my homework...and...when I tried to explain, she wouldn't have none of it. She didn't listen to what I had to say, she made me cry.

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Duke and Mallette [2004] advise that data illustrate the ways that tacitly the wider social context of teacher-student interaction in an activity as apparently simple as sharing time can make a difference in students' public identities and opportunities to learn, as well as in the recapitulation of social inequality based on race' [p. 53]. These narratives are indications of a silent war or antagonism going on between some participants and their teachers. In the eyes of these participants, it seems as though the teacher is authoritarian [Child 2000].

Conversely, Walker [1993] believes that students always do understand when school is not working for them and when the practices of teachers are not of any use in their own lives or, when their use is illusionary. Further walker argues that, for the majority of people, the most common experience of learning is one of formality and hierarchy where teachers, regardless of teaching method employed, determine the:

...distinctions between teacher and student roles, the rules governing the sequence of learning in the classroom and the procedures for evaluating students, activities and curriculum content [p.139].

However, it should also be remembered that these teachers have an accountability issue to contend with. Further, Child [ibid] postulates that, teachers need to put pupils at ease by showing sympathy and willingness to talk through problems. This process may require teachers and pupils to follow school traditions which may encompass classroom codes, 'partly laid down by the school, but are mainly left to the teacher' [Child, ibid]. Child [2001] further contends that the domination issue becomes the place of negotiation in applying codes of practice which should be followed by the class.

6.5.9. Resistance

There was strong evidence that some of these struggling pupils found it difficult to like school. For those that had recently joined the school, it was difficult to imagine how they were going to survive the British school system. In fact, the behaviour manifested by some pupils [e.g. B3 and B4, Year 9] suggest that they appear to hate school and are likely to hate and resist the system. Such pupils are bound to fall through the cracks. Empirical evidence suggests that pupils of this calibre tend to fail their GSCE tests, suggesting that they leave school without

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any recognition of their study at secondary level. And, this is not what the industry or employers are looking for. Simply put, lack of interest usually translates to failure in school activities.

Travers and Cooper [1996] postulate that the biggest stressors for teachers are pupil/teacher interaction such as verbal and physical aggression from pupils, dealing constantly with behaviour problems and high demands from parents and official appraisals among others. Conversely, Callender and Wright [2000] contend that education is by no means always a benign force for democratic justice. They [ibid] argue that it can promote violence, for example in dehumanizing and inequitable punishment, condoning sexual and homophobic abuse, or indoctrination into militarism, violent masculinities, or hatred of the 'other'.

In America for instance, Ogbu and Fordham [1986], investigating the issues of authority and engagement in the classroom through perceptions of black and immigrant students, found out that teachers and administrators perceived black students as difficult, and they needed to be put in line with school culture. [I need to point out here that American, Canadian, Austrian, English and Welsh and Australian education systems are similar]. Further, Ogbu and Fordham [ibid] contend that members of this subgroup are typically disproportionately placed in Special Education classes, receive harsher punitive disciplinary actions, or drop out of school in larger numbers. Observations similar to that of Ogbu and Fordham [ibid] were sentimentally manifested by participants in this study.

For instance, during participant observation, some teachers showed signs of irritability, anxiety and frustrations emanating from challenging behaviour from some participants; whose behaviour ranged from naughtiness, squabbling, gum chewing and lesson disruptions. Usually, trouble manifested from the same 'perennial trouble makers', who appeared to find learning challenging. These observations concur with Covington's [2000] assertions. Conversely, Covington [ibid] contends that pupils who fail to keep pace with learning try to protect their self-worth by:

- Presenting the image of an attentive student while keeping a low profile and avoiding the teacher's attention, hoping the teacher will call on other students.
- Faking effort [e.g. by asking a question to which they already know the answer].
- Minimizing participation, for instance, by not volunteering.

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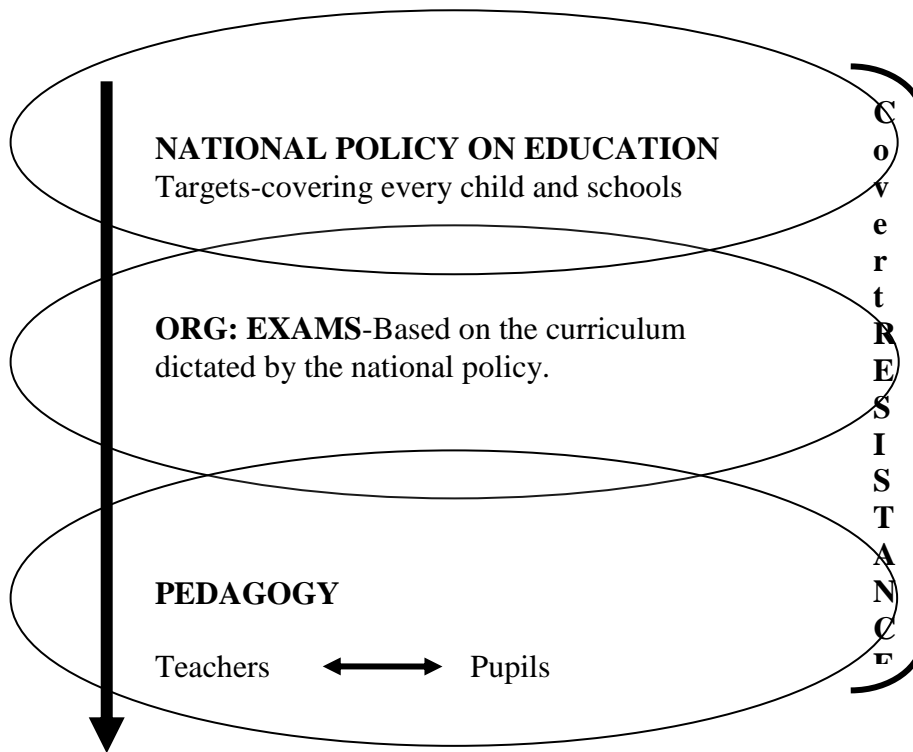
- Claiming a reason for not being able to study [e.g., sickness, or family problems].
- Procrastinating and doing work at the last minute. [Covington, 2000]

Similarly, according to Slee et al., [1998] ‘Black students who are excluded at an ever-increasing rate...have long been described as having special educational needs...because of their failure in racist educational contexts’ [p. 102]. Ironically, the majority of the participants in this research study are ‘Black’ and are reported or appear to have learning difficulties; therefore, the probability that these pupils will inevitably be permanently excluded from school if proper help is not forthcoming is high. On the other hand, according to generally held views within the self-esteem theory, these pupils may end up with very low self-esteem which might lead to juvenile delinquencies and eventually social misfits.

According to Covington, [2000], self-worth theory assumes that human beings are innately driven to establish and maintain a sense of personal worth and belonging in society. In turn, society measures people’s worth according to their ability to achieve, many students, perhaps even most of them, define their own worth in the same way. Thus, students who value the demonstration of ability because of its implications in terms of status but have doubts about their own ability are likely to develop a defensive repertoire of tactics designed to avoid failure or even possible implications of failure. The tactics that enable students to protect themselves from the negative implications of failure [i.e., an external as well as personal judgment of low academic ability] include ‘self-worth protection,’ ‘defensive pessimism,’ and ‘self-handicapping’ strategies

In America for example, Fordham and Ogbu [1986] argue that members of this subgroup [Blacks and other minority groups] are disproportionately placed in Special Education classes, receive harsher punitive disciplinary actions, or drop out of school in larger numbers. The same trend appears to be the case in UK schools as the college’s Ofsted report testifies.

In the diagram below, I attempt to represent diagrammatically the kind of covert resistance being manifested by some participants.



Willis [1977] argues:

In the working class area, there is a huge reservoir of class feeling to be drawn upon once trust has been decisively withdrawn from the school. Neighbourhood, street and larger symbolic articulations of working class youth cultures supply themes for, and are themselves strengthened dialectically by counter school culture [p. 73].

However, Ainscow [1991] believes traditional approaches of dealing with challenging behaviour are counter-productive as they 'have limiting opportunities for some children' [p.3].

Ainscow [ibid] further argues:

I believe that school systems must find better ways of conceptualising and responding to educational difficulties...In attempting to conceptualise educational difficulty in a more positive way we can more usefully see pupils experiencing difficulty as indicators of the need for reform. They point to the need to improve schooling in ways that will enable them to achieve success...It is worth adding at this stage that I believe that such reforms would be to the benefit of all pupils. Consequently the aim is effective schools for all. [, p.3]

It seems Ainscow's [ibid] argument has been superseded by the advent of accountability and high stake orientation. Further to this argument, Ainscow's [ibid] postulations are contrary to Child's [2001] ideas of leadership and exercising control that involves numerous techniques.

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Here, schools as min-society develop guidelines such as ‘knowing about the school, classroom conduct and what some describe as the puritan or protestant ethic of ‘hard work’ sober living and manners’ [p.324].

The following narrative illustrates that the college has codes of guidelines to follow as well as consequences for deciding to go against these codes. Responding to a research question aimed at finding out whether students knew the repercussions of misbehaving, G2 said:

If you mis-behave, you are told, ‘we will put you to a class of mis-behaviours. So you will rather be quiet than be sent to this class...no learning takes place. No one wants to be in this horrible class.

This narrative indicates the authoritarian stands smilingly adopted by the college staff. It would appear as though the strategy of creating a class composed of ‘trouble makers’ instils fear in children thereby assisting with behaviour management. This approach, may be working for the school but this action is tantamount to ‘labelling’ the pupils. However, the creation of such a class has been necessitated by the scale of the problem and thus, also shades light on the scale of challenging behaviour within the school. What remains to be seen is whether the strategy works in the long run. The following quote shades some doubt.

...I will not keep quiet when I’m treated like shit...I know I am a talkative person, but that does not give anyone the right to treat me like a dog. I will express my feelings...I have a mouth and I will use it. I don’t care if they hate me...they already do...anywhere. After all I’m leaving this school soon. [G1, Year 7]

From G1’s narrative, it appears that the issue at stake here is that of attitude, personality and assertiveness. There are positive views of herself whose combination paints a very unhealthy relationship with her teachers. G1 seems to accept and acknowledge her weaknesses; which could turn out to be a positive for behaviour modification. It appears clear here that G1 identifies and acknowledges her weaknesses and shortcomings and yet is determined to fight/defy authority thereby magnifying the problem at hand.

6.5.10. Ridicule and racism

There were indications of ethnic polarizations that affected certain groups of pupils. That is to say, one’s background, accent and fluency in English influenced how some foreign pupils are

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treated by fellow indigenous students. Tinto [1993], argues that formal and informal academic experiences serve to shape and refine a student's commitment to his or her prospective, current, and future educational aspirations and commitment to their respective educational institutions. Also, formal and informal social experiences also impact by way of reinforcing students' devotion to learning, facilitate in the development of educational goals and improve their academic performance. Nevertheless, a lack of meaningful and helpful academic and social integration experiences negatively influence student persistence decisions.

For one African girl [Year 7], cultural transition has proven very difficult for her, thereby affecting and holding back her learning progress. The girl explains how some native speakers of the English language have traumatized and belittled her and made learning unbearable in her class and school as a whole. She elucidates how she now feels:

Back at home in..., I felt that I spoke good English than some pupils in my class. I spoke more fluently and believed that I was doing well. But here in Britain, I became conscious all the time that I was not as good as I believed. In class, I now hold back comments or questions because I am worried that some pupils will ridicule me because of my accent. At first, I thought that students would soon stop laughing at speakers of other languages; at least I have another language that I can speak more fluently and confidently unlike some of those that laugh at us...to be honest, sometimes I felt alienated in my class....In the last two years I have suffered frequent subtle embarrassment, been pulled down by constantly being reminded that I am from a third world country...I am from Africa and should go back to Africa, that I have no right being here. I have certainly experienced pupil's misconceptions about my country, and my being in this country. I did not expect this from fellow students. I have also stopped participating in my favourite activities such as athletics. If I could, I would transfer to another school. [

Experience has it that, controversies lurk when people talk ill about things that matter to them. The team manager, Team Libra quoted in Wright et al., [2005] argues:

... Racism is within the education system, it's within the housing system, it's within the job market,...it's everywhere. What I'm saying is that for these young people...is the recognition and ability to sort of logically think through this and things are just starting to drop into place...So for me part of the drop their achievements and attainments is the fact that they are also beginning to feel the extra burdens of racism. [Team Manager, Team Libra, Nottingham: in Wright et al., 2005]

The above quote suggests that the issue of racism in schools is not an isolated case but rather, a deeply imbedded phenomenon. Thus the educational support for the emotional well-being of

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pupils elides motivating disaffected pupils to engage with learning, yet, education in English and Welsh schools' dimensions of students' experience 'a system that is widely seen to be arid, over- rational and test-driven' [Ecclestone, 2006].

G6's narrative suggests that her school life and treatment by fellow students is not conducive to learning. My observation is that such problems as racism, bullying, prejudices and inequalities in education appear to be exceedingly difficult to remedy through policy mandates alone. Such negative experiences and interactions potentially lead to poor student academic and social performance. One wonders how such problems can be tackled. Unfortunately, it appears that G6 is not alone in this predicament as expressed by the following quote from yet another year 8 girl responding to a follow-up research question: How do you find life at this school?

Generally, life is...fair...maybe, but sometimes horrible. You see, there is a lot of unfairness here at --. I don't think we are treated equally and fairly as students. Even when you complain about something, you are not taken seriously.

As it is my belief that listening teachers foster closer working relationships with students, making them feel valued, something that is deeply connected to learning; I asked her for clarity. There were clear assumptions the teacher failing to listen to the pupil's problem, and secondly the power differentials that were preventing equal conversations. McLaughlin [2000] argues, 'there are links between issues of dialogue and issues of power and powerlessness' [p.19]. Therefore, listening to such complains could be emotionally challenging suggesting, having a dialogue as presented by G6 is disturbing.

What do you mean by that? I asked G6 as I did not want to speculate on what G6 really meant.

Like...eh, last time I complained to my teacher about being bullied but nothing was done about it...and sometime when I get better marks for my work, these 'White' boys accuse me of cheating. One said, 'you wrote the answers on your skin with a black pen so the teacher couldn't see it...and when I told our teacher, he did not believe me. I was even told off and threatened with detention. If you stand up for yourself, you get into more serious trouble...what do you do? I just feel like I wanna cry...next...I don't say anything...I feel I might snap.

In this narrative, G6 has presented twinges of awareness and feelings of unhappiness caused by bullying and racist attacks. At this point she also presents signs of unhappy and anxious feelings seemingly at crossroads to a healthy learning environment. By reporting the problem

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to an authority figure, G6 felt that this was an important way to access redress and help and thus restore much needed confidence and minimize minor aggression or escalation of any peer dispute. However, failure by her teacher to listen to her cry for help even puts her in further agony. In an empirical study by Ogbu and Fordham [1981], they examine the issues of authority and engagement in the classroom through perceptions of Black and Immigrant students, reported that teachers and administrators perceived Black students as difficult, and needed to be put in line with school culture.

G6 is painting a gloomy picture about her experiences at school, a picture that needs to be addressed by the system. Unfortunately for G6, the teacher is not seen to be helpful or at least, seen to be concerned. It can be argued here that, for this participant, shouting for help without being heard is viewed as caused by who she is and her social class. This is viewed as stalling her learning as she redirects her energy towards anti-school culture [Willis, 1977]. For some of these participants, staying at this community college hinges on the friendships they have developed. As such, the absence of meaningful academic involvement leads to academic failure and thus challenging behaviour may state manifesting.

Nonetheless, Bandura [1986] postulates that behaviour is self-regulated. Thus according to Bandura [ibid], constraints to personal freedom include incompetence, unwarranted fears, excessive self-censure, and social inhibitors such as discrimination and prejudice. Thus, behaviour can be influenced by one's own imagination.

However, it is very difficult to delineate the full complexity of the teacher's actions from this one participant's narrative. But, this trend is testimonial evidence of scarcity of support resources for a certain group of students. Nonetheless, such comments have racial connotations that need to be nipped in the bud. By addressing such issues, as brought up by G6, teachers and students build good relations, thereby helping to facilitate in bullying and conflict issues more easily, sometimes before they escalate. These comments especially coming from a 'White' pupil may stem from beliefs that, 'Black' pupils are dull and generalised by empirical research that suggest 'Black' pupils as lagging behind other pupils in

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achievement. As shown by G6's narrative and the teacher's reluctance to address her complaint, suggests how such attitudes to bullying and violence may coexist at this college.

However, Thompson [2001] contends that language plays a significant part in the construction and maintenance of discriminatory and oppressive forms of practice. Thus Thompson [ibid] argues: 'discriminatory language therefore both reflect the discriminatory culture and social structure in which we live, and also contributes to the continuance of such discrimination' [p.33]. Thus for Thompson [ibid] many words and expressions have derogatory, or overtly insulting overtones whilst others are more subtle and less obvious in producing a discriminatory effect. In the same vein, Duke and Mallette [2004] argue, '...in school, social forces operate to provide or limit access to knowledge, the study of oral discourse within the conversations of the classroom is one primary way to witness those forces in participants' talk and activity' [p. 50]. And so, thus the salient aspects of talk can be explored through talk.

Nonetheless, for Adams et al., [2002], '...racism must be addressed at structural and administrative level, while supporting individuals in overcoming personal experiences of oppression' [p.122]. However, from G6's narrative, it seems as though the structure is not helping the situation by paying deaf ears.

6.5.11. Broken Trust and Social Bridges

From G5's narrative, there seems to be an academic-social divide that typically plagues the trust between them and their teachers. The shared learning experience of the students did not help with mending social bridges between participants from the ethnic minority [non-White students] and their White teachers. For some participants, racial and academic concerns compete, causing students to feel trapped between the two worlds such that students have to choose one over the other. Moreover, Callender and Wright, [2000] contend that schooling is by no means always a benign force for democratic justice. It can promote violence, for example in dehumanizing and inequitable punishment. Some students later commented:

G5 said:

Sometimes you learn more from a piece of paper than from our teachers. All they do is yelling over nothing. They all pretend to like you but what...they are full of favouritism. When there is... say a fight, they ask the 'Blacks' first who done it. If it involves a 'Black' and a 'White',

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we all know the Black boy or girl will be in trouble. They don't listen to the story...sometimes I think of not coming to school...I start to think of skiving...I will not let everyone bully me, I would rather be somewhere.

This comment by G5 suggests and is indicative of covert discriminatory practice going on.

Thompson [2001] defines discrimination as:

...Unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups; prejudicial behaviour acting against the interests of these people who characteristically tend to belong to relatively powerless groups within the social structure [women, ethnic minorities, old or disabled people and members of the working class in general]. Discrimination is therefore a matter of social formation as well as individual/group behaviour or praxis [p. 33]

Conversely, Callender and Wright [ibid] assert that social justice on educational initiatives will not be successful unless they also help to redress inequities in students' opportunities for educational success. Moreover, pupils' knowledge and understanding are shaped by the formal and informal learning experiences they have access to, by the discourses shaping thought and by ownership and participation as well as the feedback it elicits.

On the other hand, Hamachek [1987] contends that humans turn to defence mechanisms 'to help us preserve or protect our self-systems' [p.49]. One such mechanism associated with this behaviour is projection [blaming other person]. Hamachek [1987] defines projection [blaming other person] as 'a means by which we (1) blame our own shortcomings, mistakes, and transgressions on others; and (2) attribute to others our own unacceptable impulses, thoughts and desires' [, p.54]. Hamachek [ibid] further postulates that such help maintain our feelings of adequacy and self-esteem in the face of failure. Could it be that G5 has turned to projection to serve herself? Nevertheless, I pursued the analysis mindful that there are multiple truths [Foucault, 1980].

I followed up G5's narrative by asking 'How bad is bullying at this school?' G5's answer was:

Bullying... [Laughs] bullying is everywhere. You are bullied in the bus, in toilets and in lessons. What do you think are the reasons for all the fights?

It was quite clear that G5's was not happy at this school. Her cultural transition was very difficult. She comments:

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Back in --, I spoke better English than most pupils. I even believed I could speak fluently. But after arriving in Britain, I became aware all the time that I was not an indigenous speaker. I would hold back comments or questions in classes because I was worried that I could not speak as fluently as British students. I felt alienated in this new school... In the next two years I was to experience frequently the subtle embarrassment caused by the fact that I am from a third world country... I have certainly also experienced people's mistaken belief about my country... I also discovered sadly that the English I had learned was not adequate in a British school. I found that I hardly understood anything outside the class because students' language is full of slang.

From G5's narrative, it shows that her self-esteem and self-image has diminished. Therefore the likelihood of her succeeding in school work before her self-esteem and pride are restored, are very slim. G5's confidence and pride appear to have 'nose dived' creating obstacles to learning and psychological snares for herself. According to Illeris [2002] G5's experience can lead to resistance to learning. Thus Illeris [ibid] argues:

the resistance potential is typically activated when the individual is hindered or limited in his or her life fulfillment, and this can occur both in specific situations or more generally if the individual finds himself in contexts he perceives himself to be in conflict with, e.g. a more or less unwanted school or training course, a specific, a specific teacher or the social situation in the class or team [p.101].

In another narrative, a year 8 girl, G6 said that she feels she is being bullied by her 'mean' teacher. She said:

One day, I dropped a pen and said aloud 'oh! God' my teacher then said I was swearing. When I tried to reason with her, I was threatened with level three- detention. My teacher is so 'bully'. You see, some of these teachers seem nice until you start talking to them.

Q. Do you have a favourite teacher?

G6 elucidates how she feels about one teacher she thinks makes lessons interesting.

Responding to the question about confidantes and or favourite teachers, G6 said:

Yeah...I do...eh, Mr--. He makes everything a laugh; he makes everything a joke and makes the lessons fun. And...when I'm finished...the lesson, I can't really learn if it's more...it takes more of fun than it was learning; which you have to get a balance, don't you? If you gonna have a laugh you have a laugh

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and if you gonna learn, you learn. Whereas with him he would go, I got a gun...but when it gets to the end of the lesson you don't know what you are supposed to do. If the lessons look more of fun than learning...but at the end of the day I know its wrong....at the end of the day you don't want to work if it's not worth it.

G6 was cheerful when she spoke of her favourite teacher. She was however quick to point out that there is need for limits and balances that need to be struck and maintained. It also shows how thin the line that divides fun and serious learning. As a follow-up, I took the opportunity to find out how G6 would react to peer assessment.

Q-How would you feel if other students were to assess your work [peer assessment]?

It depends...it depends on who is doing it. I certainly will not have the 'gabby'...loud mouths assessing my work. But if it is someone nice, I might allow them.

Why wouldn't you allow them?

They knock your confidence...they will have another reason to bully you.

G6's response is indicative that some students may not be ready to accept peer assessment as an alternative to teacher assessments to improve results. G6 believes that peer assessment could also be a source of conflict and bullying. However, Covington [2000] postulates that, students who resort to self-worth protection usually withdraw effort. They stop trying, or make people think they do not try, thereby providing an excuse for failure that is preferable to trying and failing because of low ability. However, such behaviour is likely to gain others' disapproval, get the students into trouble, and possibly result in punishment. Defensive pessimism involves lowering one's aspirations, announcing low competence or low aspirations to others before a task in order to lower the teacher's or others' expectations, or not taking studying seriously. Self-handicapping refers to the use of another set of defensive strategies designed to introduce ambiguity in the failure-low ability connection by minimizing the amount of information that is available to others regarding an individual's ability.

6.5.12. Cooperation among Students

Another theme that manifested from the participant observations was cooperation among students. During group work some participants, were seen conversing and assisting fellow

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students who found the tough going. Of particular interest was one Asian boy B5 who was often seen assisting a fellow student who had recently come from India. The new student had language problems and sat strategically next to a fellow student who would from time to time receive assistance from the more knowledgeable colleague.

Although it appeared commendable to see pupils assisting each other, this instance was unfortunate in that, the helper was losing a lot of his valuable learning time. The other negative observation was that both the teacher and her assistant had shifted the responsibility to the student.

6.5. 13. Lateness and Truancy

Lateness and truancy surfaced as themes in the observations. B3: a Year 9 participant was observed to be usually late for lessons and did not seem perturbed about it. His reasons are usually: 'I needed to use the toilet' or I had been detained by the previous teacher. In fact, he always has an excuse for his lateness. Fordham and Ogbu [1986], postulate that Blacks and immigrants deal with a great deal of discrimination in the labour markets and in school. This foray into the climate of economic prospects for the city's primary inhabitants is helpful in constructing an inclusive history of failure. Conversely, the majority of latecomers in this instance were 'Black', which affirms suggestions that something is amiss.

Ellsworth [1997] contends that prevailing discourse shapes learning by encoding and reinforcing relations of power through its conjectures, for example in the ways it recognizes, denies, normalizes or constructs as 'other' certain identities and patterns of behaviour. Therefore, it is imperative that school and classroom climates are constantly monitored as they can exacerbate [or alleviate] the status competition and prejudice that underlie most harassment and social exclusion.

According to Willis [1977], there are many changeable reasons for opposition to the school-lateness and truancy is among them.

Truancy is only a very imprecise –even meaningless –measure of rejection of school...truancy is only one relatively unimportant and crude variant of this

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principle of self-direction which ranges across chunks of the syllabus and covers many diverse activities: being free out of class, being in class and doing no work, being in the wrong class, roaming in the corridors looking for excitement, being asleep in private [p.26].

B4 had all the credentials of someone who was bent on creating his own day from what was being offered by the school [Willis 1977]. However, unfortunately pupils from impoverished backgrounds make up the majority found in this predicament.

6.6. Documentary Analysis

Evidence from the English assessment sheets seemed to show that most pupils had an idea of the quality of work they are expected to produce in order for them to attain a particular level e.g., level 4. However, it was not clear how the pupils ended up with the same ‘targets’. It appears as though, pupils set their own targets as evidenced by what pupils themselves write about their strengths and weakness. From the look of things, some pupils seemed to copy each other’s targets as there was so much uniformity in individual targets which were:

- To show an understanding of the poem.
- To write an essay form
- To write accurately.

Due to the fact that, these pupils are operating on different levels, I believed that pupils were coping from each other or from the board as some even spelt some of the words wrongly.

6.6.1. Reports and marks schedules

Sometimes, reports and marks schedules show some pattern may need further observation study on a wider scale. Teacher assessment marks for particular minority groups were always lower than the examination mark. For example, some pupils obtained a level 4 in year six final key stage exam, and maintained that same level for the first informal tests before nose diving. Of the few participants in year 7 that I asked to provide their year six SATs results, only one did [see Appendix H].

6.6.2. The Ofsted Report

According to the principal of the Community College and collaborated by the inspection report carried out by Ofsted Inspections [2005], under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996,

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the College serves an area which is used by the Leicester City local authority to house families coming to the city from abroad. As a consequence, the college receives new students every week and loses students whose families, once settled in the country, move to other parts of the city or county. The turbulence created by this movement is very high to the point of making continuity sometimes practically impossible. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds is very high with more than ninety per cent whose home language is not English. The most frequently used home languages are Gujarati, Bengali and Somali. The proportion of students who are at an early stage of learning English is also very high, with the major ethnic group being Asian Indian. Other large groups are Black African and other Asian groups. A very small number of students come from a White working class background. Attainment on entry is well below average. However, results at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were reported to be well above those of similar schools.

The Ofsted Inspections team [2005] reported that the college deals well with the challenges presented by student mobility and the high numbers of students who are at an early stage of learning English makes the task a lot harder. The Ofsted team acknowledged that, on the whole teaching is good and examination results are rising more rapidly than the national trend and that, the college provides very good value for money. Some of the college's main strengths were reported to be:

- The consistency of teaching across the school,
- That it takes very good care of its students and has very good ethos of personal and academic development that is fostered
- Has a good range of effective support strategies to meet the many and varied needs of the students
- The very good provision made for work related learning and for students identified as gifted or talented
- The use of assessment data to monitor progress has been developed but requires greater rigour

The report also indicated that, results at the end of Year 9, in 2004, in English, mathematics and science were well below national averages but in line with those of similar schools. It was

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noted that there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, current standards in Year 9 are below average in the three core subjects but are again above average in Information and Communication technology [ICT], average in art, design and technology, religious education and modern foreign languages and well below average in music, history and geography. This appears to suggest that the majority of pupils are choosing particular subjects or speculatively, the quality of teachers may need investigation. This precedence, may also suggest a focus in particular areas and negation of the other subjects. The actual cause needs to be investigated to ascertain the actual cause.

However, Ofsted also reported that, GCSE results, in 2004, were significantly below average in several subjects, including Mathematics and English. Nevertheless, results were average in Science and French, and significantly above average in Art, Design and Technology, Sociology, other languages and the new vocational courses. It was also reported that, students made much better progress than students in similar schools, but below national average. Current standards in Year 11 are broadly average. They are well above average in Art, Design and Technology, ICT and Religious education and below average in English, Mathematics, Geography and History. Students with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those identified as gifted and talented, achieve well. The gifted and talented achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 due to the additional opportunities they have.

My analysis of the Ofsted report revealed a number of problems and inconsistencies. First by concluding that the college is doing exceptionally well by producing better results than other schools in the same category is grossly flawed. By toeing this line, the report suggests that there are multiple standards and criteria by which English and Welsh schools are assessed. Secondly, by being content with the college's Maths, English and Science results despite performances below the national level is being circumstantial. Does the Ofsted inspectorate assume that school results are determined more by the school's social class of its pupils, races or creed? If they do, what is the essence of the national league tables and, why do they not investigate the cause of failure in these subjects? Is it that the Ofsted inspectorate expects schools in similar circumstances to fail [learned hopelessness] or by the inspectors' interpretation of the schools status than it is by criteria. And fundamentally, why are these

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schools not doing so well in Maths, English and science while performing up to national average or better in all other subjects but these three? It then appears that, such inspectorial practices are failing these pupils and their communities. This suggests a case for hidden curriculum [Bowles and Gintis, 1976].

Apple [1979] asserts that, in 'Ideology and Curriculum' there is high-status and low-status curriculum knowledge. The poor and minorities are excluded from the high-status [technical] knowledge and this is used as a device to filter for economic stratification and future career prospects. The same agenda could be at play here.

Conversely Slee et al, [1998] argue:

Pupils are objectified as 'intake variables' by a culture of deficit model which appears to collude with schools' perceptions of 'low' or 'high quality' of intake. Thus certain schools are excused for poor assessment scores but only in the case of some working-class children...this shift in the [ESM's] ambitions has been necessary since the performative characteristics of the 'effective school' must be seen to underpin and inform the 'improving school', so are political and academic reputations made and sustained [pp. 25-26].

The above quotation suggests systemic hidden agendas within the government inspectorate setup. Thus Foucault [1980] postulates, 'truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint...and it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth' [, p.131]. One wonders then, if the Government's initiated education reform and social justice are well aligned in serving the entirety of its people or are meant to be for the preserve of a few people. These discrepancies create challenging problem for progressive educators and policy makers alike.

Another distinct observation is set on performance school reports that have the following headings: Performance level, Expected level, Effort level. The performance level is basically what the class teacher assesses the pupil to be operating at, while the expected level is based on the national level in that year group and finally the effort level is also teacher assessed.

The whole process is open to abuse and does prejudice some unfortunate individuals especially where these marks are used for screening purposes. For follow-up purposes, participants were asked how they felt with regards to teacher assessment comments.

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Bad marks make you feel really bad...you feel fed up...like you are lower than everyone else...good marks make you feel like...you are on top of the world. It turns out...you to feel more confident...it feels good to be smart. Good comments tell a lot about you...about your behaviour. If the teacher likes you, you always get good comments.

Another girl said:

My teacher does not write good comments...so I don't normally look at them. If they are bad comments, I remove them. But I prefer marks...but at the end of the day, it don't make any difference to me.

The first response is indicative of the psychological impact and adverse effects of bad or unfavourable comments. The participant elucidates her inner feelings for both favourable and adverse responses which work as motivators and demotivators. For her, it seems wording and tone of the words is important. Child [2001] argues that, positive and helpful methods of feedback, supportive, trustworthy, knowledgeable, friendly but firm attitudes and atmosphere are all positive factors. The second response is indicative of a care-free attitude. This is the kind of attitude most likely to lead to the anti-school culture [Willis, 1977].

6.7. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have attempted to present a triangulated qualitative dimension of the study. Thus, the chapter dealt with analysis of participant observations, the questionnaire aspects of the research study, pupil interviews and documentary evidence. The results from the analysis provide insight into two distinct, yet interrelated issues: the impact of formal and informal assessment on pupils' self-esteem and the teachers' involvement and attitudes in building trust towards student's embracement of learning and perseverance. An appraisal of the research question and sub-questions is vital to keep the research focus.

Thus, the title of this study is: 'An Investigation of the Impact of Formal and Informal Assessment on the Self-Esteem of Pupils with Borderline Learning Difficulties and Language Deficiencies in Mixed Ability English Language Classes'.

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Questions	Findings
How do poorly performing pupils deal with negative comments, poor feedback and unfavourable marks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils attribute poor results to victimisation and racism practised against them by their teachers and fellow students. • Insensitive and unsympathetic teachers
Are pupils' perceptions of the behaviour different from those of the teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils believe that they are not treated equally, that they are being bullied and that teachers are not consistent in awarding marks. • These disparities make some pupils feel they are victimised and hated by their teachers.
How do poorly performing pupils deal with positive praise or comments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the participants' perspectives, there are some who feel they are prejudiced by the system. • These participants believe that there is covert individual and institutional favouritism and racism. •
What effects are teachers' assessment comments on pupils' self-esteem or behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils believe they are not fairly assessed. • Marks are awarded in accordance with pupils' behaviour.
How do pupils do their homework?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some pupils copy from friends, while there is evidence that those with internet access, download from web sites whenever they can.
Are schools doing enough to assist learners with borderline difficulties?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system seems to be hurting more the pupils it is designed to help. The high stake testing and accountability is forcing teachers to cut corners and teach to the test.

The summary of the research findings are presented in bullet point form but not in any particular order.

- For some pupils, especially those who found learning taxing, the classroom is the crossroads where two cultures meet [the social and the academic].
- There is also cause for concern about some students' involvement in learning and the amount of student effort on the other, between teachers' efforts and the quality of student effort, learning and persistence.

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- Alleged bullying practices by both the teachers and pupils are a cause for concern. For some participants, ridiculing and racism practices have seriously affected their moral and self-esteem.
- There exists an anti-school culture at this community college caused by many variables.
- There are numerous signs of resistance marked by anti school agendas such as lateness and truancy
- Finally, the research findings reveal possibilities of resistance to authority and education by some minority' students. For them, attending school is only to avoid being in trouble from parents and police. The results suggest lack of conviction in the education system.

However, several major points of interest that emerged from the data will be probed further in chapter seven and discussed more fully in Chapter Eight, General Discussion of Findings and the Research Process. Some pupils and teachers may have to be interviewed again to provide answers for emerging questions.

I have also presented the results of this chapter in trying to fulfill the aims stated at the beginning of chapter one of this thesis. A number of themes regarding the impact of formal and informal assessment as perceived by pupils as well as the demographic variables manifested were explored in relation to each other and assessment. The narrative analysis process revealed a number of individual feelings that help with meaning facilitation of the possible impact of formal and informal assessment on the self-esteem on individual basis. Within these stories, are a number of emergent issues that are perhaps far from being self-esteem issues?

It seems that pupils are divided along racial, ethnic, class and other categories, and have distinctly formed a structure of experience' [Grossberg 1994]. Scott [1992] argues that classes have emerged as salient ways to think about and describe difference because of specific historical and contemporary structures of power and corresponding practices. Thus in this instance, cultures of resistance, hate and anti school-culture seem to permeate the protection of 'the 'self' and one's identity. Which, according to Hall, [1992], finding one's 'authentic' self,

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or the core of one's identity, is a central preoccupation particularly in mainstream multicultural discourses, hence desires to protect one's image. Therefore, for some students, the anti-school culture attitude may have been facilitated by their social context.

Some participants presented narratives that maybe linked to stress, anxiety and burnout. Leaving me to wonder if what we believe to be low self-esteem is truly esteem issues.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS
AND PARENTS**

7.0. Introduction

This chapter is in two parts. Part one covers discussions concerning participant observations and teachers' interviews. In this analysis, I discuss teachers' perceptions about pupils' attitudes to learning as well as teachers' perceptions of the importance of pupils' self-esteem towards their own learning. This will be achieved by way of interviewing teachers as a follow up to participant observations conducted earlier in the study. During these observations, I paid particular attention to the language and tone of that language and gestures of both teachers and pupils alike.

Duke and Mallette [2004] argue, 'classrooms are language-rich environments, and much of that language takes the form of talk about text, knowledge, and ideas' [p.46]. Further to these observations, Duke and Mallette, [ibid], assert 'underlying these are fundamental questions about the role of oral discourse in the social construction of knowledge, power, and identity in the classroom, schools ...' [p. 46].

However, there are practical concerns that emanate from curriculum, instruction, and classroom management which this research aims to discuss. One way of analyzing the classroom discourse within school setting is by analyzing the classroom's instructional conversations, their nature, content and purposes [Cole, 1996], which depict the salient meaning of practices that are central to classroom talk and activities in an attempt to identify what Gee [1996] calls 'identity kit'. Therefore, direct quotes from participating teachers will be used and analyzed in an attempt to illustrate their perceptions that may have become apparent through words, gestures and actions.

Thus Gee [ibid] contends that discourse is social as well as linguistic. This way, I will be able to make sense of language codes, as well as dialect or speech style, use of spoken or written words, social norms and values and practices within shared social activity systems [Duke and

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Mallete, 2004]. One may wonder why ‘discourse analyses may be deemed appropriate in the analysis.

According to Duke and Mallete [2004], teachers and pupils partly create the discourse by way of interactions and partly constrained by social, historical, cultural and political forces and factors [ibid]. As an important factor in the development of identity and literacy which is both limiting and enabling of learning and learners’ futures. Discourse as educational talk embodies three central features:

- 1) It is jointly constructed by participants in connected oral text;
- 2) It is a medium for the negotiation of meaning by speakers within particular social contexts and;
- 3) It is rule governed in order to be held in common with others, but it is also a creative act, with improvisation necessary as conversation moves from turn to turn, topic to topic.

In the second half of this chapter, I aim to present part of the analysis covering parents’ interviews [see appendix H]. The sample size of the parent participants makes any generalizations about parents’ views and beliefs untenable. Therefore, when observations are expressed about the parents’ perspectives from different backgrounds, the comments are only meant to refer to these individuals in this study.

Data discussed in this chapter, was acquired from participant observations during lessons conducted by participating teachers, audio-taped individual interviews with teachers and then parents. This process is aimed at shedding light on the understanding of the perceived impact of formal and informal assessment on the self- esteem for borderline pupils with learning difficulties and language deficiencies learning in mixed English language classes.

7.1. Summary

The aims of this chapter are:

1. to investigate teachers’ perceptions of the effects of assessment on pupils’ self-esteem.
2. to assess the impact of teacher influence/ effects on pupils’ self-esteem.
3. to investigate problem levels of challenging behaviour in classrooms.

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In this chapter, I report data highlighting that, teachers have a lot of power, which they often exert to repress pupils as a way of restoring order and sanity to classrooms. The data analyses also shows lack of trust between pupils and their teachers, mainly that pupils do not trust their teachers and that they feel victimised. Pupils blame teachers accusing them of practising racism, favouritism and biased assessment of pupils' work favouring the good pupils and penalising the 'difficult' ones.

Below is a summary of some of the findings of this of this chapter.

Questions	Findings
How do poorly performing pupils deal with negative and unfavourable assessment comments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils attribute poor results to victimisation and racism practised against them by their teachers and fellow students.• Blame teachers for insensitive treatment of students and favouritism.• Some participants are not bothered by what the teacher writes since they have preconceived ideas about teachers' attitude towards them.
What are the teachers' perceptions regarding self-esteem of poorly performing pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attribute to the absence of learning culture.• Absence of role models, particularly male teachers for 'Black' boys.
What effects do teachers' comments regarding assessment have upon pupils' self-esteem or behaviour?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils believe they are not fairly assessed.• Marks are awarded in accordance with pupils' behaviour.

7.2. Data Collection

At the outset of participant observations, I was mindful of Wolcott's [1995] argument: 'the critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all data you can, but to 'can' (get rid of) most of the data you accumulate...this requires constant winnowing' [p. 35].

To minimise the 'overload effect', I took heed of Silverman's [2006] tips [i.e. having a set of questions which I tried to answer]. By adapting questions that needed answering during

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information gathering [participant observation], I managed to remain focused on the objectives of the study. The following adapted questions assisted me with narrowing down the gathered information.

- What do I see going on here and how is it being done?
- What am I learning from this activity?
- Why do I have to include it in my data? [Silverman, 2006].

These questions work as pointers and or pegs assisting me to keep within reasonable confines and parameters of the research question.

The participant observations were conducted without drawn-up observation schedules in preference to exploring new data or themes as they presented themselves to the researcher/participant observer. 'One of the strengths of observational research is its ability to shift focus as interesting new data become available' [Silverman, 2006, p. 93]. I was thus able to focus or change my focus as themes naturally unfolded or manifested during observations.

The participant observations were carried out between the months of September, 2005 to May, 2006; for two days a week [Wednesdays and Thursdays] from 0900hrs to 1500hrs. Questionnaires and interviews were also conducted during this time span.

Questionnaire and individual interviews were administered to six volunteer English teachers who taught years 7, 8, 9 and 11. This group consisted of five female teachers and one male teacher. Questionnaires were administered in the second phase of the research following participant observation. The questionnaire collected information on a range of teachers' history and experience and their individual perceptions of student attributes. Wellington [2000] contends that, questionnaires are a rapid way of obtaining a 'wider picture or an overview' [p.101]. However, according to Bell [1999], such information obtained using questionnaires is often of rather superficial kind; hence the need for method triangulation adopted. Bell [ibid] further argues that surveys answer the What, Where, When, How, but not Why? For this research, the 'Why' was provided for in the interviews that ensued, [see appendices D, E and F].

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On the other hand, interviewing allows the researcher to investigate and prompt things that are unobservable [Wellington 2000]. Thus, ‘we can probe an interviewee’s thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives. We can also elicit their version or their account of situations...’ [p. 71]. ‘The main emphasis is on fact-finding’ [ibid, p. 9], hence the need for method triangulation ideal for strengthen the reliability of findings.

7.3.0. Field Notes and Participant Observations

Field notes were also particularly helpful in providing non-verbal clues/information observed during the interview process. They provided worthwhile information which tapes could not provide. [See appendix G. –for an example of a field note]. In the following accounts, there will be detailed discussions of the participant observation findings as well as teachers’ responses to research questions. The discussions may contain detailed participants’ characteristics in relation to the circumstances and situational contexts in which they behaved. Similarly, the study of discourse as it occurs naturally in a learning setting will provide the much needed data for analysis. Duke and Mallete [2004] argue:

given that in schools, social forces operate to provide or limit access to knowledge, the study of oral discourse within the conversations of the classroom is one primary way to witness those forces in participants’ talk and activity’ [p. 50]

In order to get meaning from activities, Bandura [1980b] espouses that, behaviour is always a joint function of the agent [individual] and the situation, hence the importance to understand the context in which that behaviour occurred. This process is crucial to understanding the what, why and how of what is really going on. The following excerpts and discussions are teachers’ perceptions of what is going on in their classrooms and lessons. The teachers who participated in this study are representative of teachers not only of this community college, but of a large number of teachers teaching in similar public schools. And therefore, understanding their perspectives is crucial to understanding the general moods, attitudes and beliefs regarding assessment, curriculum and pupils’ esteem and who it is affected by learning.

7.3.1. Teachers’ Behaviours and Responses

In order to understand these perspectives the researcher was mindful of Fenwick’s [2002] suggestions for explaining processes of knowledge development. Thus Fenwick [2002]

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identified three sociocultural ideas that are useful for explaining certain processes of knowledge development within the context of learning:

- First, that learning is experiential since it co-emerges with environment, individuals, and activity.
- Second, that understanding is embedded in the conduct and relationships among the participants, rather than the minds of individual actors.
- Third, that it is a continuous process of invention and exploration that is linked to disequilibrium and dissonance and amplified with feedback loops.

Some participating teachers seemed to favour being authoritative as they tightly controlled their classes' behaviours in a manner that sometimes drew them into conflicts with individual pupils unnecessarily. Thus, the features on which power is amassed depict a coherent basis for action and influence over others, becoming organisational principally, guiding and governing our understandings, identities and subjectivities. Hurd [2004] postulated, 'The classroom environment is fraught with constant disruptions by some male students, managed in turn by teacher threats, and results in a shift of attention from the class lesson to discipline' [p. 66]. In such situations, students express agency the only way they can: by resisting the teachers either actively through disruptive behaviour and socializing or less directly as willing spectators [Fordham and Ogbu, 1986]. Conversely, Bourdieu [1977] argues: 'a whole body of wisdom, sayings, commonplaces, ethical precepts ['that's not for the likes of us'] and, at a deeper level, the unconscious principles of the ethos which...determines 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' conduct for every agent' [p. 77].

However, it must be said here that, learning institutions are presupposed to have considerable external authority; and the onus is in the learners to adjust to the demands and requirements accompanying this mode of learning [Smith, 1988]. My participant observations concur with [Hurd, 2004; Callender and Wright, 2000] observations of constant lesson disruptions; managed in turn by teacher threats. Thus, Callender and Wright [2000] argue, 'a central feature...pupil's difficulties in the school is related to the perceived or experienced authoritarianism embedded within the school ethos' [p.218]. The following excerpts and arguments reveal similar constructs.

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Mr B.T. controlled his Year 7 class and seemed to expect them to just toe the line without breaking his rules and did not expect pupils to argue with him or question his authority. Thus, teachers are in super-ordinate positions, empowered with the legitimacy to make decisions over pupils. However, it must be mentioned here that, because nowadays, pupils are highly 'conscientized,' have become inquisitive, questioning and influencing, though inevitably also influenced by, the discourses around them as expressed by Freire [1994]; consciously question every action taken, which more often than not brings them into more scrutiny by the authorities. When that happens, students are silenced by harsh and punitive means as the following journal extract suggests.

In one instance, Ms Kh., who too appeared authoritarian, reduced higher marks awarded to three boys earlier on to lower marks because the boys were seen conversing during a speaking and listening lesson. 'Because you three were talking when you should have been listening, I'm now going to reduce the marks I had awarded you' [journal extracts Year 8: 13/12/05]. Ms Kh. has a duty as a teacher, to oversee, check and organise students impartially. On one hand, Ms Kh's [ibid] actions may be seen as punitive and bent on 'fixing' the out of line pupils by means that will put them in line with 'our way of thinking', which exacerbates a feeling of alienation in these pupils.

On the other hand, her actions may not be perceived as repressive or oppressive, but rather as consequences for non-compliance to expectations. Her action ensures these boys perform at their maximum capacity in future. But, in light of the consequences for the boys, it becomes difficult for an outsider to understand the supportive and justificatory framework of her actions especially considering the potential conflict her actions might trigger. Ogbu and Fordham [1981] believe that the perceptions and treatment of black students throughout the history has led to an oppositional culture toward schooling. Nonetheless, Bourdieu [1977] argues that while social practice has some purpose and practical intent for the individual, these goals are located within an individual's own reality, which is related to who and what they are and is, therefore at least partially, externally defined [Karlsen and Nazroo, 2002].

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Nonetheless, one can argue that, in this instance Ms Kh. used her superior position to ‘cow’ these three boys into cornered haplessness. Similar treatment manifests along similar lines, where the weak and helpless pupils are forced into submission because of fear of severe reprimands. In similar circumstances, Bowler [1993] asserts that, ‘Black and minority ethnic patients are particularly vulnerable to negative typification because of their visibility combined with the fact that crude racial stereotypes are common in wider society’ [p. 158]. I however concede that the positions taken by teachers in this study will be read, translated and interpreted in various ways; constructing comparative or normative judgements on them.

It must be said here that, it is not my intention to judge or pass on evaluative judgements on the participant teachers but comment on the diversities in various dominant positions in Agent versus Structure situations. Ms Kh seemed to send a message to the students that conduct was part of assessment and so received an evaluation of being ‘good’ or not and that it affected the final pass mark. The evaluation was heavily based upon students’ attitude [as determined by institutionally-sanctioned expectations for comportment], as opposed to student comprehension of and connection with academic content [Fordham and Ogbu, 1986].

Atkinson [2002] argues ‘through the apparent agency of the teacher the state can be seen to exercise discipline and control over the finest details of the pupil’s learning...’ [p78]. Therefore, one can argue that pupils are not allowed to talk freely as they do not have any authority which in turn suggests a sinister approach to the idea of a ‘Curriculum Discourse’. Discourse is generally associated with curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management [Duke and Mallette, 2004]. It follows therefore that educational talk become identity kits for pupils in their quest to learn. This is essential to sustaining learning and participation [ibid]. Therefore, restrictions in the development of discourse, a factor in the development of identity and literacy [Duke and Mallette, 2004], becomes the root source of rebellion and bad behaviour in schools as pupils think they are not listened to.

The majority of student participants in this research study share some of their daily experiences as they interact with their teachers, and each other and many of the interactions are negative and potentially lead to poor student academic and social performance and so influence

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behaviour outcomes. Conversely, Bandura [online] contends that, pupils will not learn well if they are distracted by competing stimuli. Bandura [ibid] argues thus:

If you are going to learn anything, you have to be paying attention...anything that puts a damper on attention is going to decrease learning, including observational learning. If, for example, you are sleepy, groggy, drugged, sick, nervous, or 'hyper,' you will learn less well. [Bandura, online]

However, Ball [2003] believes that punitive measures have all to do with power and society. He [ibid] espouses that society and power play major roles in decision-making because they segregate people into various social classes, from which they find it difficult to break free regardless of the choices they make in life. Ball [ibid] defines class as 'an identity and a lifestyle, and set of perspectives on the social world and relationships in it, marked by varying degrees of reflexivity' [p.6].

Dewey [1966] proposed that we evaluate education by its success in creating in the student the desire for 'continual growth' and in supplying the student with the means for making that desire 'effective in fact.' Reflectively, if the marks –awarded and then deducted from the three boys- constitute course work marks, then the three boys have been unduly affected by their behaviour rather than by marking criteria. If such subjective trends continued or happened to Year 9 and 11 pupils, and their behaviour influenced the final mark, then those pupils 'out of line with acceptable behaviour' are unduly failed and this has ripple effects on pupils' course work marks and the subsequent final pass mark. It follows therefore that, should these boys fail their course work, the chances are that their 'continual growth' stalls.

The decision to reduce the scores was announced to the three boys in the presence of the entire class. Reflectively, the manifestation of rebellious behaviour and challenging behaviour in schools is frequently associated with a struggle for power as Ball [2003] suggests. Maybe Ms Kh's decision to deduct marks for bad behaviour and the subsequent announcement to the whole class can be counter productive; especially where pupils feel they are being victimised /and or not listened to. I believe that such punitive measures do not improve the boys' conduct and behaviour but rather reinforce the belief that 'these teachers are racists' as it impinges on

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pupils' emotions. Conversely, Macmurray [1935] argues that 'what we feel and how we feel is far more important than what we think and how we think' since 'all the motives which govern and drive our lives are emotional' [p. 17].

Woods [1997] attests that pupils in our schools are 'bored' and thus argues:

Thirteen year olds are often 'bored', but their outward indifference is driven by what they perceive as the inability of adults to see them as capable young people. 'Bored' translates as 'insulted'. This is not the 'scared/bored' of the eight year old, but the challenging 'bored' of the adolescent desperately seeking an identity and wanting grown-ups to both notice and leave them alone at the same time. Students at this age who complain that their teachers are 'boring' are clearly indicating their perception that they are not being seen, recognized or acknowledged as individuals in the classroom. [Wood, 1997, p. 147]

At this juncture, I espouse that teachers are failing to make classrooms interesting for pupils, who in turn, failure to connect with learning thereby aggravating and precipitating the boredom discussed above. This construct, is reflected in Madaus' [1988] warning of the consequences and impact of 'high stakes tests' [see chapter 3.6]. Thus, these Government initiated education reforms and demands are not well aligned to the needs of minority groups of pupils who find learning challenging, creating a problem for teachers and pupils alike. However, as Wood [1997] contends, any classroom situation is a complex combination of elements: acceptance, opposition, legitimacy, and the particular way in which the teacher inhabits the educational paradigm. Which suggests that the teacher has autonomous monopoly to decide what goes on in his/her classroom, making the teacher accountable for the success or failure of his/her pupils. Nonetheless, the advent of league tables and high stakes testing and accountability has a strangle hold on teaching which in turn stifles creativity in classrooms.

On the whole, Year 9 and 11 teachers seemed to be driven by or were subordinated to the need to succeed at external examinations. This means that more exam oriented work, that gives pupils as much exam practice as possible was very prominent during my entire participant observations in these classes as depicted by the following journal extracts.

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This mock exam will prepare you for the real exam...this exam is based on two papers written on two different days. Paper 1 section A: tests your reading...fiction...understand the text...what, who, where and when questions...paper 2 tests your reading-transactions... [Journal extracts: 16/01/06 -Year 11]

Another journal extract suggests a culture of teaching to tests or coaching in classes due to sit-for SATs examinations as shown by the lesson summary below. This observation is in direct contrast to Garfield's [1994] view that, suggests that current reform movement in educational assessment encourages teachers to think about assessment more broadly than 'testing' and using test results to assign grades and rank students [see chapter 3.6]. This approach suggests a direct construct to Hart's [1997] observation that, 'teachers have been encouraged to formulate their goals for teaching differentially in terms of what they expect the 'most able', 'average' and 'least able' will learn [p.154]. Teaching to test does not sharpen the edges of the struggling pupils, but rather 'harden the edges of categories of abilities...' [ibid].

Planning how to answer questions: -For Catherine...start with the parents...protective, support...what best job? C-looks after E...C tells B about the job first [confides]...Preparation: impression of R. blond/ handsome/sings jazz...M quite, dark etc. ...attracted to R...takes her to cinemas, questions R. does he want her for her papers?...makes things for her. Ed thinks he is angry- is changed, how...being controlling-boxing...C caught in the middle...Christmas drunk...kisses C and then R. Then, think of Ed's death-previously called him names... The teacher writes sentence starters on the board as guide for the class...also encourages those that are capable to try to use their own words when ever they felt. [Journal extract: 03/11/05-Year 11]

This journal extract is part of the compelling evidence that the reforms introduced with the intention of enhancing learning and achievements may be having adverse effects of being self-defeating. Success in these tests does not constitute high intellectual competence since the only way children can be empowered is through actively formally teaching the skills needed to prepare for life outside formal schooling and examinations.

Another extract shows the same pattern.

If you are asked to write an anecdote, ask your self, what do I think is happening? What do I think children will say? What sort of questions will children ask? Think about the comments you will write when you are asked to... [Journal extract: Year 9, 10/11/05]

Tinto [1993] contends that, high stakes testing and accountability causes teachers to: teach to the test, narrow the curriculum, cheat, and exclude students [who are usually poor, from

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minority backgrounds, English Language Learners, and/or special education students] from participating in tests to artificially boost test scores. My observations attest to Tinto's [1993] conceptualisations as further analysis of other extracts from Year 9 class suggest. A model similar to the constructs of accountability which denied pupils the much needed 'mediated learning experience' and [Feuerstein et al., 1980], 'active contraction and scaffolding, that is needed in order to propel students to find their own sense of learning independence and success' [Vygotsky, 1988] were a common experience.

According to social constructivists, children need to be taught to think for themselves through discussion as the foundation for thinking skills; by sharing ideas and reasoning collaboratively in a community of inquiry. Thus, according to De Corte [1990], pupils need 'powerful learning environments' where 'learning experiences which promote higher order thinking and transfer of learning to new contexts...learning environments characterised by a good balance between discovery learning and personal exploration on one hand and systematic instruction and guidance on the other...' [p.12]. High quality learning and thinking demand more than the transmission of facts and routine application of familiar procedures prevalent in coaching and rote learning.

According to De Corte [1990], there are a number of factors that are influential in successful learning. Learners need thinking vocabulary, need to observe an expert performing the task [modelling], need to be given hints and feedback on their on performance [coaching]; need direct support in the early stages of learning a task [scaffolding] before moving gradually towards self-regulation and autonomy [teacher fading]; and need the opportunity to articulate their cognitive and metacognitive strategies and to make comparisons with other learners [reflection]. Thus, pupils are given access not only to the conceptual and factual knowledge, but also the tacit and implicit knowledge of the expert performer [De Corte, 1990].

However, evidence revealed that teachers are struggling to find time to remedy pupils' mistakes reflecting on the pressure exerted by accountability oriented approach to excellence.

I think most of us do make time, particularly in Year nine where we have pressure of SATs as well as we have several e-m-m, we have reading programmes in Autumn time.

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We are very diagnostic in the marking of that and so we actually look at the assessment achieved and we focus on very particular skills which the student needs to acquire in preparation for the SATs. If there are weaknesses, we may address them very quickly at the start of the next lesson. For example, if they are spelling or grammar points, that can be done quite quickly, if its essay writing and so on, we may attempt to pick up the weaknesses and consolidate learning either straight away or later on in the year. [Interview extract: HoD 16/03/07]

By closely following the National Curriculum which at the moment is not child-centred, makes it difficult for teachers to find time to attend to individual pupils. Thus, the government [through schools in particular] uses machinery such as curricula, as a means to influence the agents [students]. In turn, schools do affect the ways agents [pupils] perceive the world as well as themselves as individuals. Schools are a perfect example of hidden forms of power and control that cut through society. For Jones [1990], schools are used, ‘as the machinery which government could scientifically inculcate habits of morality. The school as an engine of instruction could manufacture a disciplinary society...’ [p.58]. Thus, the school structure deals with the imposition of rules, guidelines and prescriptions for carrying out learning activities. In so doing, limits the number of options available to learners and imposes ways of seeking information, responding and demonstrating achievement.

However, the HoD indicated that the college finds time for struggling pupils although they barely are coping under the circumstances. Claxton [1990] asserts that, ‘if people’s learning does not develop, this is not to a ‘lack of ability’ but the absence of appropriate experiences...’ [p. 35].

We use the National Curriculum level course and apply level descriptors and we also use formative comments...we use the whole air belt really, lots and lots informal, formal formative, formative. We have 12 assignments throughout the year ...seven writing assignments which include reading responsive and three for listening and two dramas in each year 7, 8, 9; and 10 have 12 significant assessment levels throughout the year. In addition we have teacher assessments which are not formally recorded which help the teacher planners and we have speaking and listening levels kept separately in sheets. [Interview extract: HoD 16/03/07]

Externalising discourse and tightly following the national curriculum suggests very little time for teachers’ creativity and pressures teachers to cut corners in pursuit of excellence and recognition. Perhaps it is appropriate here to point out that the HoD’s views are not shared by

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some of her team members with regards to finding time to assist struggling pupils. One concerned teacher acknowledged that:

For some children, it is very difficult to go on to the next level. If a pupil is falling behind, ideally there must be interventions but, we don't have the time ...yet, intervention may be the only way to drive the pupil forward. So, what do you expect? With high levels of deprivation...there are a lot of pupils on free school meals at this school...moreover; some of them come from cultures where active learning is not part of that culture...disinterested students do not value education...many of them are disinterested boys. They lack good role models...male teachers particularly... these lads need an engaging...stimulating curriculum...monitoring. [Interview extract: Ms Bt. 15/03/07]

Such revelations are indicative of teacher burn-out which suggests that all is not well; perhaps teachers have reached boiling or snapping points hence shouting at pupils and adaptation of restrictive stands. Ms BT's statement is suggestive of the notion of 'intelligence that presuppose the existence of fixed, differential ceilings of achievement for each child's development' or 'limits of an individual's intellectual powers' [Hart, 1998, p.154-5]. Her [ibid] statement may also be reflective of practice which will affect children's learning.

Hart [1998] further argues that,

One major consequence is that it creates a disposition to accept the inevitability of limited achievement on the part of a significant proportion of the school population. It makes us fundamentally pessimistic about children's capabilities as learners, and about our own power to intervene effectively to promote that learning, even though we continue giving them every support and encouragement to learn. [p.155]

For Child [2001] such approaches lead to what he calls the 'attribution theory and expectations' where similarly, pupils' beliefs about their capabilities are seriously eroded by self-doubt which in turn affects their self-efficacy. The diminished self-beliefs can lead pupils into bad or challenging behaviour leading to counter school culture and risk being permanently excluded. As a result, these pupils will remain in their family social boundaries. And, by remaining in these social class boundaries, the emancipation of pupils from working class backgrounds stalls, replicating for future generations; a state of affairs that works well for the middle and upper classes, but leaves them to become unemployable, social misfits and the so called low-esteemed wife beaters, child killers and gangsters.

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Boredom and anxiety makes pupils becoming disaffected and disruptive generating challenging behaviour. Misbehaving or challenging behaviour by some pupils was identified as a common feature during participant observations sessions. In some cases, lessons were disrupted causing a lot of anxiety to both teachers and pupils alike. Illeris [2002] contends, 'there may be resistance from the learner's side because the learner feels limited or repressed...resistance can lead to either restrictive or defensive accommodation and to more or less uncontrolled aggression...' [p.114]. This suggests that resistance does not occur in a vacuum and is often triggered by a phenomenon.

Some disgruntled teachers blamed the absence of a clear cut behaviour policy. However, Thomas and Glenny [2000], assert that attention for emotional and behavioural difficulties 'has moved from the child to the school' [p.283] since DES [1989b] emphasis on whole school approaches to discipline. Academics and policy makers advocate the change in approach to discipline with a view of not only analyzing and tackling the child's behaviour, but also to the school's operations and systems which may cause or aggravate such behaviour [Thomas and Glenny, 2000].

However, as shown by the following quote, this approach seems to have failed to improve classroom behaviour.

Teaches aren't getting enough support from the system. However, here we get support from each other and the school Head teacher. At the end of the day pupils and parents can take teachers to court while teachers will reluctantly take pupils to court...[pauses] Because of the juvenile status of the pupils, and the fact that the majority of teachers are parents, they will reluctantly take pupils to court...[sighs].

They should tighten consequences and rules for bad behaviour in schools...there are so many disruptive pupils in our schools. Some pupils mis-behave with impunity because they have been clinically diagnosed as having 'a' problem...Teachers spend half the teaching time trying to correct unacceptable bad behaviour instead of teaching those tat are ready to learn...and because mis-behaving pupils go 'scot free', other pupils copy them. At the end of the day, some pupils seem to compete to see who offends the teacher most. To tell you something, I'm fed-up to this [shows her neck]. [Interview extract: 15/03/06]

Although there are no distinctive causes of challenging behaviour, some teachers postulate the absence of esteem in individual pupils. Ms BT elucidates her perceptions regarding pupils'

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self-esteem and assessment. She uses her teaching experience [27 years] as a compass, pointing her to what she says are the route causes for resistance and counter school culture.

Well...[Pause]...Yes, I do believe there is an overall magnitude of teacher effects on student performance and achievement...but, much depends on the students' attitude...really. ...but ultimately...various characteristics of the teachers and their teaching styles do account for some of these effects. I'm thinking here of preparation...content knowledge and experience of cause, [pause] ...but I do believe the onus rests squarely on the pupils themselves...their attitudes towards education... where they are coming from...home and social background are some of the variances.

Counter school culture or resistance to learning and or authority was alluded to as a perennial problem that sometimes engulfs valuable learning time and disturbs other eager to learn pupils. Mr BT argued that the government should first deal with the behaviour problem before expecting a rise in learning outcomes.

To me, school is a vehicle from which these children will achieve their dreams [laughs] if they have any... [Again laughs]. Children come to school to gain knowledge... but, the problem is...some of these students don't seem to want to learn. I try to push my students to do more...to break them from their traditions... yes...some are just caught up in the physical family trap...I sorry to say that, this trend will not break the cycle of failure...parenting, language and desire all contribute to the success [interview extract: Mr BT 09/09/06]

What Mr BT alluded to above, goes far beyond the school capabilities. Family set- ups may be outside the school influence yet; it is the school that is accountable of educating this troubled child. Thus, the structure affects the agent [i.e. the society] which the school is part of [Hollis, 2004].

What do you mean? I asked.

The reasons for disparities are numerous. These people think that dropping out of school is better than staying in...and role models for these pupils are just too few...there are all so some differences in how some families encourage these pupils to learn. For some, the immediate need seem to be more appealing... students don't seem to care much about learning...their behaviour says it all. Well, I belong to the old school...we have to find a way of maintaining good behaviour...that's it. Sometimes teachers are owed by the sheer numbers of badly behaving pupils in their classes. I'm glad I'm nearing my retirement. [Interview extract: 09/09/06]

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For Bandura [1980b], one way of dealing with the problem of counter school culture is by way of building the child's 'perceived self-efficacy' as it plays a major role in regulating behaviour. Bandura [ibid] perceive self-efficacy as one's beliefs concerning what one is capable of doing, and arises from a variety of sources including personal accomplishments and failures, seeing others who are seen as similar to oneself succeed or fail at various tasks. According to Bandura [ibid] persons with high perceived self-efficacy try more than those whose self-efficacy is lower or diminished.

Mr BT's concerns are shared by the British public as espoused by Margo et al., [2006] who writes, 'commentators fear that British youth are on the verge of mental breakdown, at risk from antisocial behaviour, self-harm, drug and alcohol abuse. Worryingly, a disproportionate number of those committing antisocial acts, becoming teenage parents and consuming drugs and alcohol hail from lower socio-economic groups' [p. vii]. Further to these observations, Margo et al., [ibid] contend that, the futures of British people are more strongly determined by their backgrounds and upbringing. In America for instance, Ogbu and Fordham [1981] report that, Blacks and immigrants deal with a great deal of discrimination in the labour markets and in school. From the pupils' excerpts, it appears certain class of pupils experience what Ogbu and Fordham have postulated.

However, Ms Bt, had a slightly different view. She contends that:

The final decider in pupils' results status is dependent on the students' various experiences, past and present...this also includes the effects teachers have on the pupils...also includes the pupils' year to year teachers, their peers and the neighbourhood. [Interview extract: 09/09/06]

Similarly, Mrs S. argues:

I suppose it all depends on the students...really, I mean socioeconomic status of the children, previous achievements and home background etc, etc...somehow, all these correlate'.

However, Slee et al., [1998], blames high stakes oriented education for the pupils' failure to succeed in school work. In high stakes oriented education, where a child is unable to succeed, the failure becomes the student [Slee et al., 1998]. Slee et al., [ibid] contend that this

anthologising move ‘the school –its organisation, curriculum, preferred pedagogy and attitude toward difference-out of the diagnostic frame [p.102]

7.4. Teachers’ Perceptions on Self-Esteem

The second phase of the interviews focused on teachers’ perceptions regarding the importance of self-esteem on pupils’ learning. This phase was deemed important as it aimed at establishing teachers’ views and or influences on pupils’ performance and morale in learning. It was vital in assessing the affects of formal and informal assessment on pupils’ self-esteem as there were no conclusive outcomes from questionnaires and earlier interviews.

While Claxton, [1990] apporitions failure to achieve to attribution theory, the majority of participant teachers blamed lack of self esteem on pupils and thus tended to blame the contemporary victims. Shifting the blame in this manner amounts to denial of the existence of the problem, unlike, Claxton [ibid] who argues:

If I think that my failure is due to lack of effort, I am crediting myself with the capability or the resources to do better. If I think that it is due to lack of ability, then I have no control, and trying to understand will be waste of time. And if I put it down to luck, then I might as well carry on in the same old way, waiting for my luck to change. [p134]

From Claxton’s [1990] quotation above, it shows that the individual has internal ‘Locus of Control’ which is a component of self-esteem [Branden 2006]. Covington [2000] contends self-worth refers to an individual’s positive appraisal of their personal value in terms of how competent they appear to others in achievement situations. Thus, is therefore closely related to the concepts of self-esteem and self-respect [ibid].

Similarly, from the quotation below, Kazantzakis [1952] reveals clearly why some personal preferences for understanding new information need be the core of learning.

‘Everything, men, animals, trees, stars, we are all one substance involved in the same terrible struggle. What struggle? ...Turning matter into spirit.’ Zorba Scratched his head [and said] ‘I’ve got a thick skull boss; I don’t grasp these things easily. Ah, if only you could dance all that you’ve said, then I’d understand...or if you could tell me all that in a story, boss.’

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Kazantzakis's [ibid] observation, does not appear seminal now but, the point being highlighted here is the same failure to cater for the modern 'Zorbas' in English schools. For Zorba, viewing and listening are both acceptable to him, but prefers realm, abstractions concretised and ideas presented through actions. Little can be said about the provisions of such 'luxuries' in English and Welsh schools today; because of the dire need to succeed at external examinations, 'the end determines the means'.

However, the interviewed teachers had varying definitions of self-esteem and understanding. The following are arguments put forward by various participant teachers. All but one attributed lack of self-esteem to pupils' resistance or counter school cultures and or poor performances in school work. The teachers' perceptions are made known to individual pupils. Thus many of the interactions with these students have negative connotations and potentially lead to poor student academic and social performance. In short, it seems that schools now blame the contemporary victims of the system. This however, goes to show the ways that society institutionally regulates 'school achievement' which tends to limit students' creativity. For instance, I find it difficult to find reason in how high-stakes testing and the practices that go along with it [minus support service to assist struggling pupils] seek to normalize students behaviourally and academically.

Conversely, there are pupils who have developed a phobia for learning, who, according to Covington [2000], give up trying in order to protect self-worth. These pupils develop a state of learned helplessness [Seligman, 1975]. Helplessness manifests when failure is unexpected [non-contingent] and is perceived as resulting from uncontrollable events. But, when helplessness is generalized from a single non-contingent experience to other experiences in which events were in fact controllable, it becomes learned. Thus, causal attributions are central to the theory of learned helplessness [ibid]. The following excerpts suggest manifestation of the learned helplessness.

In addition, to the above observations, Vygotsky [1978] believes social environmental are crucial determinants in the success of pupils' learning. He however argues that cognitive processes and factors in the cultural and social environment are not independent; one cannot

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separate the individual from the context. Thus, Vygotsky [ibid] argues that the cultural and historical context of individuals plays a significant role in guiding the development of their belief systems. It follows therefore that individual meaning making is influenced not only by the cultural and social-historical context, but by the social interactions through which meaning is negotiated, as well as the individual's cognitive capacity. Thus according to Vygotsky [1978], the cultural context shapes children's thinking and ultimately plays a crucial role in determining the content as well as the nature of meaning making.

However, when it comes to pupils' successes and underachieving, Mrs P. has a different perspective. She postulates that the onus to fail or succeed rests with the pupils themselves and on their attitudes towards education. Thus, '...barriers to success are seen as personal rather than social' [MacLeod, 1987, p. 79]. Thus, the tendency to place the burden of students' underachievement on the students themselves is evident in the following excerpt from Mrs P.

To me, pupils who always appear disinterested in school work ...are not able to cope with the work and cover their difficulties by an air of disinterest...these pupils don't value education because they fail to identify their role in it. There is need to introduce programmes of work outside the regular curriculum so that students can catch up and achieve a level at which they can access the normal curriculum...Such programmes as thinking skills can help the struggling pupils...With high self esteem, a great deal can be achieved and vice-versa...I believe that low self-esteem leads to a lack of belief in one's own abilities. [

Mrs P. said her understanding of self-esteem is; 'A person's right to feel comfortable and valued in whatever they may find themselves in'. There are problems with such a definition as self-esteem goes further than feeling comfortable and valued. My perception is that self-esteem should not be affected by the absence of comfort and value but rather by the absence of competence.

Ms K espouses that, pupils who always appear disinterested in school work:

...usually don't believe they can do it. They suffer from low self-esteem...some of them seem to value education...they see it as nice but inaccessible...we need to be mentoring, introduce self-esteem training...and rewards. I believe self-esteem to be ...a belief in ones talents and abilities and belief that others believe in you.

Ms S. felt that pupils who appear to be disinterested in school work:

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Do not have any understanding of the importance of their education to their future lives... [Pause] I do not believe that they value education strongly at all. There is need to make them aware that they need to work hard now to achieve what they want to achieve in life...perhaps...listen to former pupils who regret messing around at school. If pupils have self-esteem in that they believe that they can do well in life, then they are automatically encouraged to work harder...the confident pupils [pause]...who know what they want out of life, tend to work harder. Self-esteem is a belief that you yourself and what you are doing is worthwhile... Self-worth, ability to achieve in terms of laurels

Nonetheless, there was no evidence to suggest that the participant pupils do not want to learn, regardless of anti-school culture they demonstrated. Data findings suggest that the participant pupils are aware of their strengths and deficiencies in their teachers and fellow pupils. Even within a punitive school environment and a pervasive culture of low expectations, these children overwhelmingly wanted teachers to treat them well, help them learn. 'I want to be a footballer' said B1...'I want to be a businessman' said B2. Thus, these boys know their chosen destinations; all they want is assistance to reach it.

Thus, the findings of this research study compel the education authorities to focus less on statistics of failures perceived especially of African-Caribbean children and more on why they are failing and the importance of high-quality classroom settings and teachers to help improve educational outcomes.

Nonetheless, Hart [1997] argues: '...there will be many whose relatively poor performance in school matches a low score on the test, thereby appearing to conform the original prediction rather than triggering concern and active intervention' [p. 154]. But, the HoD had a different perspective to Ms S's argument and seems to support Hart's [ibid] contentions. The HoD acknowledges that teacher input affects pupil performances and argues:

Well... [Pause] yes, I do believe there is an overall magnitude of teacher effects on students' performance and achievement...but, much depends on the students' attitude...really. ...but ultimately...various characteristics of the teachers and their teaching styles do account for some of these effects. I'm thinking here of preparation...content knowledge and experience of cause, [pause] ...but I do believe the onus rests squarely on the pupils themselves...their attitudes towards education... where they are coming from...home and social background are some of the variances.

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It must be remembered however, that when students engage with learning, personal factors [e.g., information processing] and situational factors [e.g., teacher's feedback] provide them with cues about their performance and skills. Positive evaluation works as motivation which enhances their self-efficacy. But negative evaluation, may not necessarily lessen motivation or self-efficacy, provided they believe that putting in more effort or using different strategies will lead to better performance.

Mrs Kh. believes that there are various for pupils to be disinterested in learning but singled out a few. She argues:

...Schools are not the write place for some students and...Sometimes teaching after home influence...these pupils do not see value in education...at all.

Mrs Kh alluded to suggesting that there was need for radical changes:

In my view, there should be appropriate parenting...appropriate discipline...appropriate curriculum... and societal change. I have no doubt about the importance of the concept of self-esteem...it is however, over used and a mis-used term. Some students have over inflated sense of self-worth though...if genuinely low, they need help...but I feel it has now become an excuse...and, over used in education. Well, I define self-esteem as difference between perception of self and reality...

Mrs Kh's views about failing pupils are shared by Slee et al., [1998] who argue:

By substituting 'teacher' for 'child', the current culture of redemption aims to save the teacher for society and to rescue society through the teacher...Competence, achievement, deliverance and salvation are promised to present-day teachers who are 'named and blamed' for the failings of decades of inadequate education recipes and policies [p.23].

Ms S argues that she believes pupils have a wrong conception of self-esteem. Although there is no empirical evidence to back up her claims, she contends that:

Their understanding of what self-esteem is... [Pause]- is ability to stand for own rights...pupils seem to think that self-esteem and pupils' rights are one and the same thing. What do you mean? ...They seem to think that self-esteem is being defensive... [Pause] ability to resist authority...to do what they want and be able to defend the action...that affects their behaviour...they seem to think it's about confidence, ability to believe in one's self whether right or wrong.

Some teachers felt that lower motivation was a factor in pupils showing disinterest in learning. This observation could be particularly true since motivation is one factor known to affect

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pupils' learning either positively or negatively. Stern [1983] argues, 'learners who have positive attitudes learn more, but also, learners who learn well acquire positive attitudes' [p. 396]. Thus, teachers' attitudes towards pupils and the scaffolding they bring into their classes appear to build pupils' trust of their teachers, their own competence and self images. Another teacher, Mr BT shared similar sentiments.

Motivation is lower in students with low self esteem, hence peer assessment may not be appropriate for such pupils...and self assessment helps because students can see where they need to improve...I would question their home life and see whether or not parents are a factor in this. I would also look at their KS2/KS3 data...Behaviour is one factor...—more significantly—for the boys...this can have a dramatic impact on results at KS4. [Mr BT., 09/09/06].

Thompson [2001] contends that, a major component of successfully achieving high self-esteem is that of maintaining a thread of meaning to one's life- having targets to aim for and goals to achieve. This appears to be a tall order for a child coming from a community where anti school culture is prevalent and knows no one who has benefited from education within the community. Closely related to the notion of self-esteem is the notion of dignity; which is continuously tested by always failing to achieve, being bullied and ridiculed, or being a victim of racism and there is very little support to learning at home.

7.5. Parents Interviews

This section of the chapter sheds light on parents' responses to questions that were mainly designed to elicit responses to questions about their children's school, child/children's behaviour at home and attitudes towards school work and parents' knowledge of their school [see appendix H]. This process was designed to augment data gathered from documentary evidence, observations and pupils' and teachers' interviews. The absence of a larger number of parent participants is due to the majority of student participants refusing to have their families involved in the research study, lest they pulled out. I decided to involve students rather than go against their wishes, hence the small number of parent participants.

The data analysis showed that the parents did not really understand the constructs of league tables. However, the general view is that the government introduced the league tables to

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improve school results as well as to have control over schools as the following excerpt suggests.

RQ: What do you understand about league tables?

Parent A:

I believe...tables are designed to give parents a snap shot of how their school is performing...which, in my view is crude...I think it's just the government's way of giving schools unnecessary pressures... As long as my daughter is happy at school...that's the thing that makes me happy. [Parent A., interview: 11/07/07].

Parent B who is a former student of the school was angry with the system and thinks that there are serious flaws in the education system. Parent B blames the system and believes that there are systemic flaws that made her what she is today, 'a failure in life'. She also fears the same fate stares her son in the face.

...As a parent, I want to know what my child has been doing at school...but that's something not possible at the moment. Sometimes, my child comes home without knowing a single new thing learnt at school...

I understand now...it's all down to money...funding...as it was then...and that's criminal. When I was at school, nobody listened... I did not learn enough because nobody listened...teachers didn't have enough time to listen.... I remember this teacher...she taught me from the heart...she was dedicated [pause] I stood a better chance...she supported me as an individual...when she talked, I listened...but...one certain career officer changed my life...he broke me down...destroyed my life. He said to me "you will never achieve anything more than a factory worker". That knocked me back...it made me look very little...and to prove him right, I ended up in a factory...mastered everything that was to be learnt...I could have moved to quality control, but I had my doubts...it needed reading and writing, something that I didn't have. At school, I learnt to defend myself...I stole from the bullies and those who teased me... I set their hair on fire...it was the only way I could get them. [Parent B., interview: 13/07/07].

On examining parents A and B's 'habitus' which underlie the flux of social life through downplaying the role of the agency, Bourdieu [1990], argues:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal! ...most people are statistically bound to encounter

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circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus [p.123]

By suggesting that parent A would be good as a factory worker, the career officer was guilty of presupposing the existence of fixed, differential ceilings of achievement [Hart, 1997]. Further, Hart [ibid] argues, 'using 'ability' as a central organising category in formulating knowledge about children's learning and school effectiveness leads to a curtailment of individual potential' [p. 155]. Moreover, according to achievement motivation theory [e.g. Katzell and Thompson 1990], such remarks by the career officer might lead one to develop beliefs and behaviours about achievement that are maladaptive for learning. Thus, Katzell and Thompson [1990] argue, motivation has been described as 'the conditions and processes that account for the arousal, direction, magnitude, and maintenance of effort' [p.144].

Thus motivation plays a crucial role by making them feel successful, and so can therefore enjoy learning. This suggests that strengthening early academic performance strengthens children's beliefs that they can control their performance. Skinner et al., [1990], argue, 'When children believe that they can exert control over success in school, they perform better on cognitive tasks. And, when children succeed in school, they are more likely to view school performance as a controllable outcome' [p. 22]. Conversely, Ecclestone [2005] argues 'there is a growing perception that the UK has a cultural problem of poor motivation for learning' [p. 77].

By listening to parent B, one gets indications of 'shared experiences' suggesting, as a parent whose school days were filled with ridicule and retaliations, she is likely to advise her children to fight back. She does not seem to trust the system and is likely to believe and defend her son basing on past experiences. 'Parents and carers often disputed the reasons given by schools either because they felt that the situation had been overstated or they did not agree that the circumstances were as described' [Wright et al., 2005, p. 63]. Thus, Wright et al's [ibid] narrative about an excluded girl write:

...maintains that her family listening to, believing and caring for her keeps her focused on success. She enjoys school less now because she is weary of teachers making

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accusations about her disrupting lessons. She is highly critical of the stereotypes that she believes are held by white teachers of black pupils as failing and violent [p. 45].

However, with reference to parent 'A's predicted demise by her career advisor, one major consequence of such notions [of fixed abilities] is that it destroys the resolve in the child's motivation to learn; it puts out the 'candle' and creates 'a disposition to accept the inevitability of limited achievement on the part of a significant proportion of the school population...' [Hart, 1997, p. 155]. The practical consequences of such attitudes are that they affect mostly, the people they are intended to assist. The irony is that these are people from the poor backgrounds of the society, the minority, the immigrants and mostly the black communities. It is also important to note that, while there are issues with the practical consequences, the problem needs to be tackled in its entirety without pathologizing it.

This excerpt is testimonial of attitudes towards the less gifted pupils has not changed over a very long time despite numerous reforms. There seems to be a case of teachers and schools drawing attention to determinants of achievements based on ability and social background. The same attitude prevails today as shown by the irony of legitimate interests to improve results by using counter productive means such as the league tables to measure a school's effectiveness. Evidence suggests that accountability drive clearly limits the teachers' initiatives to improve the educational outcomes of their pupils.

However, under the current curriculum, teachers are encouraged to formulate their own goals for teaching differentially in terms of what they expect the 'the most able', the 'average' and the least able' will learn. I argue here that, on one hand, the idea appears to be child centred as it is aimed at enhancing learning and achievement by all pupils. But on the other hand, in reality, this is a futile exercise as it has the effect of 'legitimising and hardening the assumption that differential attainment is a reflection of differential ability... [Hart, 1997, p. 155]. This too can give some teachers reason to exclude a certain group of pupils based on the teacher's assumption of fixed abilities.

Parent C who is an immigrant worker said her concerns were mainly about her children's acceptance by their new peers. However, she professed surprises at parents' powerlessness at choosing a school for her children.

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...My worries were about how my children were going to be received among their peers? I have asked myself...Are they going to be teased, harassed, or made fun of? Those are the things we are anticipating, but we are hoping it won't be as bad and that these children won't be again...

...if you hear that your daughter's or son's school is not doing well, you get really shocked...if you thought that was a good school... and then hear that this school is not doing well...but as a parent what can I do?... I don't really know. I have two children at school, but the school they attend was not my choice. I have connection with this school as long as my daughters are still at this school...
[Parent C interviews: 06/07/07]

In relation to the above, Grossberg [1989] argues about the impact of culture on identity:

...It's arguably the most powerful determinant of our libidinal and affective lives, where desires and pleasures, joys and pains, emotions and moods are rapidly constructed and deconstructed, promised and withdrawn, celebrated and realized. It is precisely where our identities and experiences are produced. [p. 94]

The parent interviewees showed major concerns of being powerless and being trapped in corners with no solutions in sight. The above parent's comment was directed at the Ofsted Report. Parent C appeared uneasy before she commented further. '...unless they have something more...how would your kids do if you didn't insist they do their homework? Maybe, it's the school's fault...maybe not, I don't know...'

Her ignorance further exacerbates her problems as she cannot make an informed decision. This seems to be a problem of being a minority and an immigrant worker with very little information and choices available to her.

7.6. Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to present a triangulated qualitative dimension of the process used to illicit answers about teachers' perspectives about the importance of self-esteem on pupils. Thus, the chapter dealt with analysis of interviews of both teachers and parents. The results from the analysis provide insight into the teachers' views about the pupils' self-esteem and the teachers' involvement and attitudes in building trust towards student's embracement of learning and perseverance. The analysis revealed a number of interesting findings. There was no consensus on the causes of poor class participation in pupils. The definition and

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understanding of the phenomenon varied from teacher to teacher. This raised questions of teachers' understanding and proper use of the concept of self-esteem. However, one teacher suggested that the concept of self-esteem was just an illusion and was misused. Teachers revealed a number of inconsistencies and practical concerns that emanate from the curriculum, instruction, and classroom management that led to pupils misbehaving.

In summary, the teachers in this study expressed varying perspectives regarding self-esteem and its influence on pupils' performances. Teachers were concerned about lack of clarity in discipline issues. The anti-school culture, racism and bullying allegations represent tensions between teachers and pupils and pupil-pupil interactions within this community college. This tension creates a dramatic situation in which teachers and pupils are seemingly in constant competition about different agendas that claw away valuable learning time. However, some teachers believe that teacher influences affect pupils' performances and behaviour 'Yes, I admit that teacher variance affect pupils' performances and results'.

Parents revealed that they do not have the power to choose a school for their children and this was rather frustrating to them. Due to other commitments, some parents are slow to getting involved in their children's education. There are varying reasons for the delayed involvement that are spread across socio-economic problems to ignorance on what to do and how they could assist. For some participant students, coming and staying in school was influenced by the friendships they have developed. It is only logical to suggest that, the absence of any academic involvement typically leads to academic failure and thus forced departure, which could be seen as a direct result of uninteresting lessons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I draw together some salient points that arose from the analysis of the data that were analysed in the end of chapters six and seven as I answer the research question. In so doing, I revisit findings and issues pertinent to assessment and self-esteem raised in chapters two, three, six and seven in order to establish if these findings can be considered valid and reliable. I will explore possible reasons for these findings and attempt to establish whether there is enough evidence from which to draw conclusions. In seeking to explore and explain the evidence, I will pull together a number of different strands raised by sub-questions in order to establish the findings of this research study in relation to the research question stated in Chapter 1; reiterated as follows:

‘An Investigation of the Impact of Formal and Informal Assessment on the Self-Esteem of Pupils with Borderline Learning Difficulties Learning in Mixed Ability English Language Classes’.

Apart from the main question, a cluster of sub-questions were formulated in order to assist with providing answers for the main question. However, please note that the sub-questions should not be treated as separate entities from the main question but rather ‘salient parts of the whole’.

Sub -Questions

1. How do poorly performing pupils deal with failure, negative and unfavourable assessment comments?
2. How do poorly performing pupils deal with positive praise or comments?
3. What are the teachers’ perceptions with regards to self-esteem of their poorly performing pupils?
4. To what extent do teachers consider the impact/effect of formal and informal assessment and feedback on pupils’ self-esteem?

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5. What are teachers' perceptions of assessment comments and their effects on pupils' self-esteem or behaviour?
6. What is the evidence that facilitates the justification for the use of self-esteem to describe pupils' personalities?
7. Do teachers have a clear sense of what they mean by self-esteem and its implications?

In a bid to find answers to the above questions, the study began initially with participant observations, followed by questionnaire administration and then interviews which were tape-recorded [with consent from participants]. The focus of inquiry concentrated mainly on participating pupils and teachers although non-participant pupils were marginally considered as they inter-mingled with participants hence affected their behaviour [see research design]. Although not so clear-cut, as we shall see, there are some definite strands directly linked to assessment; and some which are directly or indirectly linked to self-esteem. These are summarised as follows:

- a. There were pupils who presented anti-school attitudes/ behaviours by picking fights with teachers and other pupils, coming to lessons late.
- b. There were a considerable number of pupils who felt they were being unfairly and unjustly treated, victimised, bullied and treated on racial lines.
- c. The majority of teachers felt that pupils presenting such attitudes towards education suffer from low self-esteem. However, there are others who felt self-esteem was just a mirage and wrongfully used to describe pupils.
- d. Pupils did not talk of their behaviour in terms of low or high self-esteem.
- e. There was a noticeable trend of blaming the school system by parents and pupils for not being sympathetic to their needs and to who they are.
- f. A trend to teacher to test for some SATs classes seemed to deprive pupils of teacher/pupil scaffolding which they need.

8.1. Discussion of the Findings

In this investigation critical issues arose which are directly linked to assessment, which in turn affect pupils' feelings, self-concepts and their self-worth. These are: the influence of the teacher on pupils' motivation and participation in school work; pupils' behaviour in class; competence and their ability. These diverse findings are either directly or indirectly linked to

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assessments which have a domino effect on pupils' self esteem. These observations are consistent with responses, statements and comments given in response to interviews and questionnaires, as well as literature review findings and the researcher's observations [see chapters six and seven].

When I embarked on participant observations, I found myself falling into the trap of thinking that pupils who shy away from classroom activities have low self-esteem. However, even with my framework and intentions of investigating the multiple facets of the impact of formal and informal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline learning difficulties, I struggled to see any direct link/impact of assessment on pupils' self-esteem. The failure to establish the impact of assessment on self-esteem stems from the absence or lack of consensus and concise definition on self-esteem.

Take for example Beane and Lipka's [1986] argument about enhancing self-esteem. Beane and Lipka [ibid] contend that, in order to enhance self-esteem an individual must develop a sense of their own personal worth and think of themselves in positive terms; that one must also reflect on their self-esteem and the values on which it has been based. These suggestions are problematic since assessment generally may impede on pupils'/learners' feelings in manners that will make them feel bad or down. According to Wells [online], when one feels belittled or feels down due to failure, this becomes a state of low self-esteem. This contention makes self-esteem definition and behaviour related to it problematic.

Nonetheless, conclusions arrived at suggest pupils with learning difficulties face a multitude of assessment related problems that affect pupils' feelings and manifest as behaviour problems. These, presented as anti-school culture in the form of resistance, coming to lessons late, lack of classroom participation for fear of making mistakes and then being bullied, experiencing unwarranted ridicule and racism from peers; feelings of being unfairly treated by their teachers, not enjoying their school days apart from meeting friends and failing to keep abreast with learning challenges [see chapter six].

Some findings have a direct link with assessment; such as teacher affects. However, the same cannot be said about self-esteem per se. Rather, these findings have a major bearing on the

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pupils' self-concept which [Rotter 1954; Zimbardo 1985, Rogers 1959], postulate to be closely linked to self-esteem. For instance, observations noted suggested practices that have a direct effect on pupils' self-concept either directly or indirectly.

Some findings of the participant observation phase indicate that lessons for SATs Years [9 and 11] were mostly driven by desire for success at external examinations. This seemed to be a unilateral drive to improve league table standings for the school, a position that is determined by SATs exam performances of the school. Teachers are forced to cheat, by fielding only pupils whom they believe are ready for the SATs exams and affects the feelings of those pupils left out. Rogers [1968] argues that examinations have become the beginning and the end of education. They are in Rogers' views stifling to the students; and because of immense pressure from the community and the government at large, 'the end justifies the means' in the race to improve league table standing or positions. This has a negative impact on the majority of participants who find learning a little more taxing as they fail to move with the rest of the class.

The resultant outcome is that some participants expressed constant sadness that permeated in the form of resistance to learning and authority. However, problems of resistance appear to be home grown as some parent participants expressed elements of mistrust in the system. Some participants' excerpts are rife with concerns about learning limitations in spite of concerted efforts to improve on assessment, suggesting how it may be that some of these participants move into a state of helplessness. The ripple effects are that some participants, [both boys and girls] presented anti school culture, which lead to valuable learning time being lost whenever teachers tried to solve petty squabbles and by entertaining late comers.

While sometimes teachers struggled to bring order to classroom, some pupils construed their actions and authority to indifferent treatment and lead to feelings of resentment. All this translated into some form of a vicious circle of accusations of racism hate with certain being teachers branded 'racists' by some participating students. By 'racist' pupils referred to teachers who treated them unequally and along racial lines. For Feagin [1996], 'racism encompasses subtle and overt discriminatory practices, their institutional contexts and the attitudes and ideologies that shape or rationalize them' [p. 7].

Some participant observation findings also suggest that sometimes teachers resort to employing punitive measures to contain pupils whose behaviour appeared challenging [e.g. Mrs. Kh's actions]. The punitive measures included awarding less marks as punishment for bad behaviour and threatening pupils with phoning home and exclusions. Such incidents did affect pupils' feelings and self-worth. However, according to Ayers et al., [1995] pupils who display such feelings for reprimands have low self-esteem [see figure 2.1.].

I need to point out that the findings of this study are contrary to Ayers et al's., conclusions. Once again, I reiterate here that I could not establish a direct link between assessment and self-esteem through the use of interviews. However, there is evidence that suggests some participants were unhappy and did not enjoy participating in learning. Nonetheless, in this study there is no evidence that suggests that low self-esteem is 'the cause' for none participation or poor performance in learning; rather, pupils presumed to have low self-esteem seem to choose to be quiet as a defence mechanism. The literature review showed that there are technical difficulties concerning self-esteem [e.g. consensus on definition]. This suggests that low self-esteem has become more of a catchphrase for teachers who find themselves in position of 'blame' if pupils do not do well. Thus, teachers seem to find it reassuring to use low self-esteem as the reason for failure to perform rather than admit that there is a problem within the system.

Whilst self-esteem issues were problematic and difficult to identify, motivational perspectives were easily distinguishable as some events clearly affected pupils' motivation to learn. The participants who appeared unhappy indicated that they were attending school because of opportunities to socialize and meet friends rather than the desire to learn. This clearly shows lack of motivation in these pupils. The school employs a number of classroom/teacher assistances who are meant to help pupils with their work. However, the intended benefactors shunned them as they felt asking for their assistance was a sign of being damn or daft.

The literature search has shown that, proceedings of education in English and Welsh schools emphasize high accountability. This permeates the efforts to improve the gap between gifted

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students and those finding learning challenging. However, this study has shown that teachers are under enormous pressures to produce best possible results for the school. However, this seems to present indirect negative impact on how pupils feel. Thus, these efforts have a potential to translate into systemic neglect of pupils who need help to learn more than others as the end result is that pupils with borderline difficulties are left to their own 'devices'. The resultant outcome is that pupils with learning difficulties are put at high risks of academic failure due to high probabilities of deteriorating into slow learners. Overall, these negative experiences potentially lead to poor student academic and social performance which has a potential to affect pupils' competence and self-worth.

Evidence from the analysis also suggests that teachers expect students to bear significant responsibility for their own success. However, the reality dictates that a large chunk of responsibility for success lies with the decisions and conduct of the teachers themselves. It is paramount therefore that students are treated equally with the same opportunities, regardless of race, gender and social status. However, contrary to this suggestion, data indicates that this is not the case as evidenced by accusations of unfair treatment.

Although this was not part of the interview protocol, participant pupils eloquently and spontaneously brought up this observation. Thus experience was shared as prejudice attitudes or acts of discrimination by the participants themselves. These feelings appear to draw undesired reactions such as anti-school behaviour. This foray of racism accusations has the potential to turn victims to construct inclusive histories of despair and failure in English's public schools. This suggests firstly, that pupils' feelings need to be taken aboard if assessment is to be meaningful to them and secondly, to be mindful of teachers' practices and actions that are largely important in shaping beliefs and initial attitudes.

The findings also suggest that affective factors are worth considering when examining effects of assessment on pupils' feelings. These may need further investigation as they appeared to offer explanations for resistance and anti-school culture. Conversely, Krashen and Terrell [1983] postulate that affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making a mistake and peer pressure exert an influence on learners. Moreover, findings suggest that high stakes education

segregates students and has potential to inhibit access to equal educational opportunities relative to traditional conventional assessment systems. The emotionally debilitating effects of these findings particularly for teachers and pupils should not be underestimated.

For instance, the process of giving negative formative and summative feedback, which conflicts with fundamental values of enhancing and valuing individual ability, has an immediate and enduring effect upon learners' confidences it is easy to blame pupils' self-esteem when pupils fail to perform according to expectation. Thus teachers have the responsibility to ensure only explicit assessment constructs are used because:

Students want to know what the teachers' expectations are, feel they have been evaluated fairly with respect to these expectations, and want the final grade to give an accurate and unbiased reflection of how well they have met the expectations. [Eble, 1976].

8.2. The Implications of the Study

The purpose of this research study is not to make definite statements from the findings, but rather to use its conclusions regarding the impact of assessment on pupils' self-esteem in order to provide knowledge which can be used to facilitate understanding similar pupils, improve learning and teaching such pupils. Thus, this study has shown that pupils in this investigation who presented traits and attitudes which teachers considered to be linked to low self-esteem. However, contrary to this presumption, participants in this study have shown that it is not always the case. For instance, pupils who showed signs of being withdrawn did not participate in class activities were wrongfully presumed to suffer from low self-esteem, as they testified that they chose to do so to protect their self-worth and concepts. This leads us to conclude that what teachers construe to be low self-esteem may be other underlying causes that have nothing to do with low self-esteem. Thus teachers need to investigate these causes by way of exploring pupils' likely attitudes, as well as other affective factors through appropriate activities. However, under the current system where short term results matter most; teachers do not seem to find time to spend with individual pupils.

Since the majority of participants in this study felt they were being unfairly treated, victimised on racial grounds and branded some teachers as being racists, there is need to narrow the gulf existing between some participants and their teachers. Failure to do so has the potential to

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cause pupils to deteriorate into slow learners and eventual self-exclusions caused by tensions and growing learning difficulties exacerbated by conflicts between teacher/pupil. These assumptions become more pronounced especially if there race differences between pupils and their teachers as are the case with the participants of this study were the majority of the teachers are white and pupils are black.

Morley and Robins [1995] postulate that the salience of multicultural education encompasses defining, marking and deployment of the concept of identity. This covers identity and categories of identification such as race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. Wright et al., [1998], note that, 'boys in general, and Black boys in particular, are being excluded from school in ever increasing and disproportionate numbers' [p. 75]. This observation necessitates the need for a closer examination of the interrelationship between 'race and gender' [ibid]. Ironically, the majority of participants in this study and who have a high potential of being self-excluded are black and of mixed heritage. Thus, Wright et al. [ibid] findings have a striking resemblance with findings of this research study [see data analysis chapters six and seven].

The results attest to the observation of the presence of antagonism and a culture of mistrust between teachers [particularly White teachers and non-White students failing to engage with learning]. This observation is permeated by the feeling of sense of insecurity among student participants especially those of African- Caribbean origin some of whom appear to have adapted an anti-school culture. These groups of pupils are seen by the school as being anti-social and a ticking time-bomb, while other commentators have attributed lack of self-esteem as the route cause. However, the concept 'anti-social' is problematic in that it denotes a construct that is a product of culture, context, and unequal power relationships. Nonetheless, questions are generated with the desire to fully understand and comprehend what really is the cause of the so-called 'anti-school culture'. I believe schools have a mandate to cultivate and mould pupils' beliefs and attitudes expressed through behaviour and/or practices.

The findings of this study also suggest that teachers need to be provided with enough time to teacher pupils rather than teach to test which may be the case at present in this college. Teaching to test limits the extent of pupils' engagement and motivation to learning transferable

life skills. Thus, this study has illuminated the dark side of high stakes testing and obsessive accountability trends.

8.3. Limitations of the Study

This study raised a number of issues and questions that may provide a basis for future research. This is partly due to some limitations identified in this research study and partly because of issues and concerns that rose in the analysis but could not be pursued as part of this inquiry. Thus, this section presents a brief reference to the limitations of the study. It recognises the potential value of a mix of methods in ethnographic; qualitative approaches to provide the much needed triangulation. However, firstly this was a short term study conducted over a space of one year. As it was not a longitudinal study and did not allow the researcher to follow the participants across their lessons, any conclusions established do not provide a full picture of the impact of assessment on these participants' self-esteem. A lengthier time and broader inclusion of different categories of pupils would be more appropriate for a clearer and broader picture.

Secondly, data for this study were collected from the classrooms of five teachers and 22 students in five different English lesson classrooms, one learning institution, six teachers, one HoD and one Community College. And, since the study was confined to one urban community college in the Leicestershire County in England, the findings of the study may not be generalised to represent all schools in England and Wales nor elsewhere. A third limitation is that the classrooms studied are located in one particular school in the Leicestershire County in UK.

Therefore, a study of this nature does not allow us to make generalisations which can be applied to all pupils in this predicament since it is a study that was conducted primarily on one community college. Nonetheless, the findings of this research study have some striking commonalities with other similar studies conducted elsewhere although of slightly different nature. In an attempt to answer the research question, a number of assessment issues have been raised that are worthy of consideration by teachers, other educationalists and policy makers in order to make assessment worthwhile learning experiences.

Thus, the study should be regarded as an illuminative one, applicable to other similar contexts. This is because it seeks to identify the needs and attitudes of educators, which could be complex but alike to others in similar circumstances. The literature describes illuminative research approach as one that encourages interpretive human understanding and concentrates on information gathering. The primary concern is with description and interpretation rather than with measurement and prediction. The researcher's task is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex reality or realities surrounding a phenomenon under investigation, in short to 'illuminate' a phenomenon [Brown and Ralph, 1994]. Further to this view, this study applied to a small group within a class, focussed on a particular subject and to a single school. As such, tended to limit or 'exclude studies of educational issues and questions in a broader and at least as important context-that of the school district-community, cultural perspective' Hammersley, [1993, p.109]. Further Hammersley [ibid] suggests, 'the narrow focus , while generating some important knowledge, fails to shed light on the more complex issues that account for much of what goes on [or does not go on] in schooling' [ibid].

This study is restricted to exploring only the views and attitudes of teachers and pupils with regards to the effects of formal and informal assessment on pupils' self-esteem in English language lessons. It does not extend to cover other subjects and aspects in the teaching and learning process. Under the circumstance, it would have been difficult for me as an individual researcher to carry them out with my limited resources and time. Nonetheless, while recognising the weaknesses of parts, it is my belief that it is the whole that gives this study strength. At some stage, the findings of this study seemed naturally true, but this obviousness adds to their credibility [Guba and Lincoln, 1985]. However, any raised and unanswered questions can be used as a springboard for other studies in future.

8.4. Strengths of the Study

On the other hand, the small and specific sample used meant that the research attention was clearly focused and allowed for the exploration of breadth and depth. Also the small specific sample and long time span of the study, allowed for the opportunity to explore the inner life world of the participants. Thus, concentrating on a specific target group resulted in the

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collection of rich data and the qualitative study of one group offers a firm base as means for comparison with other results by researchers studying other groups using similar methodology.

Arguably therefore, data that has been systematically collected and analyzed and which has depth and substance provides a rich base and material for the development of theory. In addition, a relationship of trust that seemed to develop between the researcher and the participants was of considerable benefit to the quality of the observations and interviews. As a result, both the observations and the interviews yielded very rich data.

The data was in turn analyzed in detail providing an insight into the nature of the participants' experience that would not emerge in paper and pencil tests or by observations alone. The participants' trust meant they were willing to give of themselves and share their thoughts, feelings and experiences without fear of prejudice or victimization. This was immensely beneficial to the research as a whole, yielding data of considerable depth and breadth. The researcher kept a balance between creativity and science by maintaining an attitude of scepticism, by way of working forwards and backwards to check if conclusions fitted the data and by following systematic research procedures, which gave exactitude to the study. It must be noted that, conclusions drew from factual evidence provided by participants [see the data analysis chapters].

8.5. Evaluation of the Research Process

This research was designed with a range of methods and a process that allowed spontaneous and unsolicited responses which let patterns to emerge and be evaluated. Thus, a qualitative research methodology was used in order to allow a measure of breadth and depth through triangulation of data. It provides an analysis of various excerpts of conversational interviews selected from a larger corpus of data, consisting of transcripts of two days per week, participant observations that took place during the 2006/7 academic. The researcher selected these excerpts because they were seen to represent critical events in the participants' interactions, conflicts and dissonance that led to the findings being discussed.

Strauss and Corbin's [1967] and Charmaz's [1995] approach was chosen for the grounded analysis of the participants' narratives because it is systematic yet fluid and thus, effectively uncovers depth. During the research process the steps were followed rigorously and in detail.

The research was conducted over a sufficient length of time to ensure that the prolonged engagement and participant observation criteria were met. Coding ensured that constructions were valid and rigorously followed according to book. Wherever possible, checks with the respondents during the course of the study as well as checks regarding the final interview material helped to ensure that the initial data was an accurate representation of what participants said. Thus, I can therefore claim that the research followed the generally accepted conceptions of ethnographic studies.

8.6. Conclusion

This research study attempted to provide an insight into the ways in which classroom experiences, informal and formal assessments shape students' self-esteem. Secondly, the manner in which current theories on similar students might be improved to better reflect the impact of assessment on pupils' self-esteem. Specifically, it reveals important teacher/student relationships and beliefs on one hand and the antagonism manifesting between some groups of minority pupils and their teachers through educational activities in the classroom on the other. These feelings have a bearing on pupils' self –worth both within and without the school and classroom settings.

The results of this research study suggest that assessment systems in place do not allow for teachers to individualize and target instruction, hence do not provide room for enough tutoring; appear to encourage drill method practices and provide less time for critical thinking activities, resulting in an unbalanced and narrowing of curriculum. However, the study did not find any significant correlation between assessment and self-esteem. Nonetheless, some participants showed lack of commitment to work independently and to contribute to lessons for fear of embarrassing themselves by making mistakes. As discussed in chapter three lack of empathy for the struggling pupils as well as the accountability thrusts make it difficult for these pupils to engage with learning. Littlewood [1984] highlights teacher personalities and individual skills,

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ability and motivation, availability of time and resources as well as methodology as some of the factors that need to be considered as influences on learning. Instead, the results suggest that, teachers were inundated by a drive towards accountability thereby unwittingly diluting the quality of both curriculum and instruction.

Thus, this study has shown that assessment is one of the key factors that affect motivation but not so much of self-esteem. Stiggins [2001] asserts ‘teachers can enhance or destroy students’ desires to learn more quickly and more permanently through their use of assessment than through any other tools at their disposal’ [p.36]. This observation can also be true of how pupils feel when they are belittled and are not supported when they find the tough going.

However, Jennings [2000] argues that high standards and state-mandated tests are needed to improve the quality of public education. However, [Madaus, 1988; Corbett and Wilson 1991] postulate that the pressure of testing causes teachers to water-down the curriculum, reduce critical thinking activities, rely more heavily on drills and worksheets and reduce the quality of education. Nevertheless, Corbett and Wilson [ibid] report that testing sometimes has positive effects and at other times negative effects. Further, Corbett and Wilson [1991] suggest that positive effects occur when stakes are high and pressure is low, while negative effects occur when both stakes and pressure are high. Interestingly, according to Harlen [2004] assessment in English and Welsh schools is characterized by high stakes and high pressure, resulting in negative effects particularly for pupils who are failing to keep up with learning demands. The results of this study suggest that the drive for accountability is instilling an urgency of increased anxiety and pressure so that assessment produces negative effects on curriculum, instruction and student motivation and achievement.

Because assessment is characterised by high stakes testing, not all pupils have the opportunity to be successful suggesting, to some participants education becomes meaningless due to failure to achieve. Unfortunately, under such high stakes testing, teachers do not have leeway to individualize instruction. Nevertheless, I reiterate Harlen’s [2004] contention that assessment has a positive impact on curriculum and instructional practices. However, the positive effects on the curriculum are realised when there are less drills and when learning is characterized by

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practice and more emphasis on problem solving and critical thinking. And thus, pupils are rewarded by constructive feedback that tells students that they are successful, which helps to build self-efficacy. Students who feel successful can therefore enjoy learning [Skinner et al., 1990]. It is therefore assumed that an improvement in pupils' achievement and feelings of personal control fosters students' participation, engagement and resilience.

Conversely, for Skinner et al., [1990], children perform better on cognitive tasks if they believe that they can wield control over success in their learning. It follows therefore that when success breeds success, 'they are more likely to view school performance as a controllable outcome' [ibid, p. 22]. Thus, it is then assumed that pupil' perceptions of academic competence and control do predict their motivational interest in schoolwork, either intrinsically or extrinsically. For instance, literature review results indicate that teacher feedback from high-stakes oriented approach can be highly diagnostic. However, evidence from this study has also shown that it denies teachers time to individualize and target instruction, [i.e. base instruction on student's needs and abilities], something that struggling pupils desperately need. It follows therefore that failure to address shortfalls identified serves to de-motivate and give pupils a feeling of failure to learn leading to a sense of learned helplessness [Seligman, 1975].

As a remedial tutor and an outsider looking in, I assumed that the participating students would manifest low self-esteem perceptions. On the contrary, they reflected perceived notions that showed they did not find assessment and other educational experiences per se to be enjoyable, but did not express any low self-esteem in doing so. Nonetheless, if Ayers et al., [1995] criteria for low and high self-esteem were to be used, most of the participants would be considered to have low self-esteem. But, if we followed [Branden, 2001; Emler 2001] the findings do not add up to low self-esteem. In fact, students spoke eloquently about their bitterness over teachers they accused of being racists and also how the school is failing to meet their needs. From the analysis, it became evident that students harboured a variety of beliefs about their teachers and experienced learning and achievement considered to be negative for later positive life outcomes. Their comments consistently reflected a strong urge to protect their self-worth and egos than having a sense of low self-esteem.

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Thus, results of this research study provide an insight into two distinct, yet interrelated issues: the impact of formal and informal assessment on pupils' self-esteem and the teachers' involvement and attitudes in building trust towards student's embracement of learning and persistence. The results indicate that assessment impacts differently to different pupils, psychologically and mentally depending on individual pupils, their beliefs and goals and what they anticipate their future to hold.

The other contributing factors about how pupils felt about assessment are of motivational and competence based as opposed to self-esteem feelings. Thus, according to Ecclestone [2002]:

the complexities of motivation also highlight a need to differentiate between the effects of an assessment model, institutional and structural factors, students' dispositions to learning and their expectations of progression and achievement' [p.45].

This suggests that affective factors are important to consider when discussing assessment and learning which may need further investigation. It also emerged that for some participants, contributing in class activities increases their vulnerability to bullying. However, some participants resort to anti-school activities like becoming class clowns, coming to lessons late and/ or disrupting the smooth running of lessons to draw attention and/or so that they get excluded. Conversely, Henderson and Dweck [1990] point out; if students do not value the goals of academic achievement they are unlikely to be motivated to achieve them. Thus, goals need to be understood, be achievable, be seen to be beneficial to the learner and are valued by them and importantly, that the social and cultural context facilitates opportunities for learning [Kellaghan et al., 1996]. Thus, they comment:

Social and cultural considerations are important aspects of context because they can influence students' perception of self, their beliefs about achievement and the selection of goals...if academic achievement is not valued in a students' neighbourhood, peer group, or family, the student will be affected by this in considering whether or not to adopt academic goals...a student may decide that home and school support are inadequate to help him or her succeed [1996, p. 13-14].

Therefore, I can concede and speculate that learning motivation is lowest for pupils with low success rate, especially salient for pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils do not seem

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to see education as a success avenue. Evidence suggests that, some participant students particularly boys are ambivalent about school achievement, highlighting considerable conflict around assessment issues and feeling pressured by community and the state to attend school.

Secondly, some participants believe that they are not being fairly assessed which becomes a de-motivating factor. These pupils believe that marks are awarded in accordance with pupils' behaviour and on who they are. Thus, some of the pupils attribute poor results to victimisation and racism practised by their teachers and fellow students. For Ayers et al., [1995] pupils with low self esteem have tendencies to blame others. Results indicate that some pupils preferred awarding of marks as opposed to teachers' comments which they either read, discarded or ignore. For them, marks carry a clear message of success or failure as opposed to teachers' comments which are contaminated and are sometimes despised.

Thirdly, because assessment is characterised by high-stakes testing and accountability, not all pupils have the opportunity to be successful in learning as teachers cannot find time to individualize instruction. Therefore, teaching to test appears to be rife hence seem to arouse extreme emotional responses and sometimes feelings of anxiety in pupils who continuously fare badly. This is triggered when pupils compare themselves to each other and reconsider their abilities and competences, self-esteem and identity. In some cases, the same participants testified that they did not complete their home work in time or copied their home and course work from the internet or friends. This emanate from lack of proper tuition and scaffolding during lesson time. The problem about teaching to test is that it modifies performance on tests rather than impart knowledge, skills and pupils' self-concepts.

For instance, in an ideal class situation, students are on equal footing which seemed to be a challenging endeavour. The equality status among students of different abilities and cultures provides a unique opportunity for intense interaction between teachers and pupils and pupil to pupil experiences. It should be remembered that students do not come to school as empty vessels or blank slates, neither do their teachers. They come with their minds full of expectations and assumptions, which are influenced by their cultures, their environment, experiences, memories, goals and aspirations. Thus Trevithick [2005] reminds us that

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...children are not slates from which the past can be wiped clean, but are human beings who carry their previous experiences with them. Their behaviour in the present is deeply affected by what has happened in the past [p.58].

As such, schools can either build on or shatter their dreams and inspirations. Therefore, teachers have an obligation to treat all pupils equally, cultivate, mould and shape every pupil's inspirations and aspirations. This obligation looked suspect as was reflected by findings from this research. There is evidence based on the premise that environment and learning styles positively correlate with a variety of measured learning success in society, such as a prestigious job, high annual income, and high educational attainment. Some teachers speculated that lack of interest and anti-school behaviour emanated from lack of influential role models.

Educationists argue that the teacher's classroom language and attitude and the teaching style influence the relationship between teacher and pupils and how pupils respond to learning. In the context of this study, pupil participants experienced limiting opportunities [i.e. emanating from peer interaction, teacher/pupil interactions]. The government's drive towards improving results appears to be stifling the teachers' efforts to adopt approaches that suit pupils' preferred learning styles as lessons are now results driven and teacher led. The irony is that the system ends up affecting the same pupils it is trying to assist. In teacher centred or driven lessons, the teacher dictates the proceedings [Walsh 2002]. Thus, under such settings pupils are unable to learn in ways that suit their individualism. This has a direct impact on how they feel and value learning.

There are also practical concerns that emanate from curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. For instance, the obligation to treat every child equally is made unattainable by the current demands and accountability emanating from government policies. However, the problems of equity and prejudices remain a hidden curriculum to most teachers, within the classroom and outside as well, who believe that they treat all their students equally, but do not. Even if they have the awareness, the desire and the will to teach with empathetic treatment, they may not know where to start as their relationship with some pupils is filled with mistrust. Sometimes teachers do engage in constructive strategies that attempt to address the cognitive differences by use of assistant teachers but efforts are not exploited by would be benefactors as

they shun getting help from them. It was also established that teacher effects are also responsible for the resistance manifested by some pupils as it emerged that pupils are concerned with protecting their self-images emotionally.

As the evidence suggests, it may be futile to assume lack of esteem for pupils that are failing to engage with learning as this masks what may really be happening to pupils. However, it was evident that assessment and feedback affect pupils' confidence and competences. Evidence also suggests that assessment affects pupils in many ways. Some pupils struggling to cope with learning showed they can achieve if the environment suits their learning styles.

Finally, the intricacy of the findings have been both rewarding and challenging, raising as many questions as have been answered. A picture however, emerged of how formal and informal assessment affects pupils' self-esteem or lack of it. All but one pupil did not bring the notion of self-esteem in the discussion, suggesting that the notion of self-esteem is brought to them rather than being an issue in them. Thus, I make a humble claim here that, the perceived low self-esteem is in the mind of the teacher. What is labelled as low self-esteem could be resistance to irrelevant and patronising teaching as well as priority assigned to peer relations.

8.7. Suggestions for Further Study

This study raised a number of issues and questions that might provide a basis for further study. The limitations identified in this research study as well as issues raised during data analysis but could not be pursued as part of this ethnographic study, are fertile grounds for further research. Out of these complex findings, several conclusions can be made; that the classroom can be a source of despair and mistrust emanating from unjust and unequal treatment of pupils by teachers. Classroom influences and learning experience of the participants and the teachers' approach to curriculum and instruction were dictated by policy rather than by learners suggesting that pupils' individualism were no longer entertained. The correlation between assessment and self-esteem as well as other diverse elements of the study should prove a fruitful source for further research. Finally, the conclusions reported in this thesis are therefore tentative and provide illumination for further work in this area.

8.8. Reflections on the study and some concluding remarks

This last section draws upon my reflections of the research study and some concluding remarks. Thus, this research has highlighted the internal, personal and professional pressures which may sabotage the government's initiative to improve results due to emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability orientations. However, the governments anticipated to provide uplifting effects but may be subjugating and undermining learning and assessment. Thus, this study has shown that the majority of pupil participants in this study [drawn from four classes at one school: see research design], are not benefiting from the current assessment regimes in place. The government's efforts to improve results appear to be counterproductive as these efforts also make it difficult for teachers to cater for less gifted pupils which have a potential of letting such pupils degrade into slow learners. This suggests that there is need to rethink the essence of national league tables and accountability in favour of other initiatives that will not put teachers and pupils under pressure.

The quest to gain knowledge and understand the affects of assessment on pupils' self-esteem will continue as educators strive to improve learning for all pupils. As for this research study, I can only generalise [tentatively] to similar types [contexts] of schools [e.g. inner city, with challenging circumstances] that, the evidence presented here suggests that the current assessment regimes appear to be counterproductive, are exerting unnecessary pressure on teachers and pupils.

Teachers can learn from the literature on teacher expectancy effects which shows that teachers who base their opinions of children's intellectual ability largely on external characteristics, such as race or social class, act on their beliefs in ways that indirectly influence children's performance in the classroom. Thus, teachers who harbour beliefs that poor or minority children are not intelligent can communicate this belief by withholding opportunities to learn. Conversely, Rosenthal [1994] contends that, over time, children treated in this manner may come to expect less care and attention in the classroom relative to other children, and as a result, are more likely than others to underachieve in their schoolwork.

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Therefore the results of this research study and results of future similar research based on implicit investigation of the affects and effects of assessment on pupils' self-esteem might challenge the generally accepted notion regarding self-esteem. In future research, it will be important to use different methodologies to evaluate self-esteem and assessment issues under different settings. These potential studies will further illuminate grey areas with regards to the effects and affects of assessment on pupils' different aspects of self-esteem.

At the end of it all, I ask myself how this research process [challenges and difficult processes] have benefited my own professional development. It has undoubtedly enabled me to develop a deeper insight and understanding of the realities of assessment and its impact on pupils' motivation and self-worth. Before immersing myself into the research process I had some awareness of assessment and self-esteem issues although with a lot of grey areas. Now that I have come to the end of the road, I can look back at the same issues with open and critical perspective of what is entailed in assessment and what its possible impacts are. As such, I will use my acquired research skills to grow; first as an educator and secondly as a researcher to explore further self-esteem issues in pupils in order to extend and deepen understanding. And, at a more practical and professional level, it has given me the confidence to get involved in the initiation of the process and finding answers to unanswered questions in this research study.

8.9. Concluding remarks

Since this research is teaching and assessment based, the findings have a bearing on competence inclination which leads to outcome based findings. The research had a profound effect on how I view research. It enhanced my knowledge of teaching as well as dealing with pupils who find learning a bit taxing. I believe, with the new knowledge, skills and attitudes gained, I have become more competent giving me choices by putting me in a better position to deal adequately with problems in various teaching/learning contexts. As a teacher and researcher, I can now set myself the task of placing the development of pupils with learning difficulties' reflective competencies in the limelight. The practical nature of this research led me to review practical classroom changes and commonly perceived beliefs.

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As a practicing teacher and researcher, I now believe that I am well poised to be practically involved in epistemological debates and stances that underlie currently perceived teaching practices. Based on the premise of the researcher knowledge generated by the research experience, the research enabled me to grow from being a practical theorist to an interprevist. The research process enabled me to shift my stance from being positivist to being an interprevist/constructivist person. I now understand and accept that there are multiple truths, wishing to know 'what is' as well as knowing the 'causes or influences' of a phenomenon.

Now, after conscientious reflections, I have woken up to a dialogue with myself, asked myself questions... 'Why endure this much? What is it worth? Each time I have answered myself 'Yes, for personal growth'. Perhaps much more than mental knowledge and emotional understanding, the rigours of doing a PhD research has been instrumental for me to experience genuine growth in most aspects of my life-mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual. I also found solace in the belief that going through all the hardships required to meet my research goals were worth the effort. The hardships sharpened my thinking and strengthened my resolve. Confidently, I can now say...the long arduous and complex journey.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Forms

Student Consent Form

Introduction

I _____ have been invited to participate in this research study, which has been explained to me by Kordwick Ndebele. This research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral thesis at The University of Nottingham, UK.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to explore the impact of informal and formal assessment on the self-esteem of pupils with borderline and language difficulties learning in mixed ability English classroom setting: from the teacher's, students', and school head teacher's points of views.

Description of the Study

I understand that this study will be ethnographic, [descriptive, not experimental], and that I will be asked to participate in several activities. I will be observed during lessons, maybe tape-recorded [audio] and interviewed. In the interview I will answer questions about assessment for learning and my experience with learning, and schooling and feelings about assessment for learning.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no known or expected discomforts or risks from participating in this study. However, should I feel or experience any discomfort, I am at liberty to inform my teacher, head teacher or the researcher at any time during the research.

Benefits

The students in the study may benefit from the one to one tutorials as well as assistance during lesson times plus one-on-one interviews with the researcher. For more information about this research, I can contact Kordwick Ndebele at 01162737110. For more information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the BERA [explained to me] British Education Research Association or The Director of Research, School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

Confidentiality

I understand that any information about me obtained as a result of my participation in this research will be kept as confidential as legally possible. I understand also that in any publications that result from this research, neither my name nor any information from which I may be identified will be published without my consent. Audiotapes will be handled only by the researcher and his research advisor. Audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or any secure place and then destroyed at the conclusion of the research.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent to participate in this study or any specific activities at any time if I feel uncomfortable, and that I do not have to respond to every item. Refusal to participate or withdrawal will involve no penalty or loss of benefits and will not affect my grades or class standing or prejudice me in anyway. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I have received answers concerning areas I did not understand. By signing this form, I signify that I understand the terms associated with this study. Upon signing this form I will receive a copy. By signing this form, I therefore declare that I willingly consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject _____Date

Signature of Researcher _____Date

Appendix B

PROFORMA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

Please read each statement carefully and tick the answer that best fits your view. Your answers are confidential to me and will be used for my research purposes only.

PLEASE TICK YOUR AGE AND SEX

10-11	12-13	14-15	16	boy	girl

Please tick		Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Won't answer
1.	I find time to communicate my problems or difficulties at school.					
2.	If I have problems I would discuss them with an adult.					
3.	I find it easy to communicate my problems to my teachers.					
4.	I find it easy to communicate my problems to my parents.					
5.	If I have problems I share them with my peers?					
6.	I like my school and am happy there.					
7.	Generally, the teaching is good.					
8.	The school provides appropriate homework.					
9.	I think I am making good progress at school.					
10.	The school is not too far for me.					
11.	There is a good range of activities that I find interesting and enjoyable					
12.	It is easy for my parents to come to my school and discuss my progress with my teachers					
13.	I think all pupils are treated fairly and equally.					
14.	I use the internet a lot to do my homework.					
15.	I seek help with my homework.					
16.	The relationship of the school with the community is good.					
17.	The school seeks the views of parents and account for their suggestions and concerns					
18.	The school has put in place support mechanisms for pupils.					
20.	I have a favourite teacher at my school.					

	Please tick	Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Won't answer
21	I always do my written exercises on time and in class.					
22	I always do my homework.					
23	I find it easy to do my homework.					
24	I always complete my homework on time.					
25	I always hand in my homework on time.					
26	I am always on time at school.					
27	I find it easy to make friends at my school					
28	I find it easy to participate in sports activities at school?					
29	I find it easy to approach any teacher at my school.					
30	I am often absent from school..					

Appendix C

Proforma interview schedule for pupils

Interest and future ambitions/personal desires-----

- What motivates you to come to school?
- What would you like to do when you leave school and why?
- Do you have someone you look up to for inspiration?
- Who is your hero/heroine?
- What achievements has your hero/heroine accomplished?
- What do you prefer to do when you are at home?

Feelings about learning

- What is it like being at this school?
- Who helps you to solve your problems at school?
- Are you offered any services such as counselling?
- What is helpful at school?
- What could have been useful at school?
- What activities do you participate in?
- Which activities do you not participate in at school and why?
- What are your priorities at school?

Judgemental issues

- What do you consider yourself as a learner
- What do you like about your school?
- What do you dislike?
- What is your favourite subject?
- What is your best subject?
- What is your favourite time at school?
- What is your worst time at school?
- What do you find difficult and why?
- How do you view yourself as a learner?
- What limitations do you face
- Do you think teachers are responding to your problems?

Assessment

- Do you know the criteria used to assess your work?
- How do you feel about the way you are assessed?
- What are the advantages associated with this assessment criteria/
- Have your teachers discussed the assessment criteria with you?
- Do you always read the teacher's comments?
- Do your parents get involved in the assessment of your work?
- What effect does a failing mark have on you?
- How would you feel if you did not do well in your school work?

APPENDIX D

PROFORMA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Please read each statement and tick the answer that best fits your views. Your answers are confidential to me and will be used for my research purposes only.

Please tick your years of experience and gender.

Under 3 yrs	4-5 yrs	6-7 yrs	8-9 yrs	10 and above	male	Female

Please tick		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
	It is easy to teach English at this school.					
1	I am content with what the curriculum covers.					
2						
3	There are adequate resources for teaching English.					
4	I have adapted well to the curriculum requirements					
5	I have ample time to teach new concepts.					
6	The assessment criterion is fair to all pupils.					
7	The assessment criterion covers most aspects of the curriculum.					
	I think all children are treated fairly and equally.					
8	I have adapted well to the school environment.					
9	I find it easy to reasonably adjust to accommodate uniqueness?					
10	There are support mechanisms for struggling pupils.					
11	Most children behave well in my lessons.					
12	Most of my pupils are progressing well.					
13	Most children use the internet for their homework.					
14	There is a good range of activities that children find interesting and enjoyable in my class.					
15	The school has a good relationship with the community.					
16	The school seeks the views of parents and account for their suggestions and concerns.					
17	I support the idea of league tables.					
18	League tables affect the way I assess pupils' work.					
19	League tables are a fair way of comparing schools.					

APPENDIX E

PROFORMA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Please read each statement and tick the answer that best fits your view. Your answers are confidential to me and will be used for my research purposes only.

A. Please indicate the age and sex of your child by ticking below the corresponding box.

10-11yrs	12-13 yrs	14-15 yrs	16 yrs	boy	girl

B. Please indicate by ticking the statement that best describes your feelings about your child and his/her school.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. I want my child to attend this school.					
2. My child likes her/his school.					
3. My child/children have friends at school.					
4. I believe children are treated fairly and equally.					
5. I am well informed of the progress my child is making.					
6. There are a wide range of activities that keep my child interested and occupied.					
7. My child is making notable progress at school.					
8. I help my child/ children with their homework.					
9. The school is not too far for my children.					
10. I chose the school for my child/children.					
11. The school authorities consult and listen to parents' opinions.					
12. Overall, I am happy with my child's school.					

Proforma interview questions for parents

A. Background information

What nationality are you?

For how long have you lived in Leicester city?

What do you do for a living?

Do you own the house you currently occupy?

How many children do you have?

How would you describe your educational opportunities?

Which school does your child /children attend?

B. Information about the local school

How would you describe your local/child's school?

Was the school your preference for your child?

What do you understand about league tables?

What for you have been successes associated with your child's/children's school?

What for you have been failures associated with your child's/children's school?

Do you like your child's/ children's school?

What would you say about its proximity to you and your child/children?

How would you rate your local school?

Do you know how your child/children are assessed?

What are your views about the way your children are assessed?

Do you supervise your child/ children's homework?

Are you on the internet?

Does your child or children use the internet for their homework?

APPENDIX F

Teacher questionnaire: [Part B]

What puts you off when marking a pupil's work?

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Does this have an effect on your final grade/mark for that child?

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What would you say is the most important factor in assessment?

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Is there anything you feel should be improved with regards to assessment?

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Are there any issues you feel have not been covered that may need discussing?

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APPENDIX G

Proforma schedule for the self esteem interviews for teachers

This interview is a follow up to the first phase of the research that I undertook at this school beginning 05 September 2005-May 2006. This phase seeks to explore your perceptions regarding pupils' self-esteem. Your ethical rights to participate in this phase of the research are not changed in any way. You are free to decide whether to take part or decline and that what ever decision you take is within your ethical right in research. However, your participation in this phase of the research will be greatly appreciated.

1. What are your perceptions of pupils who always appear disinterested in school work?

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2. In your experience, to what extent do these pupils value education?

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3. What do you suppose needs to be done to engage these pupils?

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4. How important is the concept of self-esteem for you?

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5. In your experience, how does self-esteem affect the way pupils learn?

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6. Upon what evidence is this based?

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7. How would you define self-esteem?

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8. Is there any thing else regarding pupils' performance and participation in school work that you may want considered?

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Thank you very much for taking part in this second phase of my research.

APPENDIX H

don't know if you can trust ^{them} them. If you have ^m money in your pocket you don't tell anyone. There is also a danger of getting in ^{drinking} drugs and ^{drugs} because these would help you to get your ^{troubles} troubles for a few hours.

The causes of ^{homelessness} homelessness could be a lot of things. like ^{fight} fight in the family and you run off ^{from} from home.


and it will not be the ^{same} same because you will not have a bed and room and money. you slip you all not be ~~the same~~.

Monday 2nd September 05

Rules for working in a group

1. List to others - respect others
2. Only one speaks at a time
3. Avoid raised voices (ie shouting)
4. Include Everyone

Community College English Assessment Sheet

Key Stage Three (Years 7-9) 

Name: M y s

Tutor Group: 9.4

English Teacher: Mrs. [unclear]

Unit Title: Stone Assessment 1 - letter

Text(s) Used: Stone cold. Robert Swindells

Student's Comments:

Strengths:

- Targets
- ① to write a properly structured letter
 - ② to write neatly and accurately
 - ③ to show understanding of Stone Cold.

Teacher's Comments:


- ① Add 2 Strengths above
- ② Add another address

Once you stop using apostrophes wrongly, this will be a good level 4.

Effort Mark: Ex G S D P

Level: 4.2

Community College English Assessment Sheet

Key Stage Three (Years 7-9) 

Name: _____

Tutor Group: 8.1

English Teacher: Mrs B...

Unit Title: Fairy Tale Film Study

Text(s) Used: (Shrek) Film

Student's Comments:

Strengths:

I learnt alot about traditional fairytale and characters in them.

Targets:

To have correct and appealing mistakes
To give additional information and detail
beyond what I have been told by my teacher

Teacher's Comments:

A good try, Shazmin. Your work is quite neat but spoiled by the heavy crossing out. You need more practice with using capital letters for names. Your paragraph layout doesn't look quite right.

Effort Mark: Ex G S D P

Level: 3.5