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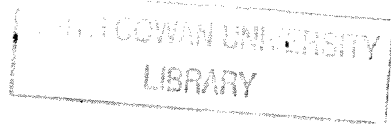
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Student Empowerment in a Primary School Classroom: A Descriptive Study

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Dip.T., B.Ed.

A thesis submitted for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Empowering students to take control to lead functional and fulfilling lives should help them meet their needs for power and belonging, and enable them to realise their social goals. Such an outcome should positively affect students' achievement motivation. However, there is little understanding and research on the construct of student empowerment particularly in the primary school context from the teacher and student perspective.

Teachers have a power-over relationship with students and are in a position to decide how they exercise that power. Teachers who choose to enable student empowerment can share power with students to establish positive forces of power, namely power-with and power-to.

This exploratory research examined the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled. A descriptive study using ethnographic techniques was conducted in a primary school classroom.

Findings suggest that there are two dimensions of student empowerment: intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment, which supports existing literature. Moreover, they build on the literature by indicating that intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of students to pursue appropriate and complementary social and achievement goals through the establishment of agendas. Interpersonal empowerment is the pursuit of goals by students that are not in conflict with peers or the teacher. It is a sense of collective autonomy with peers and the teacher. This research indicates that student empowerment is a fluid and fragile phenomenon, but also one that the teacher can contribute to.

The findings of the study suggest that teachers can enable students to become empowered by sharing power with students. Teachers can share power with students

by facilitating the pursuit of students' agendas to help them coordinate their pursuit of appropriate social and achievement goals. That is, teachers can adopt beliefs and establish structures, processes and an environment conducive to student empowerment. These findings have led to the development of a framework, which describes the variables enabling student empowerment and their interrelationship.

Finally, this study indicates the importance of student empowerment to enabling students to realise their social and achievement goals and meet their needs for power and belonging, thus enhancing motivation and achievement.

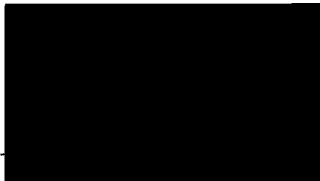
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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I wish to thank the students and the teachers who participated in the study as their contributions provided an increased understanding of student empowerment, which I hope will lead to the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my family, especially Oscar Wycherley who supported and encouraged me throughout this journey. I will be eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports a descriptive study using ethnographic techniques that examined student empowerment from a social psychological perspective. I studied intensively one year-five classroom including the two teachers and students. The study was a response to a need for research on student empowerment, particularly from the student perspective and to identify the variables of empowerment, by examining the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled. This chapter presents the background to the study, outlines the purpose of the study and describes its significance. The chapter concludes by presenting an overview of the thesis.

Background to the Study

The idea of empowerment has derived from powerlessness and the struggle for freedom from oppression and the enabling of communities who are in a position of powerlessness (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1970; LeCompte & deMarrais, 1992; Peters, 1969). Empowerment has also derived from “personal forms of liberation” concerned with self-concept and self-efficacy (LeCompte & deMarrais, 1992).

Empowerment through education has been considered as “liberation of powers” (Dewey, 1916) and freedom (deCharms, 1976; Freire, 1970). More recently, empowerment through education has been explored as a notion of *power with*, that is, sharing power (Ashcroft, 1987; Blase & Blase, 1996; Clark, Hong, & Schoeppach, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992). Kreisberg (1992) defined empowerment as people or groups gaining control over their own lives and the decisions that affected them.

Why should educators and researchers concern themselves with student empowerment? Current visions of preparing students for the 21st century include discussion advocating that students “must be enabled and empowered in the present and for the future” (Maehr & Midgley, 1996, p.21). Empowering students to take control to lead functional and fulfilling lives should help them meet their needs for power and belonging, and enable them to pursue and realise their social goals. This outcome should positively affect students’ achievement motivation and hence learning (e.g. Anderman & Anderman, 1999; Dweck, 1996; Urdan, 1997; Wentzel, 1996; Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 1999).

Many educators are calling for students to be empowered (e.g. Burkill, 1997; Caporrimo, 2001; Coll, 1986; Cumming, 1993; Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992; Portman & Portman, 2000; Schneider, 1996; Stone, 1995; Wade, 1995; Yowell & Smylie, 1999) but there appears to be little understanding and research on the area. There were some studies conducted in the early and mid nineties (e.g. Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Luechauer & Shulman, 1992; McQuillan, 1995; Robinson, 1994; Stephens, 1994; Wade, 1995) but very few conducted more recently (e.g. Davis, 2001; Sullivan & King, 1999). There is also a lack of research focusing on student empowerment from the student perspective at the primary or elementary education level. In addition, there is a need for descriptive and exploratory research to identify the variables of empowerment. The study addresses this gap in the literature and provides information that increases educators’ awareness of student empowerment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of what student empowerment is and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom. A descriptive study was used to describe and interpret the happenings of one classroom to provide this understanding. The study aimed to provide suggestions to teachers on how students can be empowered in a primary school classroom. This research was intended to contribute to teaching and learning research by investigating life in the classroom from both the teachers' and students' perspectives.

I approached the study from a social psychological perspective, which involved a focus on the intrapersonal dynamics and interpersonal relationships in the classroom. My interest was to gain a greater understanding of what took place in a “real” classroom including individual cognitions and interpersonal complexities. I wanted to explore the classroom happenings beyond academic achievement into the social arena. This perspective guided the development of the research questions which were derived directly from the purpose. The two major research questions that were investigated in this study were:

What is the nature of student empowerment, for students and teachers, in a primary school¹ classroom environment?

How is student empowerment enabled in a primary school classroom?

¹ Primary schools in Australia typically cater for five to twelve year olds.

Significance of the Study

Given the importance of empowering students for the present and their futures by helping them meet their needs for power and belonging and enabling them to pursue their social goals, an understanding of the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled is essential. There has been only a small amount of research exploring student empowerment in education. Most studies focused on teachers and there seems to be a lack of research from the student perspective at the primary education level. Furthermore, studies have not distinguished between what student empowerment is and how empowerment is enabled. In addition, there is a clear need for descriptive and exploratory research to identify variables of empowerment. This study was a response to this dearth of research on student empowerment and an attempt to contribute in a unique way to an understanding of student empowerment in a primary school classroom from a social psychological perspective. Moreover, this understanding should in turn enable teachers to improve classroom practice, increase student motivation and hence learning.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 1 served as an introduction to this study of student empowerment. In Chapter 2, I review literature related to student empowerment. Initially, I provide a conceptual framework placed within theories of power for examining student empowerment and then I review literature to establish what is known about student empowerment and how it can be enabled. Then I consider why student empowerment is important by considering social motivation theory. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in the study. First, I justify and describe the research design and then I describe data collection techniques and data

analysis. Finally, I address issues related to the quality of the study and describe my role as a researcher. In Chapters 4-7, I present the findings of the study offering increasing levels of interpretation. I take a more analytical approach in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the findings in light of relevant literature. In particular, this chapter further explores student empowerment in relation to goals and agendas. In Chapter 9, I draw conclusions regarding the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom. Additionally, I draw implications for theory and make some suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review² is to help focus the study and to explore the research and literature that provide the theoretical positions that guide the study. This review considers student empowerment from a social psychological perspective. Initially I examine the concept of power, to lay the foundations for considering empowerment. To gain a more informed understanding of empowerment, I consider early conceptions of empowerment through education. Then I examine more recent conceptions of how empowerment has been defined and described through education in order to establish an operational definition. I discuss how student empowerment can be enabled in the classroom by reviewing research on empowerment, and presenting empowerment as a philosophy and a process. Finally, I consider the importance of student empowerment in light of social motivation theory.

From the literature, I provide an operational definition of empowerment. Empowerment is a philosophy that creates an atmosphere in which individual students are supported by the classroom community to take responsibility for their lives in trying to meet their needs within learning settings. Empowerment is achieved when individuals have power-with and power-to. Empowerment is enabled by working *with* people not *for* people, that is, sharing power within a classroom community.

² An earlier version of this literature review has been published (Sullivan & King, 1998).

Power

In order to lay the foundations for examining empowerment, I consider three conceptions of power: *power-over*, *power-with* and *power-to* that are derived predominantly from Ashcroft's (1987) attempt to define the construct. The issue of power is complex but these conceptualisations provide a framework for such an examination. I argue that conceptions of *power-over* involve negative forces of power, and conceptions of *power-with* and *power-to* involve positive forces of power. I explore the forces of power in the classroom with reference to *power-over*, *power-with* and *power-to*. Finally, I argue that teachers, by the very nature of their position, have *power-over* students and therefore teachers are able to *share power* with students in order to establish positive forces of power.

There are many conceptions of power, but as Common (1983) stated "our understanding of power has been somewhat clouded because of its interchange with other words such as authority, force and dominance, all of which are manifestations of power" (pp. 208-209). Using such words to describe power has led to a conception of power as something that one can have *over* another.

In the interpersonal sphere the conception of *power-over* (Ashcroft, 1987) can be seen as a negative force of power in the form of domination (Clark et al., 1996; Fitzclarence & Giroux, 1984; Follett, 1973; Kreisberg, 1992). Although some people could perceive having *power-over* another as positive to the individual with power, the effect on the other individual is likely to be negative. Therefore, I argue that in a social situation where a person has *power-over* another person a negative force of power probably exists. Thus negative power either takes a form of domination or powerfulness, a situation when one has *power-over* another, or powerlessness, a

position one is in when someone has power-over them. However, Fitzclarence and Giroux (1984) argued that power can also be a positive force.

A second conception of power is *power-with* (Ashcroft, 1987; Blase & Blase, 1996; Clark et al., 1996; Follett, 1973; Kreisberg, 1992) which is a positive force and an alternative to *power-over* in the interpersonal sphere. Power-with is not about domination, imposition, or the control of others. Rather power-with is when “individuals or groups fulfil their desires by acting together” (Kreisberg, p. 85). Moreover, power-with suggests equality in the power relationship or collective autonomy (Clark et al., 1996). Power-with is a positive force of power, as a person who has power-with is unlikely to be in a position of powerlessness or to place another person in such a position rather, he or she would have cooperative power (Clark et al., 1996). This conception of power-with should be encompassed “as a dimension of power in human relationships” (Kreisberg, p. 86). Furthermore, an understanding of power-with will contribute to knowledge of processes that lead to empowerment (Kreisberg).

A third conception of power is *power-to* (Ashcroft, 1987) which is also a positive force. Power-to is an intrapersonal power, when someone has belief in his or her ability or capability to act (Ashcroft). Power-to, like power-with, is a positive force of power because positions of powerfulness or powerlessness in the interpersonal domain are unlikely to result from this force of power. A person with a sense of power-to is likely to feel powerful. Ashcroft stated that “a belief in ‘power-to’ precedes effective ‘power with’” (p. 154) and this order is developmental.

Power-over, power-with and power-to are conceptions of power, which offer a means for examining the forces of power in classrooms. Positive forces of power, that is power-with and power-to, would appear to be desirable and form the basis of what empowerment is. However, intentions of power-over do not coexist with

intentions of power-to and power-with (Ashcroft, 1987). Subsequently, this suggests that teachers who intend to have power-over students cannot also intend to encourage power-to or have power-with.

Forces of Power in the Classroom

Teachers, by their very position, have power-over students. This power-over relationship exists because students perceive teachers to have various forms of social power (French & Raven, 1960; Raven, 1999; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). There are seven social forms of power-over: referent, legitimate, expert, coercive, reward, information and connection. Referent power derives from people identifying with the person in power. Legitimate power stems from when certain rights are accepted by virtue of position. Expert power occurs when a person is viewed as possessing relevant knowledge or skills considered valuable. Coercive power is when a person is perceived as having the ability to punish others. Reward power occurs when a person is viewed as being able to hand out rewards. Information power reflects the amount of “insider information” one has about a group of people. Connection power derives from having relationships with influential people. These social forms of power are forces of power where one person has power-over another. If one accepts these social forms of power exist, then one can assume that students will perceive teachers to have one or more of them.

Importantly, teachers need to choose how to use their power. In choosing how to use power, teachers should consider how it could be beneficial to both themselves and the students. Positive forms of power, that is power-with and power-to, are likely to be beneficial to both teachers and students. However, the question arises as to how realistic is it to expect that power-with and power-to could prevail in the school arena?

Some educationalists have argued that teachers should find ways to use their power that seek to influence students rather than dominate them (deCharms, 1976). Influencing students implies that teachers will affect or sway students without them being fully aware of what is happening. Thus, influencing students appears to be a way of exerting power-over them but in a less dominant manner. Nevertheless, both influencing and dominating students are forms of power-over, which produce powerfulness and powerlessness, and thus are probably not positive ways in which to use power.

Another way in which teachers can use power that is beneficial to both teachers and students, is by sharing power or authority (Lincoln, 1995; Manke, 1997; Shulman & Luechauer, 1991). By sharing power with students, teachers can alter the power relationship from power-over towards power-with, which is a more positive force of power. Importantly, sharing power does not mean establishing a power relationship where students have power-over the teacher.

In summary, teachers by their very position have power-over students. Teachers, therefore, are left to make a decision about how they use or exert their power. What seems to be important and crucial to empowerment is how teachers share power with students to establish positive forces of power, that is *power-with* and *power-to*. I argue that sharing power with students forms the basis of enabling empowerment.

Early Conceptions of Empowerment through Education

Early conceptions of empowerment focused mainly on what empowerment is and broadly on how to enable empowerment. In this section, I consider these early conceptions in relation to power-over, power-with, power-to and sharing power.

Early last century the philosopher John Dewey (1916) challenged education by advocating democracy. Dewey talked about the “liberation of powers” within education. “An educational aim must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs (including original instincts and acquired habits) of the given individual to be educated” (Dewey, 1916, pp. 107-108). From this statement, it is clear that teachers should acknowledge and cater for individual differences. An awareness of students’ needs is necessary so teachers can work towards meeting them. It is important not to “neglect the specific powers and requirements of an individual” (p. 108). Dewey suggested that “education is a social process” (p. 99) and should free individuals’ capacity to grow socially. People should be bound “together in coöperative human pursuits and results” (p. 98). When considering the worth of a social life, Dewey claimed one must see to what extent “the interests of a group are shared by all its members and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (p. 99).

Democracy is a social organisation in which members have the power to participate in the decision-making process thus having power-with each other. Dewey’s call for democracy assumes teachers have power-over students and that they should share power with students. This call for democracy and advocating power-to suggests developing power-with relationships can encourage individuals’ power-to.

Paolo Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator, examined freedom and liberation in respect to oppressors and the oppressed. Freire saw the current education as a banking system using deposits and withdrawals. Teachers deposit information into students and withdraw what they know in the form of tests and essays. As an alternative, Freire suggested that teachers should work and relate as partners to the students. The banking image of education, however, meant that teachers could not relate as partners to students. Teachers would see knowledge as a gift and, therefore,

students could not be seen as partners. The teachers had power-over the students and did not share power with or encourage students to have power-to. Freire stated that critical and liberating dialogue must occur in a liberating education. Teachers should become persons who no longer just teach, but also are taught by the students through active dialogue. “They (teachers and students) become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (p. 67). Freire challenged the power teachers have over students and called for teachers to form a partnership using active dialogue. Freire’s call for teachers to work in partnership with students by becoming actively involved in dialogue with them “fits well within a conception of power as *power with*” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 209).

Freire’s conception of empowerment as power-with assumes teachers can move from a power-over situation to establish an equal power relationship with students. However, Freire did not adequately consider that teachers, by their positions, have power-over students. Teachers’ attempts to establish a “true” power-with relationship with students may not be achievable due to students’ perceptions of teachers’ power.

The concept of two motivational states called an Origin and a Pawn was introduced by Richard deCharms (1976). These motivational states “are basic to personal causation” (p. 4). Origins are people who feel they are in control of their own behaviour and, therefore, can bring about desired outcomes. Origins are likely to perceive that they have power to bring about these desired outcomes. Pawns, however, feel that their fate is determined by external factors out of their control. Pawns are people who experience powerlessness as they perceive external factors have power-over them. The Origin-Pawn concept originated from motivational theory and has “philosophical roots in discussions of freedom” (p. 4). Creating an Origin orientation in a classroom requires establishing rules with the students and

giving the students “all the freedom possible within the limits of a classroom setting” (p. 167). Giving students freedom requires teachers to share power with students, thus enabling students to develop power-to, that is, become Origins. With this freedom the students have to “assume *personal* and *collective responsibility*” (p. 167).

In summary, early conceptions of empowerment centred on power-with and power-to. Freire (1970) called for teachers to have power-with students, the interpersonal aspect of empowerment whereas Dewey (1916) and deCharms (1976) focused on enabling students to develop power-to, the intrapersonal aspect of empowerment. Dewey’s call for democracy, Freire’s call for partnership and deCharms’ call for freedom were concerned with how to empower students, that is, how to enable power-with and power-to. These calls related to teachers sharing power with students. However, ways in which teachers establish a democracy, a partnership with students and freedom for students were not examined in detail.

Many other people from various areas have contributed to a greater understanding of empowerment and the process of empowering. However, I have established some understanding of early conceptions of the construct. I now examine some more recent conceptions of empowerment.

Recent Conceptions of Empowerment through Education

Empowerment as a term has been used in educational literature since the early 1980s. Interestingly, the term student empowerment featured more predominantly in the literature of the early and mid nineties (e.g. Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Luechauer & Shulman, 1992; McQuillan, 1995; Robinson, 1994; Stephens, 1994; Wade, 1995) but less often more recently (e.g. Davis, 2001; Sullivan & King, 1999). Earlier conceptions of the construct of empowerment focused on the notions of having

power-to and power-with, that is power in the personal and social spheres. Missing in these earlier conceptions is the acknowledgement that teachers already have power-over students. Although these early conceptions briefly considered sharing power as a means of enabling student empowerment, other means of enabling empowerment were not considered. Recent conceptions of empowerment have led to notions that the empowerment of individuals is connected to their community and thus sharing power within the community is important. Furthermore, these conceptions propose that empowerment is more than just sharing power and requires a wholehearted belief and approach in endeavouring to achieve empowerment.

Boomer (1982) called for the empowerment of students and investigated ways in which power and responsibility could be shared. Boomer stated that teachers can empower students by allowing them to “exercise their own powers and responsibilities” (p. 3). Boomer’s conception of empowerment is about teachers sharing power so students are able to exercise their power-to.

Ashcroft (1987) described empowerment as personal power, which can exist in both personal and social spheres. *Power-to* is intrapersonal and *power-with* is interpersonal. Ashcroft believed that empowerment should be a philosophy of education. For schools to be successful at empowering students for their futures they need to examine “fundamental beliefs held about the purposes of education, the nature of knowledge, of learning, of development, and of teacher-learner relationships” (p. 151). Empowering is not something that can be turned on and off but needs to be consistent and persuasive. Moreover, obtaining or fostering student empowerment cannot occur by teachers just sharing power, but requires a wholehearted belief and approach.

Kreisberg (1992) examined the nature of power and its relationship to empowerment focusing on the difference between *power-with* and *power-over*.

Kreisberg defined empowerment as people or groups gaining control over their own lives and the decisions that affected them. He emphasised the importance of the community, where the empowerment of an individual was connected to that of his or her community. Thus, the empowerment of an individual student is tied to the empowerment of all students in his or her class. Kreisberg suggested that empowerment is enabled by improving lives of a community and individuals within a community through dialogue and working collaboratively. Individuals can be empowered to take control over their lives and valued resources, that is gain power-to, through the development of social skills, particularly interpersonal and group skills.

Brunson and Vogt (1996), in defining empowerment, also closely related the empowerment of an individual to that of the group structure or community to which they belong. They described empowerment as a growth process of an individual supported and encouraged by the group structure within which he or she is working to promote learning. Empowerment can be initiated by oneself or by others intervening, and is a process that occurs at varying levels and rates of progression. Brunson and Vogt's definition focuses on how to achieve empowerment rather than what empowerment is. The definition states individuals can initiate their own empowerment, however, people are often restricted by external constraints.

Yowell and Smylie (1999), in an examination of how self-regulation develops, suggested that empowerment relates to the development of self-regulation. They defined student empowerment as the translation of a goal into a plan and method of action. Essentially, self-regulation is concerned with intrapsychological processes and therefore highly self-regulated students are probably likely to be empowered intrapersonally, however, they may not be empowered interpersonally.

These conceptions of empowerment address what empowerment is and how to achieve empowerment. They build upon the early conceptions by developing the notion that the empowerment of individuals is connected to their community. Accordingly, not only is an individual's power-to important, but also sharing power within the community is important. Furthermore, when teachers share power with students to establish a more equal power relationship of power-with, students are more likely to develop power-to.

The definitions previously discussed all offer varying perspectives. With these in mind, I provide an operational definition of empowerment as a philosophy that creates an atmosphere in which individual students are supported by the classroom community to take responsibility for their lives in trying to meet their needs within learning settings. Empowerment has both interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. Interpersonal empowerment occurs when individuals or groups work with each other to meet their needs (Brunson & Vogt, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992), that is they have a sense of power-with. Intrapersonal empowerment is when someone has belief in his or her ability or capability to be empowered (Coll, 1986; Cumming, 1993; Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992; Schneider, 1996; Stone, 1995; Yowell & Smylie, 1999) or a sense of power-to. Empowerment is enabled by working *with* people not *for* people, that is, sharing power within a classroom community.

Enabling Student Empowerment

How can teachers enable student empowerment? In a previous section, I established that teachers have power-over students and are left to make a decision about how they use or exert their power. Teachers who choose to enable student empowerment can *share power* with students to establish positive forces of *power-with* and *power-to*. Initially, in this section I review the research literature to establish

what is known about how teachers can enable student empowerment. Finally, from the literature in general, I present two dimensions of empowerment teachers should consider; empowerment as a philosophy and empowerment as a process.

Research on Empowerment in Education

A small amount of research on student empowerment in education has been conducted during the 1990s. Most studies focused on teachers and there seems to be a lack of research from the student perspective at the primary education level. Furthermore, studies have not distinguished between what student empowerment is and how empowerment is enabled.

Kreisberg (1992) explored the nature of power and its relationship with domination and empowerment. The study was conducted incorporating the phenomenological techniques of interview and observation. Six teachers, who were active members of the steering committee of Boston Area Education for Social Responsibility, were interviewed about their experiences of power in empowerment. Boston steering committee meetings were also observed. A theoretical framework of *power over* and *power with* was used. The concept of *power with* was found to be central to empowerment. Kreisberg found themes which included dialogue, trust, voice, assertiveness and openness, shared decision-making and co-agency. All of these can be described as processes except trust which relates to the environment of the classroom. Although Kreisberg stressed “the importance of the empowerment of *both* teachers and students to any movement for educational and social change” (p. 194), the study did not examine empowerment from the student perspective.

Luechauer and Shulman (1992) conducted a study interviewing college students who had experience in a class in which they felt involved in the teaching and learning process. Six themes emerged from the study: (a) students felt they took more

responsibility for learning; (b) students developed a greater interest in the content taught; (c) more time was devoted to all aspects of students' work; (d) the empowering teachers were favoured; (e) grades were accepted; and (f) a greater identification was felt to the teachers and the content. The researchers concluded that "it appears as if the teaching-learning process is enhanced in classes based on a paradigm of empowerment" (Luechauer & Shulman, 1992, p. 9). This study focused on the outcomes of students being empowered rather than on what student empowerment is or how it can be enabled. Although this study provided some insight into students' perceptions at the college level, there is still a need to identify variables of student empowerment through more descriptive and exploratory research.

McQuillan (1995) used interviews and observations to examine how the structure, curriculum and dominant pedagogies of one particular high school empowered students. McQuillan found that the school valued student voice, which included the students having a say on what they learnt, the pace they worked at and how they would be assessed. The students were given much freedom of choice especially concerning their education. The high school promoted empowerment as knowledge, appreciating multiple points of view and a social phenomenon. McQuillan suggested that schools should consider how to promote empowerment using the existing structures and processes. Schools should use a variety of means to empower students because what one student finds empowering another might not. Schools should give students power and responsibility and help them consider how to use their power.

Stephens (1994) used an ethnographic methodology and the Flanders' Interaction Analysis System to explore how teachers' beliefs about schooling affect their instructional strategies. The study further investigated how these beliefs and strategies might empower students to become responsible for their own learning. The

investigation involved two elementary teachers and their students, but it focused on the teachers' perspectives. Stephens only found limited evidence of student empowerment when the students were working together which can be described as a process. Because the investigation was not an emergent design the data collection was limited to answering the questions guiding the research. Therefore the variables of student empowerment were not identified from rich data.

Robinson (1994) conducted an ethnography of empowerment in four primary classrooms focusing on the verbal and non-verbal interaction between teachers and students. Findings indicated practices that are central to empowerment, which included reflective thinking, personal disclosures, facilitating a sense of ownership, and environmental factors namely verbal and non-verbal interaction. Empowering classroom management strategies and structures were not explored in detail. Although both teachers and students were participants in the research the emphasis was on data gained from the teachers.

Using qualitative action research, Wade (1995) collaborated with one elementary school teacher to empower the students by "encouraging students to initiate their own learning" (p. 341). The findings indicated that there are three critical elements or processes to enabling student empowerment. First, teachers should actively reflect on their beliefs and the happenings in the classroom. Second, teachers must actively promote student empowerment, and third teachers should encourage students to have a sense of ownership of the classroom. This study involved collecting data from the researcher, teacher and students, but there was an emphasis on the data gained from the teacher and researcher. In addition, this was not an exploratory study so it did not identify variables related to student empowerment.

In summary, these studies ascertained the importance of a teacher's beliefs and the processes that they establish to enable student empowerment (see Figure 1).

There seems to be a need for research from the student perspective and at the primary education level. Furthermore, there is a clear need for descriptive and exploratory research to identify variables of empowerment.

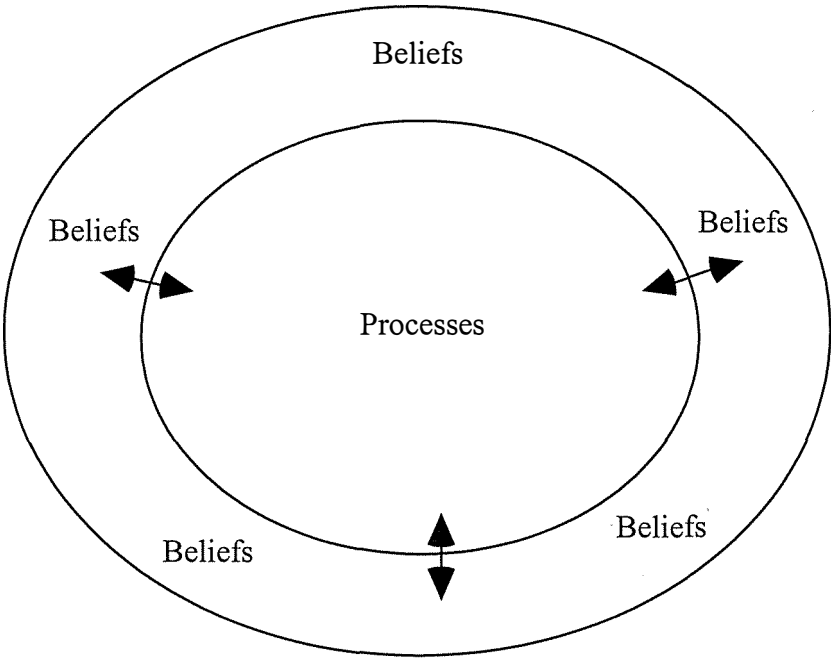


Figure 1. A framework identifying from the research literature the variables of enabling student empowerment and their interrelationship.

Enabling Student Empowerment: A Philosophy and a Set of Processes

From the literature, it appears there are two main dimensions of empowerment that teachers should consider: empowerment as a philosophy and empowerment as a set of processes (Luechauer & Shulman, 1992). Empowerment as a philosophy involves the teacher to trust students and to give them responsibility (Shulman & Luechauer, 1991). Empowerment as a set of processes involves the techniques

employed to empower students. These processes enable teachers to share power with students. Both the philosophy and processes of empowerment are worthy of elaboration and analysis.

Empowerment as a Philosophy

An empowerment philosophy is the set of beliefs held by someone regarding empowerment. These basic beliefs held by a teacher “guide that teacher’s decisions” (Robinson, 1994). Therefore, it is likely that if teachers have beliefs conducive to an empowering philosophy, then those beliefs should guide teachers’ decisions enabling students to become empowered.

Teachers who have a philosophy of empowerment will be in a better position to create an empowering atmosphere within the classroom (Wade, 1995). Cultivating an empowering atmosphere is likely to bring about change from traditional power relationships to the promotion of a democratic approach to learning (Brunson & Vogt, 1996). To achieve an empowering atmosphere many teachers may need to challenge their existing philosophies (Ashcroft, 1987; Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Shulman & Luechauer, 1991). Studies have shown that teacher reflection of their beliefs and practices is important to student empowerment (Cairns, 1994; Robinson, 1994; Wade, 1995).

Processes of Empowerment

How might empowerment occur in classrooms? The literature suggests that the teacher’s role in the empowering process is critical and there are a number of processes which teachers can use in the classroom context to share their power. For Stone (1995), the notions of respect, validation and success were identified as foundations for empowerment. In addition, Stone suggested methods for further empowerment of students such as those that aim to enable ownership, choice,

autonomy, decision-making, responsibility, independence, risk taking, collaboration and self evaluation.

According to Shulman and Luechauer (1991) there are many ways a teacher can empower students. The teacher should share power with the students. The students should be actively involved in learning and not passive learners. Optimal learning conditions should be created and the teacher should connect with the students. Emotions of the teacher and students should be valued and trust given. The teachers should realise that the students ultimately make decisions as to whether they will participate or learn. As motivation occurs from the inside and students make decisions about their behaviour, intrinsic motivation should be encouraged. Facilitating discovery, excitement and personal learning can encourage intrinsic motivation. Teachers should enable students to take responsibility for their own work, give meaningful tasks, develop a sense of student ownership, foster encouragement by peers, meet students' needs and encourage student evaluation. Other empowerment processes include leadership, student voice, decision-making, sharing ownership, cooperative learning and teaching social skills.

Leadership

Various leadership behaviours can enable students to be empowered. For example, teachers who assume a participative leadership role share power with students and “place themselves in an equalitarian position ... by often functioning as one of the class members” (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001, p. 50). Accordingly, the roles of the students and teacher become blurred as the teacher becomes a learner and students become teachers (Kreisberg, 1992), hence establishing a power-with relationship. Participative leaders trust and encourage students to make decisions particularly about issues that concern themselves. Students take more control of their

learning and behaviour. Teachers can also assume a facilitative role and work from within the group or class thus facilitating student empowerment (Cairns, 1994; Robinson, 1994). Facilitators can use negotiation to help enable students to take control of their learning. Teachers who use processes of leadership to enable student empowerment encourage students to take responsibility and ownership for their actions (Shulman & Luechauer, 1991). Furthermore teachers who enable student empowerment involve people, communicate, share responsibility, develop teamwork skills and give recognition (Dalton & Boyd, 1991).

Student voice

Student voice is “the ability to express one’s opinions in the classroom” (Harter, 1996) including the students having a say on what they learn, the pace at which they work, and how they are assessed. Schools wanting to empower students should value student voice (Hausfather, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992; McQuillan, 1995). Lincoln (1995) claimed that before students will express their voices confidently, teachers must be willing to hear and honour their voices and they must believe that listening to their voices will enable their empowerment. Learning to cultivate and express a student’s voice is an internal and external process (Kreisberg, 1992). Voice as an internal process relates to feelings of self-worth and self-confidence in having something to say. However, voice as an external process concerns being listened to by others (Kreisberg, 1992). By encouraging student voice, teachers can share power with students and enable student empowerment.

If student voice is to be fostered, then certain conditions for democratic talk should be established (Johnston & Nicholls, 1995). For example, voices that *put down* others should not be accepted. Teachers should establish an environment where students’ ideas and solutions are valued. Learning should be seen as a “community

interest as much as an individual one” (Johnston & Nicholls, p. 98). A forum for encouraging and cultivating student voice is the class meeting (Schneider, 1996). Student-run class meetings can provide an avenue for students to participate actively in the decision-making process (Schneider) thus enabling the development of power-to and power-with.

Decision-Making

Shared decision-making is an important process of empowerment (Kreisberg, 1992; Wade, 1995). Teachers should share power with students and trust students to participate in the decision-making process. Furthermore students should be able to participate “in decisions that relate to and affect their lives” (Kreisberg, p. 174). It is “by making decisions, not by following directions” (Kohn, 1993, p. 11) that students will learn how to make decisions. Involving students in the decision-making process, forms the basis for establishing a democratic classroom as advocated by Dewey (1916).

Negotiating with students and enabling students to make decisions about their learning should facilitate students to become empowered. Boomer (1982) challenged the effectiveness of the motivation model of teaching, that is teachers attempting to motivate students, and offered the negotiation model as a possible replacement. Boomer suggested that motivational strategies might in fact be “*turning off* the learning power of students” (1982, p. 3). Negotiating with students allows students to gain a sense of ownership which can be a motive because “people tend to strive hardest for things they wish to own” (Cook, 1982, p. 133). Kohn (1993) who said that students should have choices about academic, social and behavioural decisions supports the negotiation model of teaching. Students should be able to make academic decisions about “what, how, how well, and why they learn” (Kohn, p. 12).

Teachers can invite students to negotiate the curriculum, learning style, space, time, equipment and tone of behaviour. Negotiating with students is a way of sharing power, which could enable student empowerment.

Sharing Ownership

Ownership in a classroom is defined by Robinson as “the children’s feeling that the classroom is theirs too, not just the teacher’s” (1994, p. 154). This definition can be extended to include students’ feeling that their work is theirs. Sharing ownership in a classroom should enable students to become empowered (Cairns, 1994; Robinson, 1994; Wade, 1995) by shifting towards a power-with relationship. Robinson found that giving students choices encourages ownership. Additionally, students can gain a sense of ownership by participating in decisions about all aspects of school life that affects them such as their learning and the classroom environment.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is both a teaching strategy and a philosophy (Eckert, 1991). Cooperative learning is not groups of students doing individual work. As a teaching strategy, cooperative learning occurs when two or more students work together with a common purpose in order to complete a task in which every group member is included (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). Furthermore, cooperative learning is a strategy of delivering curriculum and teaching skills of cooperation. As a philosophy, cooperative learning is a particular system or set of beliefs that regard cooperation as a means to establish a community of learners.

There have been suggestions that cooperative learning, otherwise known as collaborative learning, empowers students (Cumming, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Stone, 1995). A reason for why cooperative learning could enable student empowerment is offered by Kohn (1993) who stated that some cooperative learning

models are about student autonomy as students can view learning as something under their control. Cooperative learning might enable student empowerment in both the interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. Teachers who enable students to work in teams cooperatively are likely to share power with students, and so encourage the development of power-with relationships. Furthermore, cooperative learning could enable students to develop power-to because they are likely to be more autonomous.

Teaching Social Skills

To equip students for empowerment, teachers should provide learning experiences that develop social skills related to problem solving, decision-making, group work, communication, self esteem and conflict resolution (Luechauer & Shulman, 1992; McDermott, 1994). Students require these skills to participate effectively in processes of empowerment. Teachers should teach students skills to be empowered and to become empowering (Luechauer & Shulman, 1992; McDermott, 1994).

Summary

To enable student empowerment, teachers should consider two main dimensions of empowerment: empowerment as a philosophy and empowerment as a set of processes. Empowerment as a philosophy of education requires teachers to challenge their existing belief systems especially about power relationships. Processes of empowerment include leadership, student voice, decision-making, sharing ownership, cooperative learning, and teaching social skills. Empowering leadership requires teachers to share power with students to enable students to take control of their learning. Students should be encouraged to have a voice in the classroom, participate in decision-making and gain a sense of ownership. Empowering processes place a demand on students to develop social skills so they

can be empowered and become empowering. Finally cooperative learning seems to provide a means of empowering students.

Summary

This literature review has examined student empowerment from a social psychological perspective. Empowerment has both interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. Interpersonal empowerment, or power-with, occurs when individuals or groups work with each other to meet their needs and is based on equal power relationships. Intrapersonal empowerment, or power-to, is when someone has belief in his or her ability or capability to act. I argued that teachers have power-over students and thus can enable empowerment by sharing power. An understanding of sharing power should help teachers enable student empowerment.

Early conceptions of empowerment focused on the notions of having power-to and power-with. Missing in these earlier conceptions seemed to be the acknowledgement that teachers already have power-over students. These early conceptions briefly considered sharing power as a means of enabling student empowerment. Recent conceptions of empowerment have led to notions that the empowerment of individual students is connected to their classroom community and thus sharing power within the community is important. Furthermore, these conceptions propose that empowerment is more than just sharing power and requires a wholehearted belief and approach in endeavouring to achieve empowerment.

The research literature was reviewed to establish what is known about how teachers can enable student empowerment. Research shows that a teacher's beliefs and the processes that they establish are important to enabling students to become empowered. I established that only a small amount of research has been conducted on empowerment, and that there is a need for further descriptive and exploratory

research to identify variables of empowerment. There is a particular need for research into the student perspective at the primary education level. Finally, from the literature in general, I presented two dimensions of empowerment teachers should consider to enable student empowerment. The dimensions are empowerment as a philosophy and as a set of processes. Empowerment as a philosophy requires teachers to consider their belief systems in order to create an empowering atmosphere. Processes of empowerment include leadership, student voice, decision-making, sharing ownership, cooperative learning and teaching social skills.

This literature review has focused on *what* student empowerment is and *how* teachers can enable student empowerment. What I have not considered is *why* should students be empowered. Social motivation literature, which I consider in the following section, can address why student empowerment is important.

The Importance of Student Empowerment

Guided by a social psychological perspective this study aims to describe the phenomenon of the construct student empowerment. This description includes what empowerment is and how empowerment is enabled. Derived from power theory, the concepts of power-with, power-over and power-to help provide an awareness of the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of empowerment.

Power as a concept is also significant in motivation literature. Human motivation can be seen as consisting of three domains, which provide an explanation for behaviour: striving for achievement or competence, striving for power or autonomy, and striving for belonging or affiliation (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953; Osterman, 2000; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). The level of student engagement is greatly influenced by the extent

to which these needs are met (Battistich et al., 1997). Teachers should consider creating a classroom environment that allows students to meet their needs within the interpersonal domain.

In considering motivation from a social psychological perspective, I focused on the emerging theory of social motivation (e.g. Blumenfield, 1992; Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996; Wentzel, 1999). Strivings for belonging and to a lesser extent power or influence are embedded in the currently emerging social motivation literature. What is social motivation? Social motivation focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal needs of students within the classroom. Aspects of social motivation include students striving for social identities, students striving for a sense of belonging, students striving for a sense of influence, working towards establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, and observing peers exhibit social skills (Wentzel, 1996). Students translate their needs into social goals or intrapsychological processes such as students' voice and interpersonal processes such as relationships with teachers and peers. For example, students who strive for a sense of belonging might form a goal to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with peers. Hence, the intrapsychological strivings or needs are manifested in the interpersonal domain.

Establishing an empowering classroom environment could facilitate enabling students to fulfil their need for power and indirectly belonging, particularly because a need for belonging is linked with a need for power (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Empowerment is about students satisfying their need for power so that they gain a sense of power-with peers or the teacher rather than gaining power-over them. Students who are involved in power-with relations are more likely to feel a sense of belonging than if they are involved in power-over relations. Furthermore, if students satisfy their need for belonging in the classroom and there is a sense of community

then it seems reasonable to expect that they are more likely to achieve a sense of power-with. Additionally, gaining a sense of power-to would contribute to students satisfying their need for power because students would be more likely to be able to pursue and realise their social goals. It is possible that students need both a sense of power-with and power-to to satisfy their need for power.

Although teachers have power-over students, they cannot make them participate in activities or learn, because students ultimately decide whether they will invest “time, talent and energy” in a certain activity (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). Students’ decisions to invest in activities relate to their motives and social goals. For example, students might participate in an activity to gain approval either from the teacher or from peers (Blumenfield, 1992). In a context where the teacher has power-over the students, it is possible that a student who is motivated to obtain approval from the teacher will actually participate. However, a student who is motivated to obtain approval from peers might not participate. In contrast, where a teacher has a power-with relationship with students, both students seeking approval from the teacher or from peers are likely to invest similarly and probably will participate.

Research shows that social motivation and achievement motivation are interconnected (e.g. Anderman & Anderman, 1999; Dweck, 1996; Urdan, 1997; Wentzel, 1996; Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 1999). For example, meeting students’ affiliative needs affects their achievement motivation (Weiner, 1996). Therefore educators are sensible to advocate student empowerment because empowered students would seem to be more likely to satisfy their social needs and pursue and realise appropriate social goals. This study is embedded in the general theory of social motivation and will attempt to identify the characteristics or variables of student empowerment.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the nature of student empowerment and how it is manifested in a classroom. I used a descriptive study using ethnographic techniques to gain this understanding. This chapter presents the research design for the study. Firstly, I present a rationale for the research design. Then I provide an explanation of the design, data collection techniques and data analysis. Finally, I address issues related to the quality of the study and describe my role as a researcher.

Research Orientation

I chose to use qualitative research because I wanted to make sense of the complex world of a classroom. Qualitative research involves studying phenomena in their natural setting to make sense of them through interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This study explores empowerment as a phenomenon in the natural setting of a classroom.

In this study I assumed a constructivist epistemology, and interpretivist theoretical perspective or philosophical stance (Crotty, 1998). Hence, the research was a process of constructing and interpreting meaning. In adopting such a process:

The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to

offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies. (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118)

The interpretation I constructed is intended to be useful more than valid or true (Crotty, 1998) as "there is no single interpretative truth" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p30).

Descriptive Study

I regarded a descriptive study using ethnographic techniques appropriate for this study in order to explore the nature of student empowerment from the perspective of both students and teachers. I wanted to conduct this exploration in the cultural context of a classroom but not research all behaviour or the way of life in the classroom as would a true ethnography (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Walcott, 1997). Therefore the study focused on what the participants said, what the participants did and the artefacts the participants used. More specifically, there was a focus on empowerment. Wolcott (1997) argues that much educational research is generated out of ethnographic interests and that some studies have examined aspects of classroom phenomena and embedded their analysis in cultural context. Wolcott refers to these studies as descriptive studies using ethnographic techniques. Such studies describe and interpret specific aspects of classroom life (Eisenhart & Borko, 1993). Descriptive research is about portraying things as they really are at the present.

An advantage of using a descriptive study where an improved understanding of the phenomenon student empowerment is the main research aim is that the complexity of the construct can become better known. It is not the intention of this study to be able to generalise the findings, rather it is the intention of the study to "build, and build upon, a solid basis of careful description" (Walcott, 1997, p. 347).

Hence, it is possible that the complexity of student empowerment as a construct will increase rather than decrease (Walcott, 1997), but this is valuable in exploratory research.

This study employed a variety of ethnographic techniques. First, I used participant observation and interviews, which are known as the main ethnographic techniques (Fetterman, 1990; Walcott, 1997). Second, I used many techniques that help an ethnographer make sense of data, such as triangulation, patterns and key events (Fetterman, 1990).

Research Design

I conducted this descriptive research using ethnographic techniques in the natural setting of the classroom. Empowerment as a phenomenon was explored, unstructured data were used, one classroom was studied and the meanings and functions of the participants were interpreted and reported in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations. Thus all the features of ethnography determined by Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) were included in this study.

One year five class, including the teachers and students, was studied intensively for five weeks. The techniques I used for data collection were interviews, observations and field notes. Informal and semistructured interviews were held with all participants in response to observations.

In this study I endeavoured to include the students as the subjects of the research and not the objects of the research (Hill, Laybourn, & Borland, 1996; Hood, Kelley, & Mayall, 1996; Mauthner, 1997). In addition, I provided opportunities for the students to express their voice, which is important because the students are the “primary stakeholders” (Dahl, 1995; Lincoln, 1995).

Selection of Participants

For this study, I chose a purposive sample of one primary classroom. I selected the school, an Australian Catholic school, because it was known to emphasise student-centred learning and it was likely that various aspects of empowerment would be manifested in the structure and programmes of the school. In consultation with the principal, a class was selected on the basis that the principal thought that empowerment might be a phenomenon occurring in the functioning of the classroom. Additionally, “Gemma Hanley”, the teacher of the year five class selected, was confident in the implementation of cooperative learning strategies. Likewise, the students had experience with cooperative learning.

At the time of data collection, there were two teachers of the class. Gemma was the regular teacher of the class, but for the period of one term she taught for three days a week. “Mark Church” was employed to teach the other two days. Gemma was my focus for the study, although Mark also agreed to participate.

The class of 29 students (mainly ten-year olds) consisted of 11 girls and 18 boys. Only one student was precluded from the study because his parents did not allow him to participate. I guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to the participants involved in the research and pseudonyms were used. All participants were treated with respect and in a non-judgmental manner.

I obtained the consent of the school via the principal. I explained to the students, parents and teachers, the purpose of the research, the activities that were to occur, how I would use the information, and who would have access to the information. Participants were informed of what they would be asked to contribute in terms of time. I understood the time constraints on the teachers and therefore I negotiated times for interviews with them. Written consent from the students, their

parents/guardians and the teachers, was obtained prior to commencement of the research. Although it was not necessary for me to obtain the students' consent I thought it was important that they were able to decide for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate. The student consent form was discussed with the students to help ensure understanding.

I informed the students of the purpose for the research by explaining that I wanted to write a book to describe everything about their class. Mauthner (1997) stated that researchers should take care to clearly present the purpose of the research. The students seemed happy with my explanation. In fact, the idea of writing a book about the students seemed to appeal to them as they initially showed interest in the names they could assume in the book. I also explained that I wanted to know about everything that happened in the class and thus the students initially drew my attention to events that occurred and made sure that many conversations were taped. Many students wanted to make sure I "got it right".

My study was about student empowerment and the way in which I conducted the study reflected this. I wanted to enable the students to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study and, as already stated, I sought consent for participation from the students. Throughout the data collection period, I provided students with the opportunity not to participate in interviews. Furthermore, I attempted to share control of the research with the students by, for example, enabling them to set the agenda in interviews and discussions.

Data Collection

The data collection techniques adopted many features distinctive to ethnography as outlined by Morse (1994). The study incorporated participant observation, unstructured or informal and semistructured interviewing and field

notes. The data collection techniques that I used in the study and their purposes are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Collection Techniques and their Purpose

	<u>Data collection technique</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
<u>PHASE ONE</u> (One week)	Observations	Record participants’ behaviour in order to extract areas for investigation
	Interviews -informal	Gain preliminary data for areas of investigation
	Field notes	Reconstructed dialogue Descriptions Points for clarification Reflections
<u>PHASE TWO</u> (Four weeks)	Observations	Focus on the areas established in phase one.
	Interviews -informal -semistructured (recorded)	On-going focusing, refining and readjusting of questioning techniques Gain perceptions and conceptions of empowerment Focus on areas established in phase one
	Field notes	Same as phase one

Data collection occurred over a period of five intensive weeks. I went to the school every day, for the full day, so as to fit into the routine of the classroom activities and become part of the class. In preparation for data collection I trialled

methods of interviewing and analysis. Following this stage, I made initial contact with the participants. For a period of five weeks, I conducted the data gathering stage of the research in two phases. The study began by examining the whole class community, then focused on specific details more closely, followed by moving out to examine the specific details in the wider picture. This cyclical process of focusing and broadening (Fetterman, 1990; Walcott, 1994) continued.

The kinds of data sought in this study were primarily related to student empowerment. In addition, particular data relating to the classroom culture were sought. In gathering these data, particular emphasis was on finding out what goes through the students' minds and how they perceive empowerment.

Observation

In collecting data through observation I assumed a peripheral membership role (Adler & Adler, 1998). I observed and interacted closely enough with the class members without participating in the core activities of the group (Adler & Adler, 1998). I participated in the classroom as far as possible as a student rather than a teacher in an attempt to enter the students' world (Hatch, 1990; Hood et al., 1996; Mahon, Glendinning, Clarke, & Craig, 1996; Mauthner, 1997). For example as a class member I sat with the students on the floor or at desks and joined in the activities with the students. At other times I participated as an adult, in staff functions such as Happy Hour and one evening I had dinner with Gemma. On such occasions I was able to develop rapport and elicit constructs from the participants. At other times, I positioned myself outside the class group and refrained from interaction with students and teachers, however sometimes they approached me. Such observation enabled me to record specific details.

I attempted to address the problem of an unequal power relationship between the researcher and students (Mahon et al., 1996; Mauthner, 1997) in many ways. First, I encouraged all students to call me by my Christian name, Anna, whereas students referred to other teachers in the school by using surnames. Interestingly, students called me Miss Sullivan. One explanation for this occurrence is that students perceived I had status or power because I was an adult and I was older than them (Mahon et al., 1996; Mauthner, 1997). Second, throughout the study I made it clear to both students and teachers that I was not a teacher and would not perform functions as one. This was important to help lessen the unequal power relationship because I did not want students to view me as a teacher. I perceived my role in the classroom as crucial to gaining both teachers' and students' trust and to developing a rapport conducive to the study. I believe I did lessen the unequal power balance between the students and me, however I did not eliminate it.

Interviews

In common with ethnographic practice (Fetterman, 1990), I used informal interviews throughout the study with the teachers and the students. The informal interviews may have sounded like casual conversations, but they had a particular research agenda. Particular orders of questions were not asked. Many questions emerged from conversations, and I planned others and asked them at an appropriate time during conversations.

In addition to informal interviews I used semistructured interviews that had an "explicit agenda" (Fetterman, 1990, p. 48). In this study, I established lists of questions throughout the period of data collection, which were a guide to me for covering issues during interviews. I did not ask the questions in any particular order nor did I use exact planned wording. Rather I asked the questions where appropriate.

I incorporated various kinds of questions in the interviews such as experience and behaviour, opinion and value, feeling, knowledge, background and demographic, sensory (Patton, 1990), descriptive, structural and contrast (Spradley, 1979).

The interviews with students were conducted during school at times when the teacher was not addressing them as a whole class. I negotiated with the teachers the appropriate times for interviewing the students as I tried to avoid major disruptions to classroom life. Most interviews were held after recess.

I held ongoing interviews with students and did not follow a systematic approach. Some students were interviewed on more occasions than others depending on such things as the happenings in the classroom. I held semistructured interviews with all students on at least three occasions and up to seven times with some students. Many interviews were held spontaneously. The initiation of interviews with the students occurred in two ways. For some interviews, I approached individual students and asked if I could have an interview and whether it was an appropriate time. Students are capable of deciding whether to participate in an interview or not (Mahon et al., 1996). On some occasions students said they would prefer not to have an interview at that time and so I asked them to indicate when they would be available. Interviews were also initiated when students asked me when I was going to interview them. I usually interviewed them immediately or arranged a later time.

By not following a systematic approach to interviewing the students, I was able to capture much of the phenomena in the classroom. This “naturalistic” style of data collection also facilitated a more relaxed style of interview. I sometimes held interviews with students where they were working at the time. I tended to conduct other interviews in more private and less noisy settings than the classroom, as it was in an open space building and there was a high noise level. I recorded interviews using a recorder similar to a ‘Walkman’ with which the students seemed very

comfortable. I allowed the students to hold the recorder while they were talking to me. In many cases, the students began to take the recorder from me and operate it themselves. The interviews with the students generally lasted between three minutes and ten minutes. The way in which the students participated in interviews differed markedly compared to the adults. Students provided short answers and required much prompting to continue. I was careful not to lead the students in a given direction by using prompts such as “Mm” and “Can you think of anything else?” Whilst transcribing early interviews I noticed that on occasions I asked questions when I thought students had stopped speaking, however I realised that students could have in fact stopped to pause and with time they could have continued. In subsequent interviews, I waited much longer when students stopped speaking to try to ascertain whether they would continue or not. I noticed that the students did not indicate using body language that they would continue speaking but needed to think first. In addition, I noticed that many students clearly indicated verbally when they had completed telling me something. Students ended their talk with words and phrases such as “Yeah”, “And stuff like that”, “and that”, “and stuff”, “that’s all”, and “I can’t think of anything else”. Once identified, these cues were very useful to me as a researcher because they enabled me to allow the students to finish what they wanted to say.

When conducting interviews with students I was very aware of using language appropriate to their culture. Rather than use formal adult language, I attempted to use language similar to that of the students, such as slang. I believe this helped build a rapport with the students and also reduced the unequal power relationship between us.

Most interviews were held with individual students, but some interviews were conducted in groups. I held group interviews if the interview was about an event

involving a group of students or if some students requested an interview together. When I recorded the interaction of students in a group, I sat outside the group to make observations and the students held the recorder.

Many semistructured interviews were held with the teachers. I held ten interviews with Gemma, who was the focus for the study, that took place before school, on a day she was not teaching and on one occasion over dinner. The four interviews I held with Mark were held during non-instructional time or after school. Interviews with Gemma and Mark varied from thirty minutes to two hours in length.

Field Notes

I used three types of field notes at various times during the research as identified by Clifford (cited in LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). I used inscription, one type of field note, which involved jotting notes to remind me of a thought or of an occurrence. Transcription, the second type of field note, involved recording as much as possible as it occurred. Descriptions, the third type of field note, were detailed accounts of what I observed using inscriptions and transcriptions.

The field notes I kept consisted of both descriptive and reflective parts (Boglan & Biklen, 1992). The descriptive part of the field notes included reconstructed dialogue and descriptions of participants, the setting, events, activities and my behaviour. The reflective part of the field notes included points for clarification and reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas and my frame of mind. The descriptive and some reflective field notes were written in three field note books. I wrote the other reflective field notes in a book that I called a journal. In the journal I also recorded areas I wanted to investigate further and questions to guide me in interviews.

Phases in the Study

Data collection occurred in two phases. In Phase One, I focused very generally on the culture of the class. It was a time of familiarisation when I gained an understanding of the procedures, processes and structures that occurred. I also gained an understanding of the nature of the learning environment. The initial focus of data collection in Phase One was on how the students and teacher interacted, how the teacher asked the students to do things, how the students organised themselves, the choices available to the students, what the students were responsible for, how decisions were made and who made decisions.

The first day I entered the field, from my observations I recorded notes, or inscriptions, on a small pad of paper. That night I wrote up more detailed descriptions from the notes. After this, I openly recorded field notes. I recorded the physical environment and began to build profiles on the participants. I described what was happening, the length of time each activity took and whom I was observing. Often I would take time out to reflect in my journal on what I was doing and what was happening. Whilst observing, I recorded questions, thoughts and impressions that came to mind that I wanted to investigate further.

On the first few days, I informally interviewed students. I recorded some of these if I felt it would not alter the conversation greatly. From day three of the first week, I held semistructured interviews. This was deemed appropriate as some students began asking me when I was going to interview them. I recorded all of these semistructured interviews. Towards the end of the first week, I began to identify potential key informants.

Gemma and Mark met on the third day to discuss Mark teaching in the class and they invited me to attend. I taped this meeting. My first interview with Gemma

was held on the fourth day and we met during her time out of the classroom in an office. The first interview I had with Mark was held on the fifth day during his non-instructional time. During these interviews I asked background and demographic, opinion and value questions, and descriptive questions.

At the end of the first week I began data analysis and identified critical elements that focused further data collection. This marked the beginning of Phase Two.

In Phase Two I began to focus on more specific areas established in Phase One including how the participants solved problems, what the students did when they required help, teacher expectations, social skills and behaviour management. I also continued to focus on areas of initial focus in Phase One. The observations continued and in Phase Two I was more focused in what I observed. During the second week of data collection, I identified students whom I thought would be good informers and I conducted more interviews with these students than the others. I found during the last week that I was experiencing what Fetterman (1990) called “the law of diminishing returns” (p. 20). I was repeatedly seeing and hearing the same things.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed in two stages. Some data were analysed concurrently with the data collection and the remainder were analysed more formally when data collection had been completed.

Analysis Concurrent with Data Collection

The analysis was an iterative process, building on ideas throughout the study. After each period of fieldwork I analysed field notes in order to establish questions for further investigation. I transcribed interviews and wrote memos on areas

identified for further investigation. Completed transcripts were read and preliminary coding categories recorded against units of data.

At the end of the first week I read observations and transcripts made at that stage. I began analysing using domain analysis (Spradley, 1979) recording a list of areas on which I decided to focus. This list was compiled from what I had seen and heard.

Formal Analysis

Formal analysis of observational and interview data occurred after data collection was complete. I undertook more specific and conceptualised analysis of the phenomena related to student empowerment. This process of analysis was emergent and categories and themes were not imposed on the data. Although the mechanics of working the data occurred in different ways, the process of analysis was essentially the same. However, for the purposes of explaining the mechanical processes of dealing with the data, the analysis of observational and interview data are discussed separately.

At the end of data collection, I organised the field notes to be able to facilitate access. Initially, I created an index for the field notes, which involved listing page numbers next to coding categories. This served two purposes. Firstly, it enabled me to locate data in context and secondly, it was a method for generating preliminary coding categories.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. I identified regularities, patterns and topics to initiate the establishment of coding categories. Moreover, I sought irregularities. Words and phrases that represented these patterns and topics I then recorded and called coding categories. I assigned initial coding categories to data to test the “workability” of the categories. Modifications were made which included

adding new categories, discarding and merging other categories. Then I clustered the categories into themes or dimensions and verified them with the original data. Key events were identified and used to “provide a lens through which to view a culture” (Fetterman, 1990, p. 93). Finally, Gemma was asked to read the descriptions to verify they contained the essence of her original experiences and whether the interpretations accurately portrayed aspects of classroom life. I attempted to have Mark validate aspects of the study related to him, but unfortunately he had moved from the city and I was unable to contact him. Nevertheless, I am confident that the various data sources helped me accurately portray life in the classroom with Mark.

Quality of the Study

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) described reliability as “concerned with the replicability of scientific findings” and validity as “concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings” (p. 32). Reliability and validity of *all* research is important and, therefore, are discussed in this section.

As my study occurred in the natural setting of the classroom, it is vulnerable to the problems of replication. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stated that “because human behaviour is never static, no study can be replicated exactly, regardless of the methods and designs employed” (p.35). Therefore, strategies I used for addressing reliability in this study consisted of describing my role and status as a researcher, describing decisions I made about choosing informants, specifying the social setting where data were collected, outlining the theoretical premises and defining constructs that formed and shaped the study, and describing methods of data collection and analysis. Additionally, I sought patterns of thought and behaviour (Spradley, 1979) and disconfirming evidence in the form of negative cases (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Erickson, 1986).

Ethnographic validity refers to the degree the study achieved what it aimed to discover (Sherman & Webb, 1988). Spending five continuous weeks in the field provided opportunities for continual data analysis and comparison to refine constructs. The study was conducted in the natural setting that “reflected the reality of life experiences for participants more accurately than ... contrived settings” (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 43). Continual questioning and re-evaluation occurred throughout the study at all phases. I obtained validation from Gemma through a member check (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to determine what was actually meant and whether interpretations portrayed accurately aspects of classroom life. The study is reported using thick, rich description to help the reader understand the credibility of the account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation across data sources and data collection procedures determined the congruence of findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

A Researcher in a Class

To enhance the reliability of the study it is important that I describe my role in the research. I arrived on the first day of the third term and I was introduced to Gemma and Mark at recess time. After recess, Gemma and I talked. When the students returned from their Language (Chinese and Spanish) classes Gemma introduced me to them. Gemma explained to the students that I was there to learn everything about their class because I wanted to write a book.

Researcher and Students

Initially students showed some interest in my purpose for being in their classroom. By the end of the first week I observed:

The students do not seem to be concerned with me being around. They do not seem to mind that I write a lot and they do not read what I am writing. Most students just walk past me now without even looking at me. (Journal, 25/7)

The students quickly began to openly share their experiences and welcome me to participate in their activities. For example, on one occasion during a prayer session the students were required to form groups. Marion, Marie and Sally came over to me to form a group including me as a member.

The students seemed anxious that I understood all aspects of their class and often requested interviews and invited me to observe and listen to events such as base group meetings. Occasionally students approached me for help, although I did not encourage this. Students quickly developed trust in me to keep observations and interviews confidential. I noted on one occasion early in the study:

Some of the students started to chat to me a bit more today. I am trying not to behave like a teacher. I am often seeing students misbehave, that is break rules, and I do not do or say anything. Sometimes some students have seen me notice them. Maybe they are testing me. (Journal, 22/7)

This is illustrated further by an event, which demonstrates the trust students had in me:

I asked Anthony, what Michael and Aaron were doing outside. Anthony explained to me that they often go wandering. When Michael and Aaron came in from outside they said they were playing with ants. They explained to me that they go wandering when they are bored. It is easier when there is a lot happening in the room because people do not notice. If someone finds them and asks what they are doing they say they are just

going somewhere. The teacher then usually asks them to go back to their room. (Field notes, 29/7)

Researcher and Gemma

Gemma and I quickly built a relationship that was based upon respect and trust. Gemma said she was initially aware of my presence but had decided that it did not matter and that I could see the class as it was normally. She showed great interest and excitement in student empowerment. Gemma enthusiastically reflected on her own practices and honestly discussed her experiences, conceptions and perceptions of issues with me. Sometimes, after reflecting on interviews, Gemma informed me of points she wished to add.

Gemma was supportive throughout the study. She was aware of my needs and made continual attempts to meet them. Under considerable time constraints, Gemma always found time to meet with me for interviews. On one occasion, Gemma and I were discussing times for future interviews and she suggested that we go out for dinner or lunch. It was clear that Gemma felt comfortable enough with me to suggest going out together (Journal, 7/8).

On the occasion that Gemma and I went out for dinner one evening for an interview, we chatted for quite a while before the interview about what was happening at the school which demonstrates the trust Gemma had in me. We also began to get to know each other on a more personal level (Journal, 14/8).

At the end of data collection Gemma commented that much of the time she did not realise I was there. She also said that the students never said to her that they had not done something because they had been having an interview with me (Journal, 20/8).

Researcher and Mark

Mark was new to the school the previous term and to the class that term. There was a feeling that we were both learning about the class at the same time. Mark sometimes approached me during class time to make comments about what was happening or even about issues not school related.

Mark did not seem clear about my role as a researcher as he sometimes treated me as a teacher or another adult with whom to communicate. This is highlighted by one event:

The class were lining up outside. Mark remembered something and left me with the class. I felt awkward because I had to ask Michael to stop something as he was physically fighting. I do not normally interfere with what the students are doing. (Field notes, 24/7)

After this incident, I spoke to Mark to try to explain my role in the classroom as a researcher.

I explained to Mark today, that it was difficult for me not to behave as a teacher and that I won't tell the students off or anything unless it concerns their safety. I feel better now I have told him that. (Journal, 25/7)

On one occasion, I spoke to the acting principal and she asked me how Mark was going. I had to explain that I did not want to answer that question because I wanted Mark to trust me. The principal said she understood. The principal later told Gemma about the incident saying that I would not tell her anything about Mark or her. I think this feedback enhanced Gemma's confidence in me (Field notes 24//7).

There were times during data collection that I felt Mark needed “space” because he was trying to establish control using the school behaviour management procedures. On those occasions, I left the classroom until such time I thought Mark had regained composure.

In conversations with Mark, he often reflected on lessons or incidents that had occurred. Mark told me he enjoyed the interviews because they required him to answer questions regarding issues that he had not considered before.

Summary

In this chapter, I have stated that a descriptive study using ethnographic techniques was most appropriate for this investigation because it describes and interprets aspects of classroom phenomenon embedded in the cultural context. I explained the research design and the variety of data collection techniques used in the study, which strengthened the validity of the study. I also provided a detailed description of data collection and analysis, which increased the reliability of the study. Finally, increasing the reliability further, I described my role and status as a researcher.

CHAPTER 4

A DAY IN A CLASSROOM

In this chapter, I describe a typical day in the classroom with both Gemma and Mark. This description was written to provide a clear picture of what happened in this unique classroom and furthermore, to provide a context in which findings are set. I reconstructed these typical days from incidents that really happened, though not necessary on the same days. Descriptions of incidents and quotations of speech from teachers and children come directly from field notes, audio-recordings and interviews. The description begins with an introduction followed by the “typical” progression of a day with both teachers.

Introduction

Gemma and Mark tandem taught a year five class. That is, Gemma taught on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and Mark taught on Thursdays and Fridays. This tandem teaching arrangement was only for one term as Gemma normally taught the class full time. Due to the short time of the arrangement, Gemma and Mark made efforts to keep continuity for the students. Efforts included collaborative planning and Mark made attempts to adopt a teaching methodology similar to Gemma’s. Therefore, Gemma and Mark taught the same students in the same physical environment, however, although Mark made efforts to adopt a teaching methodology similar to Gemma’s there were differences in their teaching. Hence, I describe a “typical” day in the classroom with each teacher to set the scene for the reader.

The classroom was situated in an open space building referred to as a unit. There were four classrooms in the building, one that was empty. In the centre of the

building was a shared open space. The classrooms also shared a wet area where art and craft materials were kept. The unit was usually a hive of activity. Staff, students and family members were often moving around the building and in and out of classrooms. Much of this movement seemed unnoticed by staff and students.

Students in Gemma and Mark's class had access to the empty classroom next to their room and to a covered area outside. In the classroom, students' work was displayed on pin boards and from string, hung across the room. Rectangular tables were arranged into groups and there was a large floor space in front of one white board and two chairs.

A Day in the Classroom with Gemma

The Students Arrive

The students entered the classroom before the bell. Many students stood around talking, while others went to use one of the many computers that were in the unit. Gemma informally chatted to some students and parents who entered the room. After the bell rang and all the students were in the classroom Gemma said, "Right, can we start spelling now please." Paul told Bill that he was to be Person of the Day. Gemma began talking to a student from another class. The students slowly moved to their desks and began working. Julian, one of the lunch monitors, clapped a rhythm, which the class copied. When he had the class's attention, Julian asked them if anyone had any lunch orders.

Spelling

Gemma praised some students because they were on-task. She then told the class that they had until the count of five to start their spelling. Gemma sat on a chair next to the white board.

The students worked towards completing contracts they signed on Monday. Many students were performing “Look, cover, write, check and say” on words they had selected as their word lists, in preparation for when they tested each other on Friday. Other students were completing activities they had selected using the words from their lists. Activities students chose included alphabetical order, short story and Pictionary.

Carl, Jack, Tom and Antonio sat at one group of tables. Jack was completing his word list. Tom, Carl and Antonio were working on activities. This group of students discussed a great deal during spelling, particularly the activities on which they worked. For some activities they required a partner and thus organised someone with whom to work.

Students worked on their spelling for fifteen minutes before Gemma stopped the class. Gemma talked about issues regarding cleaning the room and then asked the students to move next door.

Prayer

While the students were working on their spelling, Michael and David organised prayer. They knew it was their turn because there was a roster for students to organise daily prayer. They planned for this prayer session around the chosen theme of “God”. Michael and David had selected a hymn and two prayers that related to their theme for the session.

Michael and David organised a centrepiece for the centre of the circle. They placed a cloth over a container on which they had candles, flowers and a crucifix. The class went into the room and sat in a circle. Someone turned the lights off and Michael and David lit the candles. Michael began, “We start prayer with the sign of the cross” and then the class sang a hymn. David showed the words of the hymn on an overhead projector and Michael worked the tape recorder. David and Michael then passed a candle around the circle and whoever held the candle said a prayer relating to the theme. Gemma prayed with the students. At the end of the prayer session the students moved to a Chinese or Spanish lesson with another teacher. Gemma recorded the programme for the day on the white board while the students were out.

Mathematics

When the students arrived back from their language lesson, they began working on maths. Four heterogeneous groups worked on different topics. The groups were reading tasks written on cards and making decisions about which task they were going to work on first. There were tubs of equipment on the desks. Some of the students decided to work on their own and others in pairs or groups of three. The students chose how to record their work using their own methods.

Gemma monitored the students’ work by moving from group to group talking to students about their work. Occasionally students approached her to ask questions but usually students asked each other for help. Gemma’s presence in the room was not very noticeable. She used a quiet voice and usually physically lowered herself to the student’s level at which the students were working. Gemma always appeared very focused on the person with whom she was talking.

Students moved around the room to collect equipment and talk to others. When students appeared off task, Gemma usually asked them what they were doing and then talked to them about the activities.

Whilst the class were working on maths, one group of students held a base group meeting. Cathy called a meeting with her base group on returning to the classroom from the language lesson. Paul, Karen, Simon and Cathy went and sat on chairs in a circle in the room next door. They met for 35 minutes discussing personal and social problems. When the group finished their meeting they unobtrusively entered the classroom and began working on maths.

At the end of the lesson Gemma approached Bill, the Person of the Day, and said quietly, "Bill, it is time to pack up". Bill clapped a rhythm and the class copied. Bill asked everyone to pack up and Gemma added that she wanted all books placed on the bookshelf.

The students packed up their belongings and returned equipment to where it belonged. They then moved out to recess as they were ready. Gemma did not closely monitor the students as they moved directly outside.

Class Meeting

The students entered the classroom after the bell rang. Gemma asked the students to move quietly next door for their weekly class meeting. Paul took his Student Representative Council (SRC) folder. Michael took with him the agenda chart from the side of a trolley. Gemma asked Scott to bring the Class Meeting book and a pen. The class sat on chairs in a circle. Gemma asked which students had assumed roles last week and recorded them. She then went around the circle allocating names to roles for the future meetings. This roster was later displayed in the classroom.

David, the chairperson, tried to start the meeting but some people were talking. Gemma suggested to David that he put up his hand. David raised his hand and after the rest of the class copied, David started the meeting. David used a sheet that contained the format for the meeting along with some helpful questions to guide him through the meeting. David said, “Welcome to our class meeting. Can we please have the SRC (Student Representative Council) report?”

Paul, the SRC representative, read from his folder about decisions made at the last SRC meeting. Larry recorded issues discussed in the meeting in the Class Meeting book. Cathy observed the meeting and recorded notes.

When Paul had finished, David looked at the agenda sheet and said, “The first item on the agenda is (from) ‘Paul, borrowing books’”. Paul explained his suggestion that students should have more time from the library to read “thick books”. When Paul had finished explaining the issue, students began raising their hands. David chose people to speak. Some students suggested solutions to the problem and others commented on suggestions given.

After some discussion David said, “Maybe we should make a decision on this. We will go around the circle. Say ‘yes’ if you want to leave it as it is, and ‘no’ if you want to make a longer time for borrowing.” Each person around the circle gave a response. Everyone said yes. David said, “The decision is we will leave it as it is. Sandra, coupons”.

Sandra asked what was going to happen when students in the class have ten coupons. Gemma responded without putting up her hand. She explained that students could choose to go on the computer during silent reading.

David said that the class did not really need to discuss the issue further. Gemma asked, “Is everyone happy with that?” Some students commented without putting up their hands. Antonio reminded the class that they had previously decided

that they could have a lolly, teach a lesson or go on a computer when they had ten coupons. Gemma said she remembered that and explained why they could go on a computer during silent reading. She then asked if they were happy with the choices.

The meeting continued with more agenda items being discussed and decisions being made. This was followed by the observers' report, and the meeting ended with a game organised by the chairperson. David decided to play Chinese Whispers and he initiated a sentence to send around the circle.

When the game had finished, Gemma asked everyone to move back next door and to sit as a group on the carpet. David took the guide sheet and agenda chart back to the room.

English

Gemma explained that they were going to look at picture books because it was Book Week. Some of the students began to ask questions. Gemma asked them to listen first to what they were going to do because this might answer their questions. She showed the books. Two students left the room quietly to attend a music lesson. Gemma explained that they would form groups to read the books, and she described what to look for in the books. She said, "In thirty seconds you need to organise yourselves into five groups. We need two groups of six and the rest in groups of five. Once your group is organised, I will give you a book." Gemma waited and then counted down from ten.

The groups formed circles on the floor and decided who was going to read. Gemma initially kept away from the groups. Julian, from a group in the satellite area, approached Gemma. She went with Julian to his group and sat talking to it for a couple of minutes. Gemma then returned and sat on a chair in the classroom reading a book.

Gemma sent Aaron to timeout for breaking a classroom rule. He went to a desk and completed a timeout sheet.

Groups swapped books as they finished them. Gemma sat next to a group and listened to the story. While she was there Marie and Sally approached her to talk about a school timeout. They then went to discuss the matter with the principal.

When Aaron had completed his timeout sheet he took it to Gemma. She read it and sent him back to answer a question again. When he returned, Gemma asked what he had done. They discussed the sheet and then Aaron put the sheet in his file in Gemma's desk drawer.

Michael asked Gemma if they should collect the lunch orders. Gemma clapped her hands and asked everyone to sit down. She told Michael to wait for five more minutes. When the students were sitting on the carpet Gemma reviewed how the groups worked. Gemma then asked the class to give "Thumbs up or thumbs down" to each book, that is indicate as to whether they liked or disliked them.

Gemma sent the students outside to eat their lunch. Some students returned to their desks with objects before leaving the room and others went directly outside. Gemma sat and ate her lunch with the students chatting informally with them.

Silent Reading

After lunch the students came inside and began reading. Five students read to some year seven students in the room next door. In the classroom most students chose to sit at their desks. Students quietly moved around the room to change books, acquire tissues or go to the bin. Two students were sharing a book and were quietly discussing it. Bill, the Person of the Day, had a film container with tokens in it. He gave out tokens to students who he thought had started reading quickly. After 25 minutes Gemma asked everyone to stop reading and to sit on the carpet.

Family Life Education

Gemma explained what Family Life Education was, and what they would be doing during the unit. The Person of the Day and Gemma sat on chairs in front of the class. As Gemma talked, some students entered the room quietly and sat down with the group. They had been to cross country training. A class discussion began which involved students putting up their hands and Gemma selecting students to speak.

Gemma asked two students, who were very good friends, to stand up in front of the class. The class gave suggestions on how both students were unique. Gemma then explained the task for the lesson. The task involved all students writing, on a sheet of paper that Gemma gave them, how every person in the class was unique. Gemma explained that the sheets would be cut up so every comment could be given to students later.

Everyone moved back to his or her desks to undertake the task. Students began to look at each other whilst trying to think of something to write about each person. Gemma left the room for a couple of minutes and the students did not seem to notice. Everyone worked quietly and occasionally some students whispered to each other. Gemma asked everyone to be quiet a couple of times when they started to talk a little louder. She played some relaxing music and then sat down next to a student to write comments about how she thought everyone was unique.

After about 20 minutes, Gemma asked the class “Who has finished? Who has lots to do? Who has a few to do?” The students put up their hands in response to the questions. Gemma decided that they would share their comments during the next day. The students were allowed to complete their comments that night.

The End of the Day

Gemma asked the class to pack up. All the students had a “class duty”, such as emptying the bins, closing the windows and tidying the bookshelves, that they had to fulfil at this time. The students cleared their desks, brought their bags inside, placed belongings in their bags, placed chairs on top of their desks and picked up rubbish from the floor. While the students were doing this, Gemma talked to individuals quietly.

Gemma asked the class to sit on the carpet when they were ready. The Person of the Day began playing a game as some students sat down. The bell rang. Gemma said “Good afternoon” to the class and they replied. The students took their bags before leaving the room, many talking with each other.

A Day in the Classroom with Mark

The Beginning of the Day

Mark unlocked the door and students came into the room. Some students played on computers and others stood around talking. On the board Mark had written the programme for the day.

Prayer	
Maths	
<hr/>	
Society and the Environment	
Fitness	
<hr/>	
Reading	
Writing	

The bell rang and students sat on the carpet. Mark and Marion, the Person of the Day, sat on chairs in front of the class. Some students told Mark that they

normally had fitness before recess. Mark said, “Today we will have fitness before lunch.” The students also asked what writing was. Mark did not tell them.

Kerry went outside to look for something in her bag. Michael found the lunch order box filled with books. Michael took the books out of the box and he told Mark that the books should be returned to the library. Mark said Michael could return the books on the way to the canteen. Michael called out to the class, “Has anyone got a lunch order?” No one replied so he took the box to the canteen.

Mark clapped a rhythm and the class copied. He was about to speak to the class when the students organising prayer came in looking for the matches. Mark went to help them look for matches. Stephen sat on the teacher’s chair and clapped. Some students copied. Marion said to the class, “Who wants a game?” One student put up her hand. Mark came back and sat in his chair. Cathy arrived at school and, as she was meant to be Person of the Day, she swapped with Marion. Mark asked the class to move next door for prayer.

Prayer

Paul and Larry, the students organising prayer, told Mark that they were not ready and that they needed ten minutes. Carl said to Mark, “Why don’t I do my show and tell?” Mark said he could.

The class and Mark sat in a circle on the floor. Carl stood and told everyone about his car. When Carl had finished speaking, Mark asked the class, “Does anyone have any questions?” Students raised their hands and Carl chose people to speak. Students started speaking to friends until it appeared that no one was listening to Carl although he continued to talk. Mark began asking people to listen to Carl. Mark clapped a rhythm and the students clapped in response. Mark said, “Now after I clap, listen. I am going to say from this point on that if we are sitting in a situation like this

again and you know there is someone you can't sit next to without talking, then move so we don't have to give out warnings. So let's be fair on the people who are talking." Some students asked some more questions. However, students continued to talk to each other. Mark said, "Listening again. Right everybody let's have all eyes this way. Paul! Right!" Then Mark clapped. "Okay, Carl thanks for that. There's one, two, three here (Mark pointed to students). I suggest next time, do not sit next to each other okay, because you are the last people to give me your attention."

Paul and Larry announced that they were ready for prayer. They had organised prayer around the theme of "Friends" although originally they had planned prayer around "Families" but could not find the hymn they had wanted so they changed the theme. Paul asked Cathy to turn off the lights as he lit candles. Paul and Larry began by reading a prayer each and then they played a hymn for the class to sing. Larry worked the overhead projector and Paul the tape recorder. When the song finished, Larry asked, "Bernadette, will you blow out the candles please?"

Religion

The students sat at their desks with their religion books out. Mark stood in the centre of the floor where he clapped to gain the students' attention. They did not give their attention so Mark tried again. For religion the students had to continue work begun the day before. Mark allowed ten minutes to complete the work. While the students worked Mark moved around the room and some students asked him questions.

After fifteen minutes, Mark asked the students to sit on the floor in a circle. When they were seated on the floor, Cathy clapped a rhythm and a few students responded. Mark asked Cathy to clap again. This time more students copied the rhythm. Mark began explaining that he wanted the students to swap books. He

stopped and asked Cathy to clap again because the students were still talking. The students had to read another person's work.

Mark clapped, "If you have someone's work in front of you who have done a really interesting job we might hear them." Mark chose students to read out work they thought was interesting. Throughout this sharing some students talked to each other.

Mark said, "We can't hear because of these clowns over here. If you keep talking, I will have to give you a warning." Students continued sharing and others continued talking. At times it was very difficult to hear the person reading. Mark explained that he was disappointed with the people speaking. The students returned books to their owners.

Maths

Mark asked everyone to move closer to him and so students shuffled forward. Mark clapped a rhythm and some students copied. He asked Cathy to call the names of those who did not copy the rhythm. Mark clapped a rhythm again. When Mark had most students' attention he explained that the students had to finish their work from last week. When completed, Mark said that the students had to create a maths game. They were required to use two dice and make a board game where the players had to move tokens around squares. Mark explained that the game should help players learn addition, subtraction or times tables. As he continued explaining the task he began recording on the board;

- game
- to test $x +$ or $-$
- board with squares
- dice
- move counter around
- How do you win?

Mark told the students that they needed to have clear rules. Many of the students were talking to each other while Mark was explaining the task. Mark asked two students to separate because they were talking. As the volume increased it became difficult to hear what Mark was saying. Mark stood up and told the students they had to choose a partner and then decide where they were going to work. He gave the students 30 minutes to design and make a game.

Students began finding partners and moved off to obtain scrap paper from a tray before they sat down. Nobody picked Cathy to be his or her partner. Mark “put” her with two other students. Cathy was crying because the two students did not really want her in their group. Larry explained that the same thing used to happen to him but he said it was not happening as much any more. Larry explained if you did not have a partner you were “put with someone no one else wants”.

There was a great deal of excitement and discussion as all students were planning games, thus completing work from last week appeared forgotten. Mark moved around the room asking students about their games offering suggestions for improvement. Aaron and Jack were playing around a table for a while and then sat down.

After about 15 minutes, Mark clapped a rhythm. He repeated it because only few students copied the rhythm. Mark explained that he was pleased with all the activity going on and that he wanted to check whether they were on the right track.

Some students were not listening as they continued with their planning. Mark told the class that he was giving them ten more minutes.

Cathy, the Person of the Day clapped a rhythm. She tried about six times to get the class's attention and many students did not copy. Mark said to the class, "If you don't do it this time we will wait until the bell goes and try again." Cathy clapped again and everyone copied the rhythm. Mark told the class they had to pack up, as it was recess time.

Society and the Environment

After recess, the students entered the room and sat on the carpet. Mark talked for a short time about a recent disaster that had occurred. The topic they were studying for society and the environment was disasters, which the students chose at the end of the previous term. When the discussion ended, the students continued with their disaster work. The students chose activities from a list established by Mark. Each activity had various point values. By the end of the topic, the students had to complete activities worth approximately one hundred points. The students had to choose how to present their work, how to go about the activity, where to work and whether they wanted to work with others.

Cathy and Antonio were building a disaster proof house together. Some students were working in the satellite area and others in the room next door. Work included constructing buildings, organising plays, drawing plans and searching the internet. Mark approached students and discussed their work with them. Some students approached Mark as well.

Julian quietly left the room to attend a music lesson. There was much talking and laughter by the students. Students often shared their work with others and lengthy discussions developed. Advice was sought and given by students.

When Mark asked the class to pack up, Antonio placed his construction and materials into a plastic bag and placed it on the floor in the corner of the classroom. He had decided that was an appropriate place to store his work. Carl placed his construction on top of a bookshelf where Mark had suggested.

The class was still packing up when Mark requested them to sit down on the carpet. “Antonio, you are heading for a warning.” Mark asked the class to sit down about five times.

The bell rang for lunch and the students went outside. They did not have fitness as planned.

Reading

The students came in from lunch talking and then sat down and began reading. About fifteen minutes later some girls entered the room and sat down. Marion explained to me that they had been in the toilets doing Brigitte’s hair because she liked Jack and Jack liked her. Mark offered to listen to anyone who would like to read to him. Michael said he would. Mark and Michael sat on the chairs out the front. When Michael had finished reading he called out to the class, “Would anyone like me to read to them?” Many of the students called out “Yeah!” Mark told Michael, who was still sitting next to him, that he had a warning and if he continued he would go to time out.

The students continued reading for a while and then Mark asked everyone to sit on the carpet.

Writing

Mark began reading a poem to the class. A group of about four students were whispering to each other while Mark read. Mark stopped and said, “Anthony, you are

heading for a warning.” A few students continued whispering. Mark stopped reading again and looked at those who were whispering. “There are just three or four people and we are still waiting for them.” Mark continued reading. The group of students began playing with a piece of cardboard. They were throwing it at each other. Mark said, “I am going to speak to those three guys afterwards”.

When Mark finished reading the poem, he gave the class a task. The class had to read four poems and choose their favourite. Students had to choose a partner and where they were going to sit. As students were organising themselves Mark spoke to the students to whom he had indicated earlier he had wanted to speak.

After about five minutes, Mark gained everyone’s attention and asked the class to come and sit on the floor as a group. Mark asked Aaron to read a poem. Aaron was reluctant at first but then agreed to read it. When he finished, the class clapped.

Mark gave Anthony a warning because he was talking. “Warning, I have been watching you there.” Mark recorded it in the “consequences” book.

Antonio then read another poem to the class. Other students read the remaining poems and then the class discussed those that they preferred. Throughout much of the discussion, students had conversations with their classmates.

Mark asked the class to pack up, to be ready to go home. Students chatted to each other whilst they collected their bags from outside and packed them, tidied up desks and placed chairs on their desks. When the bell rang Mark said good afternoon to the students and they left.

Summary

This chapter described a typical day in the classroom reconstructed directly from field notes, audio-recordings and interviews. The first part describes a day with Gemma. Gemma was the regular teacher of the class and thus had established much

of what occurred in the classroom. Gemma and Mark taught the same students in the same environment and Mark attempted to adopt a teaching methodology similar to Gemma, nevertheless there were differences in their teaching. The second part described a day with Mark suggesting some of these differences. Having set the context, the next chapter discusses Gemma and her role as a teacher in detail.

CHAPTER 5

GEMMA

Gemma, in her mid twenties, had six years teaching experience, including at a large country Catholic school and the school at which she was currently teaching. She had taught years three to six and worked in open space units. Gemma was an active member of staff who participated on many school committees. One of her roles was to supervise and support the Student Representative Council or SRC. Gemma enjoyed teaching and enjoyed her current job.

This chapter describes four dimensions that I discerned from analysis of interview and observation data related to Gemma: (a) Gemma's belief system, including a reflection on the notion of empowerment, (c) structures, (d) processes, and (e) environment. First, I present Gemma's belief system through the identification, elaboration and illustration of each belief. I identified the beliefs from interview data. Using interview and observation data, I provide an elaboration and illustration of each belief. I also provide a summary of Gemma's reflection on the notion of empowerment. Second, I describe the aspect called structures, that is, the organisational arrangements, formations or constructions that Gemma established. Third, I present the aspect referred to as processes, which includes procedures, approaches, systems, methods and applications, used in the classroom. Finally, I present the environment aspect that refers to the surroundings, environs, milieu, atmosphere and climate. I discerned these last three dimensions from all data collected. Descriptions of incidents and quotations of speech come directly from field notes, audio-recordings and interviews.

Before proceeding with the chapter, a brief comment about the nature of the description. This chapter is descriptive and the accounts provided are filtered through my own perceptions of the experience. I have made two levels of interpretation. Firstly, I made interpretations at the time of data collection such as the decisions about what to include in my field notes and what to ask participants in interviews. Secondly, I interpreted the data by making decisions about the construction of this chapter including what to present. Essentially, I have tried to describe what was going on in the classroom particularly from Gemma's perspective but it is my interpretation. Nevertheless, Gemma has read this chapter and confirmed that it is an accurate reflection of her beliefs and teaching.

Finally, before commencing with this chapter, I want to place it in a larger picture of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute as a basic building block to an overall understanding of what student empowerment is and how can it be enabled in a primary school classroom. It does this by offering a description of what happened in the classroom with Gemma, which then provides a foundation for further exploration and interpretation. I have intentionally written this chapter excluding higher levels of interpretation to lay this foundation, but it is important to be reminded of the purpose of this study. In the following chapter, I will reflect from the students' perspective on the dimensions presented here to begin to shed light on how they relate to student empowerment. Then in Mark's chapter I describe from both Mark's and the students' perspective what was going on in the classroom when Mark taught. Increasingly in these chapters, I begin to address what does all of this mean by offering a third layer of interpretation more explicitly.

Gemma's Belief System

From data analysis primarily of observation and interview data, it was possible to develop an abstraction of the teacher's beliefs. In the section that follows, Gemma's beliefs are identified. These appear in italics and each is followed by an elaboration of why Gemma held that belief.

Students should be valued. By giving students responsibility, Gemma thought that she demonstrated that they were valued. Gemma said, "giving them responsibility I think I show them that I value them" (Int, Gemma, 7/8). Gemma believed that students could take responsibility and develop independence and should be trusted to do so. She gave responsibility to students in the form of special roles such as Person of the Day, chairperson of the class meeting and organising sessions during the day such as prayer. Gemma showed trust in students in many ways. She trusted students to form groups themselves, to carry out their class duties and to manage and monitor their work.

Listening to students was a priority for Gemma, as she believed that by actively listening to students they would feel valued. Gemma remained alert to feelings expressed by students, which enabled her to make changes to suit their needs. Sometimes this meant changing aspects of the classroom life, for example, the programme for the day or routines.

Gemma liked to interact with and show interest in the students and endeavoured to communicate with them not only on an academic level but also on a personal level. Gemma believed that everything the students did and had to share was important. She showed interest in the things students sometimes brought to school to share with the class. Gemma arranged much of the students' work to be displayed

around the room. Additionally, she showed interest in the students' activities outside school and celebrated their birthdays.

Students should have a say. Gemma believed that having a say meant students being able to initiate and bring about change and participate in the decision-making process. In doing so, they could develop a feeling of ownership and belonging. Gemma believed that she needed to be flexible and open to negotiation with students so that they could have a real say. She actively listened to students and provided them with many choices regarding, for example, what they wanted to learn and how they wanted to learn it. Gemma not only encouraged students to have a say but also encouraged them to follow up on suggestions, consulting anyone who could be affected by what they wanted. She endeavoured to create an environment:

Where ... they (students) can feel comfortable and relaxed in what ever they are doing and that they can have a say in what happens in the room. I have to be an open teacher, open to changes and perhaps not do exactly what I want all the time. And adapt some of the routines and things and let a few things pass so that they can see that I do appreciate their suggestions and ideas. So, therefore, be flexible. (Int, Gemma, 30/7)

Students should be informed of and given reasons for decisions. Gemma believed that being informed allowed students to understand decisions and accept them rather than resenting decisions and arguing for change. She gave reasons for decisions she made and kept students informed. Gemma explained:

I think that (negotiating decisions) helped in creating a room where they are quite happy to come and tell me about problems or any concerns that they have got because they know that I will listen to them and that I am

not going to say 'no'. And if I do say 'no' I'll say, 'No, that is not going to happen but the reason for it is... but I am not going to give this for an open discussion but I am going to give you my reasons.' So then they know it is not just straight out 'no'. But I don't give it to them that they can argue with me (laughter). I try to give them a reason. (Int, Gemma, 24/7)

Students should be encouraged to seek help and support from each other.

Gemma recognised that students often had problems and believed that they did not learn effectively unless steps were taken to address or solve the problems. She believed that students should learn to solve problems independently from her with the support of their peers because adults will not always be available to help them. Additionally, students should be aware that other people have problems and should learn ways to support them.

Gemma encouraged students to seek procedural and academic help from peers as she recognised that all students had knowledge, skills and experiences to share. Many options were available to students when they needed help or support to solve a procedural or academic problem. Gemma facilitated students to seek help and support by sitting them in groups and allowing free movement around the classroom. She encouraged independence by asking students to think of someone who might be able to help them.

Gemma encouraged students to solve personal and social problems and seek support from their base group. Gemma explained:

We have them (base groups) so that if they (students) have got a problem, instead of coming to me to solve their problem, that they can work together to solve the problem. Problems come up all the time. They meet together ... to talk about it (the problem) and go through a process of what

that person can do.... Often the problem may involve one person in the group and they are the group who will help them solve the problem. (Int, Gemma, 31/7)

Students should work with all students in the class and learn skills to be able to work together effectively. Gemma believed that it was important for students to be able to work with anyone whether they liked them or not because in the workplace people are expected to do this. She explained, “So I think all the kids should get the opportunity to work with everyone in the class” (Int, Gemma, 31/7). Gemma expected students to sit with all members of the class at various times. She encouraged this by randomly selecting seating arrangements, arranging groups from which students selected with whom they wanted to work, and by allowing students to choose with whom they wanted to work. Gemma taught students cooperative skills to help them work with others more effectively through such approaches as role-play and student modelling.

Students learn more effectively when their social needs are met and it is important to address these needs. Gemma attempted to be aware of and cater for students’ social needs. To support students, she actively taught social skills that helped them interact and relate to others. Gemma believed that social skills should be taught to students. She explained:

I suppose it (teaching social skills) is probably one of the highest priorities because if the kids aren’t happy at school, if they’re not happy in the environment, and they don’t get on in the environment, then learning is going to be the least of their worries and they’re not going to learn. Ultimately they are there to learn, but we need to make an

environment where they are happy to learn and are comfortable. (Int, Gemma, 5/8)

She believed that although some students learn social skills from seeing other people use them many do not and, therefore, the skills should be taught. Gemma formally taught social skills weekly using base groups and role play. The class focused on a particular skill and considered what the skill looked and sounded like. The students then practised the skill either in context or in base groups using role play. Gemma often altered the programme to teach an appropriate lesson on a social skill to facilitate teaching and learning. She also informally taught skills using incidental situations throughout the day and worked with individuals and small groups as the need arose. Gemma explained:

... there will be individuals who will need one to one help. An example is with Sandra, she just had a lot of trouble with friends. She had some friends from another class, but they decided not to be friends with her. She didn't really have a network of friends. So once a day, we would sit down and talk about who she was going to play with. And we used to help her plan that you have to think of people, you can't just stand out there and wait for someone to come and ask you and we would plan ahead who she was going to play with and what she was going to ask them. Like really down to the specifics of how she was going to get to the group, who was she going to ask, what was she going to talk about when she got there and looking at where she was going to be seated in the classroom. And we went right down to basically a whole list of all the girls in the class and looking at who their friendships groups are and which one she would best fit into. And then talking about things that you know, maybe it won't work, maybe they don't want that, and how she needs to cope with that, how to cope with that, coping mechanisms to be able to deal with problems. (Int, Gemma, 5/8)

Students learn more effectively when they have fun and participate in learning together. Gemma believed that students should have the opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other as higher order thinking occurs when students explain their work or teach others. She endeavoured to make students feel more comfortable by creating a collaborative and non-threatening environment where students built on each other's ideas and took risks. Gemma used cooperative learning extensively and she defined cooperative learning as students working together towards a common goal where all members have to contribute. She recognised that there were occasions when working cooperatively did not help students learn, such as when the groups did not cooperate well. Gemma explained, "There are some kids who just don't cooperate, who just get into a group and they are like destroyers. They just want to talk." (Int, Gemma, 31/7)

Gemma thought that society expects children to mature too quickly and, therefore, she believed that it was important to let children be children. Thus, Gemma encouraged students to have fun, participate in activities together and to play games daily as a class.

A relaxed, happy, supportive and safe classroom where students feel comfortable to share and to open up should be created. Gemma endeavoured to create a relaxed, safe environment where students felt comfortable to take risks and to laugh at funny occurrences. She held high expectations for a positive and collaborative environment. Gemma expected students to respect each other and encouraged them to value differences. She used the behaviour management policy to support students and their right to be respected.

Gemma was open to ideas and suggestions for change. Structures, such as class meetings, provided a forum for discussion among students. If the students were not

happy about something, Gemma encouraged them to share their thoughts and endeavoured to make them feel safe in doing so.

I think most of the kids will come and tell me something that happened you know, sport or on the weekend and things, and especially through class meetings. I mean sometimes there comes a time when they will ... tell me that they might not like something I do. (Int, Gemma, 7/8)

Gemma also thought that she created such an environment by giving students choices about their learning and the classroom, and recognising that students' problems were real and needed addressing. Additionally, she recognised that some students were shy and thus she respected their right to think before sharing.

The room is "our" room not "my" room. Gemma believed that the classroom belonged to all members of the class. Therefore, students had access to everything in the room except for Gemma's personal belongings. In addition, the students had a say about many aspects of the room both formally and informally. Formally, students could use structures such as the class meeting to have a say. Informally, students made comments to Gemma upon which she often acted. Gemma described how she wanted to establish an environment:

Where the environment is so that they (students) can feel comfortable and relaxed in what ever they are doing and that they can have a say in what happens in the room. I have to be fairly open, an open teacher, open to changes and perhaps not do exactly what I want all the time. ... So therefore I have to be flexible. (Int, Gemma, 30/7)

The students also made decisions regarding the classroom without consultation with Gemma. For example, students moved tables as required during lessons.

The individual learning needs of students should be catered for because all students are different. Gemma believed that students learn in different ways. She catered for individual differences by providing students with choices, allowing them to decide whether to work on their own or with others and structuring activities so they could work at their own pace. For example, “in spelling I like them to have their own list and to be able to pick their own activities because some kids learn words in a different way to other kids” (Int, Gemma, 30/7). The students had to decide which words to use, how many words they would study and which activities they would use to learn these words.

Significant learning occurs when the subject matter is perceived as interesting and relevant to students. Gemma believed that content and skills should not be taught in isolation but rather they should be taught in context. Work should seem familiar and students should perceive they can be successful. Gemma believed that students learn best when new learning relates to existing background knowledge. Furthermore, when students have a say in what they do they tend to show more interest in their work. Gemma explained, “I believe that kids need to be interested in what they are learning. It needs to be relevant to them otherwise they are not going to learn anything” (Int, Gemma, 30/7).

Students made many decisions regarding their learning. For example, students chose the society and the environment topic for the term by giving suggestions for what they wanted to study and then voting on a topic.

Students should be active participants in the learning process to gain knowledge and, more importantly, understanding. Gemma believed that students learn more effectively when “learning by doing” through such approaches as problem solving and discovery. She thought that it was important for students to learn that there is often more than one way to approach a task, so she set “open” tasks. Open tasks required students to decide how to go about the task and what direction to take. Gemma provided Mathematics tasks as an example, “they've got a choice of equipment, and the task is not so specific that you have to do this in these steps. It's very open so they can try it out in different ways, so there's no one way to solve the problem” (Int, Gemma, 7/8). Additionally, Gemma gave few instructions at the beginning of lessons to start students and they were open to interpretation and change. She then encouraged students to help each other. Gemma used questioning techniques to challenge students' thinking by having them reflect on what they had done and learned.

Physical arrangement of the room should be conducive to group work and for the class to sit in a circle. Gemma believed that there should be areas for students to work in groups on the floor and at tables, as students should be able to communicate with ease when working with others. Additionally, the furniture should be arranged so that the class can move freely into groups. Gemma also believed that it was important for the class to be able to sit in a circle and as a class group to enhance unity and closeness. Gemma said:

I think it's really important to have the closeness as a class group as a unity, you know that we're a group together. I also like to have a circle

because I think the symbol of the circle means that we are all a part of it and all included in class, which is really important. (Int, Gemma, 7/8)

Gemma arranged tables so students could sit in groups and she left floor spaces around the room so small groups could sit in circles. She placed furniture around the edges of the room so a large space was available for the class to sit on the floor in a circle.

Resources should be accessible to students to facilitate creativity and independence. Gemma believed that making resources available to students encouraged them to show initiative. Resources that students might wish to use to fulfil their purposes were available and accessible to them all. To access the resources, Gemma arranged furniture so students could move freely around the room. By providing resources, Gemma explained she was:

Creating an environment where they (students) know that they can make changes if they want to. Like one of the kids asked if he could hang something up the other day in the room. I told him to find a place to put it, where ever you want to. So they (students) can use, get access to anything like “Blue-tac” if they want to. (Int, Gemma, 7/8)

In this section, I presented an abstraction of Gemma’s beliefs. These beliefs included how Gemma believed that she should treat students, how students learn and the social and physical environment she thought best for the students. The beliefs identified in this section influenced Gemma’s notion of student empowerment, which is summarised in the following section.

A Reflection on the Notion of Student Empowerment

During three interviews, I asked Gemma questions that dealt with her perceptions of power, control and empowerment. We also discussed the notions of power-over and power-with. For the final interview, Gemma prepared notes on how she perceived that she empowered and had power-over students. From analysis of the data, it was possible to provide a summary of Gemma's reflection on the notion of empowerment.

Issues of Power and Control

Gemma described how different types of power could exist in the classroom. She explained that there were times when she "has power" and others when she wants to "give power" or "share power" with the students, but that she had ultimate power. Gemma thought that all students had some power but some use it more than others do. Additionally, she explained that some students have more power than others do as they have better developed social skills. For example, some students can communicate an idea more effectively and thus influence others.

Gemma stated that "we need power, people need power to survive" (Int, Gemma, 15/8). However, she did not think students should have a "dominating power" or "authoritarian power", but rather students should have power that enables them to make changes and to have a say.

On the issue of control, Gemma thought that individuals could have control over others and over themselves. Gemma conceived that a person has control over others when he or she limits the choices available to them. In the classroom, Gemma perceived that she had ultimate control but that she shared control with students, particularly with the Person of the Day and the chairperson of class meetings. In addition, Gemma thought that individual students had control over themselves. She

explained that “individuals have their own control. ... They have control over whether they work or not work. They have control of their own behaviour and their own learning” (Int, Gemma, 15/8).

How Gemma had Power-Over Students

As a teacher Gemma believed that she had certain responsibilities, therefore, students could not always have their own way. Thus, Gemma thought that she needed to establish restrictions and guidelines that lead to her having power-over the students. Gemma perceived that she had power-over students in the following ways:

- By having the final say in some matters, but she chose when this would occur.
- By influencing students in decision-making. For example, Gemma could persuade students that a particular idea was best.
- By making demands or changes if she believed that it would help students’ learning although she attempted to give reasons for students so they could gain a greater understanding. For example, Gemma insisted on work being completed by a certain time (Int, Gemma, 19/8).
- By Gemma’s position as a teacher, giving her power-over students. Gemma explained, “just to walk into a room and not to have said a word at the beginning of the year, you’ve already got power. It’s already there ... you can’t take it away even if you want to. It’s there ... it’s just how you use it” (Int, Gemma, 19/8).
- By having the ultimate decision on what the students learn. Gemma was employed to meet the educational needs of her students, which gave her power-over the students.

Gemma's Perceptions of Student Empowerment

Gemma's perception of student empowerment included how she perceived that students are empowered and how they become empowered. Presented in this section are these perceptions.

Student empowerment.

Gemma believed that student empowerment is enabled when a happy, safe and supportive learning environment is established. She explained that students are empowered when they:

- have a say
- have choices
- can make decisions
- have power
- are happy
- are motivated to learn
- enjoy learning
- have a sense of ownership

Different rates of student empowerment.

Gemma stated that the rate at which students become empowered "varies from individual to individual" (Int, Gemma, 13/8). Some students may not be ready to become empowered and others may not have the necessary skills or confidence to become empowered. Gemma believed that an environment should be created so students feel supported and can become more empowered as they are ready.

Gemma's perceptions of empowerment included how she empowered students, how she disempowered students, outcomes of empowering students, issues of power and control, and how she had power-over students.

How Gemma empowered students.

Gemma perceived that her role was important in empowering students. She explained that she empowered students by listening to them, valuing what they had to say, being positive, and having trust in and respect for them. Furthermore, Gemma was open to change through active listening. In the process of empowering students, Gemma perceived her role was as a supporter, role model and facilitator. Gemma viewed herself as a teacher but not as a boss. She developed relationships with students by getting to know them as individuals and allowing the students to get to know her by sharing more personal aspects of her life.

Supporting students to become empowered, Gemma explained, was a gradual process. Initially Gemma gave students structured choices and gradually more open choices about their learning, behaviour and management of the classroom. Concurrently, Gemma taught students social skills to help them make more effective decisions, solve problems, listen, and communicate ideas. She also gradually gave more responsibility to students for their learning and the environment. Gemma found that over time students developed a sense of control and began to take over the "running of the classroom".

Creating a community where all students communicate with and develop confidence in each other, Gemma believed was important to the process of student empowerment. Moreover, she thought that students require opportunities to learn from each other. To facilitate this, Gemma taught social and cooperative skills and regularly provided students with opportunities to work individually and in groups.

Gemma shared the ownership of the classroom with students. She involved students in making decisions about class issues, such as the reward system and the establishment of classroom rules. Gemma held discussions with students about perceived class problems, such as the noise level. She also encouraged students to have a say on physical aspects of the classroom.

There were aspects of the physical environment that Gemma perceived helped students to become empowered. Gemma made resources available, provided different places for students to work, and gave students freedom to use the resources and spaces. Students were able to move freely around the classroom to obtain resources and to talk to others. Gemma arranged desks in groups rather than rows encouraging students to learn together, from each other and to seek help as required.

Gemma explained that she helped enable students to become empowered by “giving up” her power. For example, she sometimes agreed to do something that she did not particularly want when the students requested it. Furthermore, she thought that she empowered students by “sharing power” which involved taking students’ thoughts, ideas and needs into consideration.

How Gemma disempowered students.

Although Gemma gave many examples of how she empowered students, she only gave a couple of instances of when she disempowered or was not consistent at empowering them. For example, when a student teacher was with the class for a term Gemma began confusing two students’ names. Gemma provided this as an example of how she disempowered students because she thought that it indicated to the students that she might have been thinking about the other student and that they were not special.

Gemma perceived that occasionally she was not consistent in empowering students. She illustrated this by explaining that one student, John, tended to ask Gemma questions about everything and that he found it difficult to make his own decisions. When John asked a question, Gemma would redirect it back to him so that he would have to make the decision. However, on a couple of occasions Gemma said that she became “cross” with him in the process. Gemma felt that by expressing her anger she was disempowering John.

Outcomes of empowering students.

Gemma stated that empowering students helps them develop their personality and lifestyle, giving them confidence and building self-esteem. Discussing the benefits of empowering students, Gemma explained:

... that the kids are happier I think because they feel appreciated and they feel as though you care about what they think, you care about them. It makes a happier environment generally. I think the kids are more willing to learn and want to try things. They're more willing to take risks and if you don't take risks you're not going to learn I don't believe. You need to make mistakes to learn something so I think they were willing to try that. I think it lets them know that they are a valuable person. As a person, they can do things and they're not just a student at school who has to do things. They are a person who has a say, who can make decisions, who can be a part of society I suppose, and not just there but an active part of it. (Int, Gemma, 19/8)

In addition, Gemma believed that empowered students are more motivated to learn and, therefore, learn more. She said:

They want to learn, because what they're doing is often what they are interested in. ... I think what they're really interested in is the topics that they've had some choice in. Like society and environment, they chose the topic, they can choose the activities, they can choose who they work with (and) they can choose how they do it. (Int, Gemma, 19/8)

At times, Gemma found that it was hard work empowering students. For example, she said that empowering students involved her giving up time to listen, to go through things and to plan with the students. Additionally, sometimes Gemma found it difficult to accept students' decisions when they were not what she wanted. On occasions, Gemma said it seemed easier to not empower students and just tell them what to do. However, Gemma thought that in the long term it was more beneficial for her and the students if they worked through a process, such as decision-making or problem solving. Gemma found that students who were not involved in the process did not own it, did not agree with it and, therefore, were not motivated to change. When Gemma took power away from students she usually found that she "end(ed) up going back to giving them the power anyway" (Int, Gemma, 13/8).

Summary

This section provided a description of Gemma's reflection on the notion of student empowerment. Gemma described the power relations in the classroom explaining that, although she shared power and control with the students, she had ultimate power and control over students. She thought that students are empowered when they, for example, have a say, make decisions, have power and are motivated to learn and that they become empowered at different rates. Gemma explained that students require a happy, safe and supportive learning environment to become empowered. She thought that she empowered students by adopting a facilitative role,

supporting students, creating a classroom community, sharing ownership of the classroom, providing a conducive physical environment and, importantly, by giving up power and sharing power with students. Finally, Gemma identified some outcomes of empowering students that included higher self-esteem, motivation to learn, and greater achievement.

Gemma's beliefs, identified in the first section, influenced her notion of student empowerment. Her beliefs also influenced her teaching. Discussed in the following sections are the ways in which Gemma's beliefs influenced her teaching.

Structures: Organisational Arrangements Established in the Classroom

The following three dimensions, namely structures, processes, and environment, emerged from all data collected. I provide descriptions of incidents and quotations of speech that come directly from field notes, audio-recordings and interviews.

The first dimension called structures refers to the organisational arrangements, formations or constructions established in the classroom. Structures used by the class were Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meeting and games. These structures are now briefly described. The description is brief, but nonetheless important.

Person of the Day

Every day one student would assume the position of Person of the Day to support the teacher. The Person of the Day was expected to help look after the class by doing such things as:

- encouraging students to begin tasks;

- asking students to sit on the carpet;
- giving students instructions, such as asking the class to pack up or to move into another room;
- checking that the organisers for prayer know who they are;
- giving counters to students exhibiting positive behaviour; and
- organising games.

There was a roster for students to be the Person of the Day displayed in the classroom that was arranged alphabetically.

Class Duties

At the beginning of the year, the students brainstormed jobs for the class. They were:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| • Bins | • Maths equipment |
| • Outside | • Computers |
| • Living things | • Sports equipment |
| • Lunches | • Communication bag |
| • Bench tops | • Prayer table, white board |
| • Consequences | • Book monitors |
| • Library books | • Windows, heaters |
| • Dentist | |

The duties the students had to perform changed approximately every five weeks. A student randomly selected names of peers from a container who then chose a job and a partner with whom to undertake it.

Base Groups

The Staff Information Booklet (1996) described base groups as groups of four students chosen from the class by the teacher as a support group for its members. The school founded base groups upon the belief that “Strong people share” and “Strong

people come together and solve problems with the help of others” (Staff Information Booklet, 1996, p. 50).

Teachers established base groups in all classes in the school, usually after the students had been at school for approximately six weeks. This year Gemma established the groups in the second term as she expected a student teacher then and Gemma wanted to share with her the experience. Students gave suggestions to Gemma as to who they thought would be good in their group. Gemma then selected the groups based on the students’ suggestions and her own opinions. The groups were heterogeneous consisting of both girls and boys.

Gemma explained to students how the base groups would operate. The teacher would not listen to or join in meetings unless invited. A rule was set that students must keep issues discussed in base group meetings confidential. However, if at any time a student was or could be hurt the group must inform a teacher.

The teacher or individual students called base group meetings. Gemma called weekly base group meetings so students could discuss issues of concern, such as personal and social problems, and to teach and reinforce social and cooperative skills. Individual students called meetings whenever they had a problem that they wished to discuss. When students called base group meetings they would check with the teacher if it was appropriate to hold a meeting and then inform the group members that they had called a meeting. The students would find a place outside the classroom, but within a short distance, where they could talk in private. The group would sit at the same eye level in a circle.

Class Meetings

Class meetings were held weekly and run by students. Students assumed various roles during the meetings for which there was a roster organised by the

teacher. The roles were chairperson, recorder, observer and timekeeper. Students established an agenda for the meetings by recording items they wished to discuss with the class. Agenda items related to both class and school issues.

Gemma assumed two roles during class meetings. She participated in the same manner as the students, such as raising her hand to speak, allowing the chairperson to control the meeting. The other role Gemma assumed was that of a teacher when she spoke as she wished.

The school decision-making policy guided decisions made at class meetings. The class made decisions that affected only them. The class representative referred issues that involved other people to the Student Representative Council for further discussion and consultation.

Games

The class regularly played games chosen and organised by students who held particular roles, such as the Person of the Day and the chairperson of the class meeting. They played games at various times throughout the day, including when the class were finishing packing up, at the end of a class meeting and at times when the class sat on the floor and Gemma had to give her attention elsewhere.

In this section, I presented structures established by Gemma. These structures included the Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meeting and games. It is possible that when students used the structures they would have experienced some sense of power-to and power-with their peers and Gemma. In addition the students were likely to experience a sense of power-over their peers especially when assuming the role of Person of the Day. By establishing the structures and enabling students to use them, Gemma was attempting to share power with the students.

Processes: Ways Things Happened in the Classroom

This section describes the dimension called processes, which refers to procedures, approaches, systems, methods and applications used in the classroom. The main components of this dimension include managing behaviour, giving rewards, solving problems, decision-making, teaching strategies, teaching social and cooperative skills, and teacher communication. These processes are now described.

Managing Behaviour

Gemma managed student behaviour mainly by using the school behaviour management policy. The school behaviour management policy endeavoured to “empower children to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour, and furthermore to help students accept the logical consequences for their actions” (Staff Information Booklet, 1996, p. 42). According to the policy, students established the classroom rules. If students broke a rule, they received consequences in sequential order. The consequences were as follows:

1. A verbal warning;
2. Go to timeout;
3. Sent to planning centre; and
4. Meet with the principal.

Gemma conformed with the school behaviour management policy as she explained “I do agree with it so that’s okay, I totally support it” (Int, Gemma, 13/8). She implemented the policy in the following way. Gemma and the students established rules for the classroom at the beginning of the year. The rules, “Respect ourselves, respect each other, respect property and respect the environment” were displayed in the classroom. If students broke a rule for the first time during a day, they received a verbal warning. The second time students broke a rule they went to

timeout. Timeout involved the students completing a Classroom Reflection Sheet away from the group for approximately ten minutes. The sheet asked the students about why they received a warning and then why they were in timeout. The students answered the questions, “What did you do? What is the rule about this?” and “What are you going to do in the future?” The students then signed the sheet before discussing it with Gemma. Planning Centre, the next consequence, required the students to go to a “buddy class” for approximately thirty minutes to reflect on their behaviour. The students had to complete a Planning Classroom Reflection Sheet whilst they were in planning centre. This sheet asked the students about what they did each time they broke a rule. Questions included what the rule was that they had broken and then “What do you need to do in the future?” and “How will you make up for what you have done?”. The student, class teacher and planning room teacher signed this form. If students broke a rule for the fourth time, they would meet with the principal. The students began each day with a “clean slate”. A different student recorded all consequences given, as a class duty.

Gemma explained that the behaviour management procedures encouraged students to own their behaviour as they enabled them to make “decisions about their behaviour, which is ultimately saying that you’re responsible for what you’re doing” (Int, Gemma, 13/8). With this in mind, Gemma explained that “putting the responsibility over to them (students) rather than the teacher or the principal ... you don’t have to get angry at them, you don’t have to yell at them, you don’t have to raise your voice at them ... they know what they’ve done wrong.... it’s their problem” (Int, Gemma, 13/8).

In addition, Gemma also managed behaviour in other ways. For example, Gemma waited when trying to get attention from the class, asked students to move positions if they were talking at an inappropriate time, said students’ names to get

individuals' attention, and used a serious tone of voice when repeating an instruction. On many occasions one technique Gemma used was to gain the attention of the class, clearly explain her expectations and ask the students to "try again" to meet them.

Giving Rewards

Gemma used a system of giving rewards in the form of counters (or tokens), coupons and privileges. Before establishing the system, the class discussed and agreed upon issues such as what to give rewards for, giving rewards to friends and the stages towards getting coupons. Gemma explained that when the system started she modelled giving counters to the students. At the time of data collection, she preferred the students to give the counters to peers because "it is actually fairer when they do it than when I do it ... (because) sometimes I would just forget about it when I am doing a million other things" (Int, Gemma, 23/7).

The Person of the Day was responsible for giving counters to students for positive social and behavioural actions. This involved giving counters to students whom the Person of the Day thought had exhibited "good" behaviour. The use of counters enabled the Person of the Day to give the reward without interruption to the class. Students who received counters wrote their name on a chart called "It's so good it's terrifying". If students received two counters in a day, they would then receive a coupon. When students accumulated ten coupons Gemma stamped them and they were able to choose a privilege of going on a computer during reading, having a lolly or teaching a lesson.

Solving Problems

Gemma expected students to take responsibility for getting help and there were many options available to them for gaining it. First, if students had personal or social

problems they could attempt to solve the problem on their own, seek support from a friend, the teacher or principal, call a base group meeting or discuss it in a class meeting. Gemma particularly encouraged students with personal or social problems to seek help from their base group. Second, if students had academic or procedural problems Gemma encouraged them to seek help from a friend, the group of students that shared the table or those who were doing the same work.

Decision-Making

The school decision-making policy stated “That everyone affected by a decision will be consulted by the persons making the decision” (Staff Information Booklet, 1996, p. 24). The decision-making model that supported the policy stated that at the class level decisions could be made that did not affect other individuals or classes. Thus, individual students, teachers, base groups or class meetings could make decisions at this level. At the school level, decisions could be made in consultation with those affected by the decision including all students, staff and School Councillors such as the Student Representative Council.

In the class, Gemma perceived that decisions were made in three main ways: Gemma made some decisions, the students made some and they made other decisions together. Gemma stated that she sometimes made decisions such as choosing topics because she was very enthusiastic and on other occasions, she let the students choose topics through discussion and a vote. The students formally made decisions using structures such as base groups and class meetings. Students also made decisions when provided with choices about many aspects of their schooling. Gemma negotiated many decisions with students. On all occasions, she encouraged students to have a say through questioning, making suggestions and giving opinions.

There was a gender imbalance in the class as there were 18 boys and only 11 girls, which concerned Gemma particularly when making decisions. Gemma endeavoured to cater for the small number of girls by being aware of what the girls wanted. When making decisions that the gender imbalance could affect, Gemma weighted the votes to make it fair for the girls.

Teaching Strategies

Gemma used a wide variety of teaching strategies that were student-centred. Strategies included questioning, problem solving, modelling, cooperative learning, group work, guided-discovery learning, hands-on learning, contracts, open meetings and class meetings. Many lessons began by focusing students on the lesson. This involved reviewing past lessons, and giving explanations and instructions to the students as they sat on the floor as a group. Gemma did not spend much time talking to students before they moved off to work. After students had moved from the floor to begin work, Gemma rarely interrupted the class to give further instructions or information. Gemma monitored students by initially waiting until students were on task and then moving around the room talking to students about their work.

Gemma tried to structure lessons so the students could “take control of themselves” (Int, Gemma, 15/8). She organised some lessons so that the students knew what they had to do and thus they needed very little teacher support such as in spelling, class meetings and base groups. Gemma gave guidelines from which students could make decisions such as, how to approach a particular task and how to present their work.

Attempting to establish a success oriented learning environment Gemma structured activities to reduce the likelihood of failure so students gained a sense of progress. She planned open-ended tasks that were interesting and relevant to students

and designed to “stretch” students. Gemma did not give the students work just to keep them busy.

Teaching Social and Cooperative Skills

For the first few weeks, at the beginning of the year, Gemma focused on teaching social and cooperative skills. She explained that she spent less time on academic learning until “the class feels that they are ‘one’ class and they are a group that works together” (Int, Gemma, 5/8). Once Gemma felt the class had reached this stage, she continued to teach social skills that were relevant to the students’ needs. Gemma planned weekly lessons to teach social and cooperative skills. In addition, when issues developed Gemma altered plans to meet students’ needs. Gemma explained:

I think if there’s a social need or (something) that comes up like in teaching or in the classroom, to make things work in the classroom better, that will over-ride some things. If I decide that we need to re-practice our listening skills or someone in the class is having a social problem I might add an extra lesson in and take something else out because I think that is really important. (Int, Gemma, 30/7)

Gemma taught social and cooperative skills throughout the year. She taught social skills such as listening and problem solving and used base groups as a structure to teach them. Gemma taught cooperative skills in context whilst the students were working in groups. She taught all skills by identifying the skill then discussing and reflecting their use.

Teacher Communication

Gemma had many expectations of the students that she expressed explicitly and implicitly. When expressing expectations, Gemma explicitly gave reasons to students explaining why she held them. She expressed expectations regarding the amount of work due for completion, when work would be due, the presentation of work, completing homework, social and cooperative skills and behaviour. Gemma informed students of the consequences if they chose not to do as expected. On one occasion I noted:

Gemma is waiting for everyone's attention. She is talking about spelling. Gemma is explaining that she has marked a few books and will mark the rest tonight. She is not overly happy with the effort put in. Gemma is reminding students of the time they have to complete their spelling. She is standing in front of the board talking to the class. Her voice is reasonably quiet but serious. Gemma is expressing her expectations, "This week if I am handed up work that is not neat, labelled, ... you will have to meet with me and we will work out a consequence for that." Gemma is referring to the contract. "If you have signed something, it means that you will do it." (Field notes, 4/8)

On many occasions, Gemma gave students feedback about aspects of behaviour that Gemma was not happy with and she then stated what she expected from the students. For example, one morning after Mark had taught, Gemma began the day and told the students that she was not happy with how they left the classroom. Gemma then explained that she understood Mr Church was new but it was the students' responsibility to clean up the classroom (Field notes, 4/8).

Gemma reinforced positive student behaviour using descriptive recognition and praise. She regularly used descriptive recognition, giving a clear description of the

behaviour and how she felt about it or the positive effect it had on her. She used praise particularly when students were beginning a new task, for example, “Well done (student’s name) who is working quietly” (Field notes, 6/8).

Gemma used a variety of techniques when she wanted the students’ attention. Usually Gemma asked the students in a loud voice for their attention. For example, “Could people please look this way from their seats?” or “Are we ready?” On some occasions Gemma clapped a rhythm, which the students copied giving Gemma their attention. On other occasions, Gemma asked the Person of the Day to gain the class’s attention by clapping a rhythm.

When Gemma interacted with the whole class, students raised their hands to ask and respond to questions and to contribute to class discussions. Gemma selected students by name to contribute. She usually chose students who had raised their hand but sometimes she chose those who did not raise their hand.

In this section, I have described the dimension called processes. Processes included how Gemma managed behaviour, rewarding students, students solving problems, decision-making by Gemma and students, teaching strategies, teaching social and cooperative skills, and teacher communication. Many of these processes were supported by structures Gemma established in the classroom that I presented in the previous section.

Gemma shared power with students by establishing the processes and probably enabled them to become empowered because they could have gained a sense of power-to and power-with. In the following section, I examine the environment that supported the employment of the structures and processes.

Environment: The Social, Emotional and Physical Context

The environment dimension includes the social, psychological and physical aspects related to the surroundings, environs, milieu, atmosphere and climate. Aspects of the environment including the atmosphere, physical environment, resources, sitting as a class, student movement, physical presence of the teacher and teacher-student interaction will now be discussed.

Atmosphere

There seemed to be a positive collaborative climate in the classroom and a sense of community cohesiveness. Gemma and the students communicated with respect for each other and showed concern for each other's welfare. Students were often observed seeking and receiving help, and showing interest in each other's work. On many occasions, I observed groups of students sitting in a circle and talking. When someone was speaking, those listening gave eye contact and if they could not see the person speaking, they often leant forward. I rarely heard or saw Gemma or students put others down. Parents wandered into the room in the mornings talking to their children, other students and to Gemma. Students often brought to share with the class, items from home they considered important.

The atmosphere seemed informal, and there was usually a busy hum of activity and purposeful movement. Most of the time, one could see and hear students laughing, talking to each other, and students moving around and in and out of the room. On one occasion I commented, "there is a buzz in the room and a sense of excitement" (Field notes, 22/7). Students often began lessons quite loudly especially as they were organising themselves but in time, the noise level dropped as they began the task. Gemma allowed this time of settling to occur and did not ask the students to

quieten. There was only one occasion that Gemma did not allow the students to communicate with each other and that was when the students sat a National English test.

There was a sense of trust in the classroom. Gemma and the students openly shared, for example, their ideas, opinions, and feelings. Trust was also shown in a more physical sense. Gemma's handbag and sometimes a lap top computer sat on the floor by her desk even during break times. In addition, students lent their belongings freely to others.

Physical Environment

The focus of the classroom was the floor space in front of a white board. Gemma arranged students' desks around the floor space and her desk was almost hidden in a corner. She used her desk to store belongings and did not sit at it during school hours. Gemma and the students rarely used the white board for anything other than recording the programme for the day, the date and homework. Situated on the white board was the "It's so good it's terrifying" chart, used for recording students who received counters. Students' work was displayed on pin boards and hanging across the room.

Gemma arranged groups of tables usually catering for four students to facilitate group work and communication between them. Students sat at allocated tables for much of each day. The allocation of students' seats at tables occurred randomly. Students drew coloured tokens from a container to determine where they would sit for approximately two weeks. Gemma made some changes to the seating arrangements to ensure there was not only one boy or one girl at a table group. She then expected students to stay at that group of tables until the next move. If students had problems where they were sitting, Gemma supported them to work out their

problems. When students worked with others not from the table group, they often moved to sit together.

Gemma arranged other aspects of the class so students could easily access what they needed. There were many resources freely available to students, including books, stationery, computers, tape recorders, cleaning materials, art and craft supplies. She placed trolleys in which trays held students' belongings so students could access them with ease. There were various areas available for students to work, such as the shared space in the open-spaced unit, floor spaces, the room next door and an area outside. Students used a small prayer table to display prayer books and candles. Stored under the prayer table were items for use in prayer sessions. There was a wall hanging with a pocket for each student where coupons and notices were placed.

Displayed around the room were student and teacher created posters, such as rosters, the class rules, base group members and lists of class duties. There were also some charts for students to refer to such as:

Good Listening means -

1. Appropriate body posture
2. Eyeballing
3. Supportive statements
4. Asking open-ended questions
5. Summarising what has been said.

Covering the door were yellow stars. When students received a “positive”, a positive comment from another student, they recorded the positive on a star. Students then placed the stars on the door. Interestingly, there were no stars available for the students to use while I was collecting data.

Whole Class Interaction

There were occasions when the class sat as a group on the floor and other times when they sat in a circle. When Gemma gave explanations or instructions to the class, students sat together as a group on the carpet whilst Gemma and the Person of the Day sat on chairs in front of them. Gemma explained that the class sat in a circle during, for example, class meetings and prayer. By sitting the class in a circle, especially when making decisions, Gemma found it easier not to direct the conversation and she thought that quieter students felt more comfortable to have a say. The circle symbolised to Gemma, “Unity, togetherness and equalness” (Int, Gemma, 19/8).

Student Movement

Gemma allowed students to move around the room as they needed for example, to collect items and speak to peers. Many students had jobs or lessons that required them to leave the class at certain times. These students always left and returned quietly. When students returned from being out of the classroom, they joined the class in unobtrusive ways finding out what the class was doing.

Physical Presence of the Teacher

Gemma’s physical presence in the classroom varied at different times according to the role she assumed. When Gemma spoke to the class as a whole her presence was very noticeable. She usually sat on a chair next to the Person of the Day in front of the students who sat on the floor. However, if the class was sitting in a circle then typically Gemma would sit on the floor as part of the circle and thus her presence was less noticeable.

When students were working, Gemma's presence was not obvious. When Gemma spoke to students she moved near them and she rarely called across the room. Gemma gave eye contact and spoke in a voice that the student(s) with whom she was talking could hear. To obtain the same eye level as the student with whom she was speaking, Gemma often leant over, squatted down or sat down. While the students worked, Gemma sometimes worked at a student's desk or on a chair out the front.

Gemma often left the room to monitor students working in the room next door, outside or in the shared space of the unit. On most occasions, students did not notice Gemma's movement in and out of the room. This was evident because the students' behaviour did not change and they did not make comments about her absence. An exception to this was when students wanted to speak to Gemma and could not find her. Students would then ask others if they knew as to Gemma's whereabouts. If Gemma had to go to another classroom or office in the unit, she usually asked the Person of the Day to "keep an eye on things".

Overall, Gemma did not have a strong physical or verbal presence when the students were working except when she was addressing the class on the carpet.

Teacher-Student Interaction

The nature of teacher-student interaction appeared to be based upon respect and trust. Gemma demonstrated respect when interacting with students. When she spoke to students about serious issues, such as their behaviour or social problems, she conducted the conversation in private. Gemma sometimes asked students to remain behind class to discuss an issue or she met with them away from others and used a quiet voice. When managing students' behaviour, Gemma spoke to students in a manner that enabled them to explain their actions. Gemma accepted choices made by

students but encouraged students to consider other options that were available. This is illustrated in the following conversation:

Carl was upset. He approached Gemma and explained that Robert had said something that that put him down. Gemma taped the subsequent conversation she held with Carl and Robert (Field notes, 6/8).

Gemma Did you say something to Carl about this?

Robert No.

Gemma You didn't say anything to Carl at all?

Robert I went over and just said, "How's the TV going?" and looked at it and...

....

Gemma Right now, Carl's got a problem about something that you did. Can you think about what you might have done?

Robert No, I came over and I said, "How's the TV going?" and then I twirled it around like that ((demonstrated how)) and I saw that- and I asked if "Where's all the stuff gone?" and he said "It's not a TV any more it is a video recorder" or something...

Carl No, no...

Gemma Pardon?

Carl I said, "Philip's got the TV".

Gemma Right, so did you say anything negative to him? You know a put-down or anything? Carl did you feel like you received a put-down?

Carl Yes. ... He picked it up like this and then he puts it down and goes "That's crap", and then walks off..

Robert I did not! I did not!

Gemma ... Where would he get the idea that he had that said to him?

Robert I dunno.

Carl Well, I must have mistaken his words or something. Maybe he um- Maybe I heard something different that what he thought he said.

Gemma So you don't think that you said anything incorrectly?

Robert I didn't. I think I said, "It might need a bit of work" Did I? I dunno.

Gemma Did you say positive things about it?

Robert Mm. Is it a TV or is it a video recorder?

Carl Video camera.

Gemma A video camera. All right, well then what can you do next time when you are with someone who's working and you're talking about something they've created? Remember you might have something to say to improve it. Say, "That's good what you're doing so far, but perhaps maybe it needs something." Rather than telling them, "No". I'm not sure whether you did it or not, but you're saying you didn't, which I believe what you are saying, and Carl said he may have misheard. But just for future notice in case there is an argument, just remember to try to look for something good and then you can give suggestions. You might say, "One idea is..." Okay?

Robert&Carl Ah ha.

Carl Like "Can you help me with my TV?"

Gemma Yeah, all right then. Okay.

(Conversation, Gemma, Robert & Carl, 6/8)

This conversation also illustrates how Gemma accepted what students said. She also clearly expressed her expectations that the students should respect each other and presented ways in which the students could show respect and give constructive feedback to each other.

Gemma also apologised when she inconvenienced students. On one occasion in mathematics, Gemma asked a group of students to sit on the carpet because she wanted to talk to them about a social problem. Gemma kept the group waiting a few minutes as she was detained talking to some other students. When Gemma joined the group, she apologised to them before starting the conversation (Field notes, 5/8).

Gemma supported students when they attempted to take on responsibilities. The following incident illustrates this.

Antonio (the Person of the Day) is trying to clap a rhythm and get others to copy. Gemma suggested, “Antonio do it louder.” He did and everyone copied. He told everyone to get a sheet and get into his or her base groups (Field notes, 29/7).

On many occasions, Gemma interacted with students on a more informal basis. She seemed to have fun with the students and would often laugh with them. There were also times when Gemma did not interact with students, although she made herself available for students to approach her. For example, when students held base group meetings and on some occasions when students worked.

This section has described the environment that Gemma established. Gemma shared her power by creating an environment that supported the students to employ the processes and structures. It was likely in this environment that students would have been able to gain a sense of power-to and power-with.

Summary

This chapter has presented four dimensions that emerged from analysis of interview and observational data. Firstly, I described Gemma’s belief system through the identification, elaboration and illustration of each belief. Gemma’s belief system

included how she believed that she should treat students, how students learn and the social and physical environment she thought best for students. Secondly, I presented a summary of Gemma's reflection on the notion of student empowerment. This section included Gemma's conceptions of student empowerment and perceptions of how she empowered students. Thirdly, I examined the structures established, that is the organisational arrangements that supported the processes and the environment. Fourthly, I described the processes that occurred in the classroom, which included the procedures, approaches, systems, methods and applications. Finally, I presented the environment, which referred to the surroundings, environs, milieu, atmosphere and climate.

This chapter has laid the foundation for the following chapter, which reflects from the students' perspective on the dimensions presented here. It has suggested that by establishing these dimensions Gemma shared her power with the students and thus begins to address the question of how can a teacher enable student empowerment.

CHAPTER 6

STUDENT LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM WITH GEMMA

This chapter describes the students' life in the classroom with Gemma as a teacher and includes their conceptions and perceptions of this life. In the previous chapters, I described a day in the classroom with Gemma and with Mark. Then an analysis of data related to Gemma was presented. In subsequent chapters, the description in this chapter will be interpreted and discussed further. Data analysis of interview and observational data generated three major dimensions: structures, processes, and environment. I present these dimensions and their categories offering extracts of significant episodes and interviews to illustrate important features. Moreover, I often use "instrumental case studies" to provide insight into issues. These instrumental case studies play a supportive role, facilitating understanding of the findings (Stake, 2000). In addition, I present a section on the students' conceptions and perceptions of power as it helps build a greater understanding of student empowerment. Some sections are described in more detail than others due to the amount of data collected and the significance of the area. All sections contribute to the overall description of student life in the classroom.

This chapter directly addresses the research question of what is the nature of student empowerment and further considers how it can be enabled by examining the structures, processes and the environment established. It is essentially descriptive, but I have included another layer of interpretation guided by the conceptual framework. That is, I have begun to consider more seriously what all of this means. These interpretative remarks are placed at the end of each section separated from the description by a row of asterisks and in the final section of the chapter.

Structures: Organisational Arrangements Established in the Classroom

In this section, I describe the structures that Gemma established for class members to use. More specifically, I describe and illustrate the students' conceptions and perceptions of the structures which include Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meetings and games. In addition, this section examines the ways in which the students utilised these structures.

Person of the Day

Every day a different student assumed the position of Person of the Day to support the teacher. All students perceived that the role of Person of the Day as important and they seemed to have a clear understanding of it. An interview conducted with Sarah after she had assumed the role of Person of the Day illustrates students' perceptions of the experience and their conceptions of the role.

Sarah It (being Person of the Day) was good because you get to do things when the teacher's not there. Like when she is talking to a person, you get to play games and stuff. Yeah I just liked it.

Anna So can you tell me about your day. What did you do yesterday?

Sarah Well I gave out little counters for people to put their names on the board if they were being good. And I played a little game and I clapped every time we needed to do something. If the teacher wanted everyone to be quiet, I would clap them all to be quiet.

Anna So when you give them counters what sorts of things did you look for?

- Sarah I look for people who are listening well, and are doing the right thing and are keeping on-task.
- Anna Can you describe how you are different from the rest of the class?
- Sarah Because you get to do all little jobs sort of thing and yeah you get to sit up the front. And you just sort of being the teacher's helper for the day.
- Anna How do you think that they help the class?
- Sarah Well it helps them if- usually when the teacher goes and talks to someone or she has to go somewhere, everyone starts talking and stuff. But when you've got the Person of the Day they can keep them quiet and play little games with and things.
- Anna Are there any other ways that it would help the class?
- Sarah Um, not that I can think of. It helps the Person of the Day learn different skills so like controlling the class and things like that.
- Anna What other skills?
- Sarah Um, helping to organise things.

(Int, Sarah, 24/7)

They conceptualised the job involved helping the teacher by, for example, gaining attention and organising games when the teacher was occupied. The Person of the Day also played a major role in giving rewards. He/she was responsible for identifying students who were "good" and rewarding them with a counter. Students enjoyed assuming the role and they perceived that they benefited from the experience as they learned many skills.

The interview extract above also highlights how students perceived that the Person of the Day was different from other class members. This difference was

emphasised physically as the Person of the Day sat on a chair next to the teacher in front of the class.

The only problem with the role of the Person of the Day identified by students was that they could not enforce the classroom rules. Marie explained:

Anna Is there anything bad about the system?

Marie You can't give people warnings. But that's fair in a way because like some people pick on other people in the class. And they would probably just give them out the most 'cause a few people aren't having very good times at the moment and they normally just pick on each other. So Miss Hanley doesn't want to be going through all that. ... She doesn't want to have the Person of the Day being in charge of warnings.

(Int, Marie, 5/8)

This interview extract also illustrates how the students accepted Gemma's decision not to allow the Person of the Day to give warnings. In addition, students seemed to understand Gemma's reasons for the decision.

In summary, students had a clear understanding of what the role of Person of the Day involved. They enjoyed the experience of assuming the role and perceived that they benefited from it. In addition, students perceived that the Person of the Day was different from the rest of the class. A problem identified by students was that the Person of the Day could not give consequences to those who broke the rules.

When students assumed the role of Person of the Day, they seemed to be intrapersonally empowered. Students thought that they had the ability and the capability to perform the role and thus they gained power-to. Additionally, Gemma

supported the Person of the Day to assume the role further enhancing some students' sense of power-to. Perhaps the students could have been further empowered if they were able to enforce the classroom rules.

The Person of the Day was also involved in power relationships with the teacher and with peers. Clearly, the Person of the Day had more of a sense of power-with Gemma than he/she would normally have had. Gemma shared her power-with the Person of the Day and in doing so gave him/her power-over the other students. In addition, as part of the Person of the Day's role involved giving rewards to peers, it is likely that he/she also gained reward power. Nevertheless, in an implicit manner Gemma retained ultimate power. This suggests that the students experienced some level of intrapersonal empowerment and a degree of interpersonal empowerment.

Class Duties

The students were allocated class duties that they had to undertake. The students clearly understood what each duty involved and they readily assumed independent responsibility for their duty. Students perceived that their duty was important and Paul illustrates this perception. He explained that his job of looking after the windows and heaters was "very important" (Int, Paul, 30/7). Generally, students carried out their duty at appropriate times without reminder or guidance from the teacher. The book monitors were the only students who needed direction from Gemma, as they usually could not anticipate when she required them to collect and distribute books as it occurred on an irregular basis.

The way in which students carried out their duties changed during data collection, apparently due to student initiative. For example, initially the students responsible for lunch orders asked the Person of the Day to gain the attention of the class and enquire if there were any more lunch orders. By the end of data collection,

the lunch monitors had begun to gain attention and address the class themselves. Students who maintained the white board and prayer table also initiated change of their duty. They began recording homework and the date on the white board and occasionally rearranging the prayer table display. Students understood the role of each duty, which they adapted as they saw necessary.

The class duties enabled students to become empowered to some extent. As students were responsible for carrying out their allocated duty independently and they were able to make decisions and initiate change, it is likely that many students were intrapersonally empowered. In addition, the class duties probably enhanced the students' sense of ownership in the classroom enhancing power-with relationships with the teacher and peers.

Base Groups in a Classroom

From analysis of data related to base groups a number of features emerged. I use one base group as an instrumental case study to present these features and use extracts of significant episodes from meetings held by this base group to illustrate issues.

A Base Group in Action - A Case Study

Simon, Karen, Cathy, and Paul were members of a base group. Simon was a student who had very few friends in the class. Gemma described him as having difficulty with making friends. Karen was a confident student who had many friends and one in particular who she considered her "best friend". Cathy had one close friend and a few other friends with whom she would work on occasions. Paul was assertive and appeared confident. He did not have many close friends but interacted with those he chose.

Simon called a base group meeting because he had a problem he wished to discuss. After checking with Gemma that it was all right to have a meeting, Simon approached the other group members to inform them that he had called a meeting. The group sat around a table in the “wet area” which was an area in the open space unit. The meeting began:

Simon Well, I got a problem and it's Brigitte, she keeps on annoying me. She chucks my pencil case out and you know it's really annoying me. So that's all.

Cathy Have you told her to stop?

Simon Yes.

Paul Did you tell a teacher?

Simon Yes I did.

Karen What did she do?

Simon Yes, I did tell a teacher, but she didn't say anything. She just said, “What a bad boy, a bad girl, I mean” (giggles). That's all she said, so...

Karen Was that the Chinese teacher (the teacher of Chinese)?

Simon Yeah.

Simon That's what the Chinese teacher does. She chucked my pencil case out.

All (They all talk at once.)

Paul You could tell Miss Hanley and then she might speak to the Chinese teacher.

Simon Yeah, but she won't do anything.

Paul Yeah, then she will say, “It's up to you” or something.

Simon Okay, now how can we solve it?

Karen Well, you could tell Miss Hanley.

Paul Or you could just take a pencil or a pen to Chinese.

Karen Yeah, without your pencil case...

Paul And just take your book.

Simon Yeah, I'll just take my book.

Paul Okay.

Simon Okay, it is solved. I reckon I'll take the book up to her (class).

(Base Group Meeting, 18/8)

All the meetings began in the same manner, which indicated the students called base group meetings with a clear objective in mind. Students stated their problem, which they expanded upon following questioning from the group. Options for how the problem could be solved were explored with some consideration to possible consequences. The student who had the problem usually decided upon an option, which on many occasions would be reviewed at a later meeting.

During base group meetings, students used “meeting language”, that is, language appropriate for base group meetings. Meeting language seemed to help students maintain a sense of purpose during meetings enabling them to give a structure to meetings. Typical statements used by students throughout the base group meetings were as follows:

“This base group meeting is now open.” (20/8)

“I have got a problem and it is...” (20/8)

“Now the problem is solved.” (20/8)

“Now, does anyone else have any problems?” (20/8)

“How did we solve Cathy’s problem? Did we solve it?” (18/8)

“I am reporting back.” (20/8)

“So are you okay now? Has that solved your problem?” (21/8)

“Shall we finish the base group meeting?” (18/8)

“The meeting is now closed.” (20/8)

Problems students discussed during the meetings were of a personal or social nature and most were related to their friends. Other problems included students who were annoying them, being treated unfairly by a teacher, incidents that occurred in and out of the classroom and trusting another member of a base group.

Some problems were ongoing and students discussed them repeatedly during meetings. Students seemed to be aware of the importance of following up problems and asking each other to report back to the group. This is illustrated by Cathy who had an ongoing problem with Sandra, whom she thought was breaking up her friendship with Lucy.

Cathy You know how last week I said about Sandra?

All Yeah.

::::

Cathy At recess today she was walking around with Lucy when Lucy wanted to come play football with me.

Simon Yeah, I know...

Cathy And she was walking with Lucy around the school and I think she was trying to break us up.

Simon Yeah, and today when you weren't there she said something like-she kept on going with-um, she kept on asking things and...

Cathy Yeah, and she shows off. She shows off to like...

Simon Yes, she is trying to break you up.

Karen It's just that she follows me and Sarah around too.

Cathy Yeah, same with us.

Karen It could be like she wants some friends as well.

Simon But she does it in annoying ways.

Karen She could just say "Can I play with you?" not "Hey, come over here, follow me."

- Cathy And she begs and you have to give up. She says “Oh, please, please.”
- Simon But that’s not the problem with you ‘cause she’s just trying to break you up.
- Cathy Mm. She’s always trying to come with us and then when we play football she goes away with Lucy and then I’m there and I try to track them down, but then I can’t find them.
- Simon She says she hates you.
- Karen What does Lucy feel like?
- Cathy I dunno.
- Karen Does she mind? Maybe (you should ask her).
- Cathy Okay.
- Paul And also she puts you down instead of puts you up. She was doing that at lunchtime...
- Cathy And she copies too...
- Paul ...and then she always goes next door to you, and she keeps on giving you everything, and...
- Simon ...and she wants to borrow your stuff.
- All Yeah, yeah.

(Base Group Meeting, 18/8)

The students continued discussing the problem and then moved on to other group members’ problems. Each problem was discussed with a sense of purpose. After a while Simon prompted Cathy to continue talking about her problem regarding Sandra. Cathy seemed to welcome the opportunity to continue.

- Simon How did we solve Cathy’s problem? Did we solve it?
- Karen About what?
- Simon Cathy’s problem...
- Paul ...with Sandra.

Cathy Mm, and also when um, wherever there's a lot of people left to go with partners, then she always goes with me. Yeah, like Marie and Brigitte, all the girls that are like left there and she always goes with me and Lucy.

Karen Is that why you wanted to be with me in Spanish?

Cathy Yeah.

Karen I'm sorry.

Cathy That's okay. That's okay.

Simon Well, all you can do is sometimes just say - I notice that she like begs and everything - just try and like - you know...

Karen ...Say, "I'm doing something else." Like...

Simon Yeah or go with Lucy or something and just like ignore her.

Karen ...Or play a two player game.

Simon Or just like ignore her or something.

Cathy "But can't you make it three?" ((pleading voice)) (imitating Sandra).

....

Paul Well, what did we decide to do last time with Sandra?

Cathy Well, it was the same thing I told you. She was trying to break me and Lucy up.

Simon Well, like I said...

Paul Well, what did we solve?

Karen We didn't solve it, we said "report back" like I had to report back with Sally. So we're just reporting back now ...

Paul Very hard problem.

Simon ... (say) "Sorry Sandra I'm going with Lucy and someone else." But I know it's hard 'cause she keeps on begging, but you just try and like... Do you want to be Sandra's friend?

Cathy Not really.

? She's just too much.

Cathy If she sort of calmed down a bit.

Paul You could always tell her, “If you keep being annoying, keep annoying me, I’m gonna” - No, don’t say that. Say that, “I don’t want to be your friend.”

....

Simon So, we can’t really solve that problem with Sandra.

Karen Yeah, it is a bit hard. We need Sandra. Shall we get Sandra?

Cathy No. No.

Simon We’re not really supposed to get other people.

Karen If you need to talk to them you are.

Cathy Yeah, I know but I think. Next week I will report back to see how it’s going and if it’s still going, we’ll get her.

Paul Well, I sort of think you should tell her if she keeps annoying you and you know, ...

((Simon said something at the same time and Cathy responded to what he said))

Cathy No, next week. See if she calms down next week.

Paul Um, you could tell her if she keeps annoying you like she is, then you know, you could say you won’t be her friend.

(Base Group Meeting, 18/8)

Cathy was adamant that they did not call Sandra to the meeting, reflecting her ownership of the problem. The group began talking about another problem. Toward the end of the meeting, a student again suggested that they call Sandra to the next meeting. However, the group did not deal with the suggestion as the conversation took a different direction.

The next morning Gemma arranged for all the base groups to meet. Gemma had recorded on the board issues for the students to discuss.

- Any problems
- Check tables
- Discuss how each person will try to complete homework and school activities.

During this time, Cathy reported to her base group about what was happening with Sandra. After a while, Gemma spoke to the class about checking each other on their knowledge of the multiplication tables. This prompted Cathy's base group to decide to call another meeting later to continue discussing her problem. Clearly, the students required time to discuss problems thoroughly, that is, for students to go through the process of exploring the problem, discussing possible solutions and consequences and choosing a plan of action.

All talk during base group meetings was either "on-task" or exploratory in nature. Generally the students remained on-task, however, when the conversation explored issues in more detail someone usually brought them back on-task after a short time to discuss the problem at hand. For example, on one occasion Simon said, "Well we should get back to the problem. We've just got two more minutes. The problem really is we have to get ..." (Base group meeting, 18/8). Students were clearly aware of the need to stay on-task and they closed meetings when there were no further problems to discuss or students perceived that they had met for long enough.

On occasions, particularly when problems were ongoing, base groups called to meetings other students who were involved with the problem. To help resolve the conflict the group members used basic conflict resolution techniques. Gemma had modelled these techniques when resolving conflicts between students. This is illustrated in a meeting called by Simon. After Simon reached a satisfactory solution

to a problem he had, Simon invited the other members to discuss their problems and specifically asked Cathy to report to the group about her problem with Sandra.

Paul Okay. Okay, so we'll leave that. Um, anyone else have any problems? Cathy? About Sandra?

Cathy Yes. She has been really, really annoying me now. I don't know why, she's just getting on my nerves. She is telling me a lot of things that I don't really want to know about. ((Students begin to speak but stop)) She blabbers on all the time, and I just, I just don't listen, I just nod my head and things and she's just getting *really* annoying. ((Students begin to speak but stop)) And also if, even though Lucy's my best friend, she is getting a bit annoying sort of thing, kinda like....

Paul Who?

Cathy Lucy. 'Cause she like, um, wherever I go, she'll come with me.

Karen That's 'cause she likes you.

All Yeah.

Simon Yeah, she is your best friend.

Paul Yeah. You're really not....

Simon ...it's like Sarah follows Karen and Karen follows Sarah.

Paul No offence, but she really doesn't have any other friends in this school because she is quite new.

Cathy Yeah, I know...

Paul Like you are-have many. You have made quite a few.

Karen Yeah, I am not new and I have only got one. I haven't really only got one but I have only got one best, best friend.

Simon Um, what about Sandra? (She) kept on hanging round Lucy.

Cathy Yeah.

Simon Why don't we bring Lucy into our base group and ask her how she feels.

Karen ...and Sandra.

Paul First Lucy and then Sandra.

Simon Yeah, let's get Lucy now.

Karen I'll get her.

((Simon and Karen went to find Lucy while Cathy and Paul obtained a chair for Lucy.))

The students seemed to understand the social relationships in which group members were involved. They attempted to reinforce to Cathy that Lucy was her friend when Cathy indicated she had begun to doubt the quality of the friendship. Cathy's base group provided her with verbal support encouraging her to maintain her friendship with Lucy. On this occasion, Cathy appeared happy to allow the group members to call Lucy to the meeting.

The base group discussed what they would say to Lucy and who would speak. Yet, as the following extract indicates, the students did not adhere to what they had planned.

Paul Ask her how she feels about it.

Karen Okay let Cathy do it.

Paul Yeah let Cathy.

((Lucy joins the group))

Cathy How do you feel about Sandra when she follows you around everywhere?

Paul ...and telling you what to do and everything?

Cathy Yeah.

Lucy Well, well, I, well um, (sigh) it's hard to say it, but I don't feel comfortable having her following me around. It's quite annoying.

Paul Um, what do you mean, you're not comfortable with it.

- Karen You don't like her following you.
- Lucy I don't like her following me.
- Paul So you don't really want to be friends with her?
- Lucy No.
- Paul Okay, and do you Cathy?
- Cathy No, because she just follows you around without any warning and then she just wants to play with you when you're playing like a ...
- Paul ...a game
- Cathy ...a two person game. And she just begs you to make it three and then you have to give up, otherwise she'll just go off crying or ...
- Paul You don't really want to hurt her feelings at all, but at the same time you have to.
- Cathy Yeah.
- Paul Probably just tell her "If you keep acting like this, I don't want to be your friend, because I don't like friends who are, you know, up like that".
- Simon Okay, is that all? ((Said whilst Paul was speaking))
- Simon Can Lucy go now?
- All Yep.
- Paul Yep, you're welcome.
- Karen Yep, you can go.

(Base Group Meeting, 20/8)

During the interaction with Lucy, Cathy and Paul assumed roles similar to Gemma when she resolved conflict. Cathy and Paul took control as surrogate teachers. They elicited how Lucy felt, clarified for meaning and reflectively listened.

When base groups decided to call other students to meetings they usually prepared what they were going to say. Students gave much thought to the other person's feelings and possible consequences.

Cathy What are we going to say about Sandra?

((Simon went to get Sandra.))

....

Paul Ask her if she would stop, you know annoying us. Ask her to stop and if she does, let me know.

Cathy Well, I can't really 'cause she'll just get angry, really angry. I'll ask her the same thing about - I'll ask her the same thing about what we asked Lucy. "How you feel like..."

Paul "Do you feel comfortable with..."

Cathy ...being friends with me and Lucy?" And just say that, "You can make a lot more friends if you just ask them to play with you."

((Simon came running back calling, "She's coming."))

(laughter)

Cathy Oh, Paul!

Paul Okay, um, this is Sandra. Um how do you feel about, what was it?

Cathy How do you feel about playing with me and Lucy most of the time, like when we play football with my football and just? Do you feel comfortable or do you feel left out?

Sandra Oh, a bit of both sometimes.

Cathy A bit of both?

Simon That's not the question.

Paul What do you sort of mean you feel both?

Sandra Well sometimes I feel left out and sometimes I feel comfortable, when people like, pass the ball to you.

Simon Why do you like- sometimes you follow Cathy and sometimes you say you hate her and then you like her?

Karen She didn't say she hates her.

Simon No, I asked her once and she said...

Cathy She doesn't.

Sandra It's just that sometimes you get in bad moods.

Cathy Yeah, I do get in bad moods all the time and sometimes I get upset.

Sandra That's the only time....

All Okay, um...

Karen Your problem was that you didn't really like being followed around that much.

Paul Yeah.

Karen She doesn't like you following her around. She still likes you. She still wants to be your friend. She just doesn't want you following her around.

....

Paul I think maybe Cathy would like a bit of a break from playing with you...

Simon She still likes you.

Cathy I still like you though.

Paul ...and maybe play with you a couple of times a week or something instead of everyday.

Cathy You can still play with me though.

Simon Yeah, she still likes you.

Sandra I know.

Simon Okay.

Cathy Okay.

See ya Sandra.

See ya Sandra.

Paul Now the problem's solved if she keeps continuing tell her that you don't want to be her friend.

Cathy ((whispering))

Simon Why did you say - you didn't want to hurt her feelings. You don't really want to be her friend?

Cathy No.

Simon I know how you feel. Yeah I know how you feel.

(Base Group Meeting, 20/8)

Calling students into base group meetings did not occur without firstly trying to resolve problems through other means. Students accepted being called into base group meetings as part of the problem solving process. When called into base group meetings, students were treated with respect. The climate was friendly, non-threatening and students felt comfortable.

Students clearly understood who owned the problems discussed in base groups and their role in the problem solving process. Carl, who was called to a base group meeting because Paul had a problem with him, illustrates this. When asked how he felt about being called to the base group meeting Carl replied:

Well, people have problems- people- everybody has problems in their life and they've got a problem with me 'cause I bring things to school. Well, I feel okay, but I'm a little bit angry 'cause I didn't finish my maths. (Int, Carl, 20/8)

During the base group meetings, students used many social and cooperative skills. Students usually took turns to speak, used people's names and gave eye contact. All group members were encouraged to contribute to discussions sometimes by invitation. Students helped groups by guiding the discussions forward. Individuals

achieved this by redirecting an exploratory discussion to more on-task talk by restating the problem or indicating time remaining. Students gave verbal and non-verbal support to each other. They demonstrated an awareness of not hurting other people's feelings. Individuals readily revealed their feelings, and accepted and valued the feelings of others. Students expressed empathy, especially when they were trying to establish reasons for an individual's behaviour. When appropriate, students used conflict resolution skills.

Students exhibited many cognitive skills during base group meetings. Students gave opinions, expressed their beliefs, and expressed agreement and disagreement. Information was given as students recounted personal experiences and gave summaries of what had been said or decided. Students expressed opinions supported by reasons, justifications or information, criticised views of others and defended personal positions. To elicit information, clarification, opinions and explanations, students asked many questions. Reflective listening was used to clarify feelings and meanings. Students identified and clarified problems. Additionally, they explored options for solving problems and considered some possible consequences.

Students clearly perceived that trust was important within groups. There was an expectation that group members be able to trust each other. Simon who called a meeting to discuss how he did not fully trust Paul, another member of his base group, illustrates this. Simon said, "Well, I can trust Paul, but I can only trust him 90%, 10% I can't trust him. So that is the problem. Base group has to trust" (Base Group Meeting, 20/8). The base group discussed the issue and established that Paul had told someone something said in a previous meeting. Karen, another member of the group, told Paul that, "You're not allowed to tell anyone what we discuss and what we don't" (Base Group Meeting, 20/8). This was accepted and Paul agreed to keep discussions in base group meetings confidential.

Students perceived base groups as a positive support structure for making decisions. Within the base groups, there was a very positive and supportive climate. Students demonstrated respect for each other, valued what members had to say, helped one another, showed concern for one another's welfare and worked collaboratively. The following extract from an interview with a base group held directly after a meeting highlights students' perceptions of base groups.

Brigitte They're like our family.

Anna And what are they good for? Like how has that meeting helped you?

Sarah Well, they help you solve problems and ... they help you decide things.

Anna And how has that one (meeting) helped you?

Sarah Well, I think it has helped because they asked Sally in and we sort of talked about it and they sort of...

Anthony Other people's opinions. Like help you decide what....

Sarah They helped me decide what to do. Yeah I think I am okay now.

:::

Anna Do you think that (every class having base groups) is a good thing or....

Brigitte Yeah, I think it is because you have someone you know who that you can trust you can turn to. And what ever is said in the base group meeting you can't tell anyone.

Anthony The only problem is if some- if people in the base group are against each other. Like if they're the people who are fighting.

Anna In the base group?

All Yeah.

Brigitte That hasn't happened to us.

Anthony That hasn't happened.

Sarah I don't think it will.

? We're friends.

(Int, 23/7)

In summary, students called a meeting for a purpose, their own purpose, specifically when they had personal or social problems they wished to discuss. Once students had discussed their problem and selected an option for solving the problem, students seemed much happier to continue with their work.

Students had a clear conception of the structure of base groups. They understood how to hold meetings. The format of meetings involved stating and exploring the problem, discussing options for solving the problem and some possible consequences. The student who owned the problem then selected an option and the base group reviewed the situation in subsequent meetings. Meeting language, taught and modelled to students, enabled base groups to run meetings according to a format and helped students maintain a sense of purpose. On occasions when a problem involved conflict with other students, those students were called into meetings and conflict resolution skills were used to help resolve the conflict.

Students demonstrated the use of many cognitive, social and cooperative skills during base group meetings. Gemma explicitly taught many of these skills to students and she modelled others. Peers also modelled skills in meetings. The social and cooperative skills students learnt enabled them to establish a positive and supportive climate within base groups. Base groups provided a safe forum to gain support from peers to solve problems. Students gave help, verbal and non-verbal support and showed concern for each other in base groups. Generally, the level of trust within base groups was high. On-task talk and exploratory discussion occurred during base

group meetings. Both forms of talk were important as they provided opportunities for students to reach new understanding. Finally, students perceived base groups as a supportive group that they could depend upon to help them solve their personal and social problems. Students consulted their base groups regularly and considered group members as friends.

Using base groups students seemed to have a sense of empowerment in both the interpersonal and the intrapersonal domains. Students were able to and capable of attending to their concerns at any time by calling a base group meeting. The students perceived that they were able to solve their own personal and social problems with the support of their base groups suggesting students had intrapersonal empowerment. A trusting climate supported students to gain this sense of empowerment. Additionally students were able to express opinions in meetings, thus they had a voice.

Base groups encouraged power-with relationships among peers. They were a mechanism that realised a positive impact on student-student relationships in the class. This mechanism encouraged students to accept their group members and students encouraged each other to accept their peers during the process of sharing and solving problems in base groups. Base groups seemed to provide students, even those students who did not have quality relationships with their peers, with a sense of relatedness with base group members. Therefore, base groups possibly helped alleviate students feeling a sense of isolation from peers and gave students a sense of control in obtaining personal and social support. Students worked with each other in base groups to meet their needs, which suggests they had interpersonal empowerment.

Class Meetings

Students had a clear conception of class meetings and they were aware of the meeting format, procedures and the roles students assumed. An interview held with Cathy illustrates students' conceptions:

Cathy Well, we had a chairperson and they had this big sheet of paper. And we write down agenda topics that we can discuss with the whole class and we discuss them when our turn comes. And we have a recorder who records if there's like any votes and records how many voted yes or no. And we have an observer who observes the whole class what their body posture (is, and) putting their hands up. And a timekeeper who keeps the time of a topic, five minutes per topic. Then we just discuss all these topics that we have down on the agenda. ... Sometimes we set up in the multimedia room (the vacant room next door)... and sometimes we sit in the classroom. In the multimedia room we normally use chairs but sometimes we don't. If we are a bit silly we don't use them. And normally we just sit down (with our) chairs. ... The teacher keeps a roll and then calls the name of the person who's the chairperson, the time keeper, observer and recorder.

Anna And can you tell me what sorts of things go on the agenda?
Can you give me an example or something?

Cathy Well sometimes we talk about having fundraising days. Like we were talking about it today, the bike and the roller blading days. And if we can't figure out a way to have it or not have it we take it to SRC, Student Representative Committee that's what it stands for. And we just talk about if we want it and if how much money we would like to give to the fundraising on the day. Like 20 cents or something or a dollar. If we are able to do it we can decide when we are going to have it with the

SRC. And what we are going to do. If we are going to have a bike day or roller blading day, cake day or something like that. ... Sometimes we talk about like the drinking taps if like they're- if people are mucking around with them we just tell the teacher in the class meeting. And we figure out what we can do to stop this. And sometimes people have been throwing wet toilet paper in the toilets. So we discuss about that. And we decide if we can do anything about it and if the teachers can do something. If we can have a yard duty teacher in the toilets or, yeah. And sometimes we can't actually make our decision. ... Sometimes it gets a bit too hard with people suggesting a lot of things. Like we have monitors to go to the toilets every half hour or that they might miss out on work. And if we have teachers (checking on the toilets) they would have to put up with the stink a lot (laughter). And sometimes we just can't decide what to do with it. So we just take it to SRC or leave it.

Anna So what sorts of things go to SRC?

Cathy Fundraising ideas, things we can do to help the school be more clean or more enjoyable.

Cathy demonstrated students' conceptions of what happens in class meetings and the role of the class meeting in the decision-making process. This interview extract also illustrates the variety of issues students discussed in class meetings. All agenda items were student-initiated and there appeared to be no limits perceived by students as to what items they could put on the agenda.

Students understood the decision-making process and the role of the class meeting in this process as indicated by Cathy above. Bernadette explained the process:

Bernadette Well, (in a class meeting) we all sit around and we might like have a problem or something that we want to talk about. Like we might want to change the uniform or have something. And we talk about it with our class and we have that once a week. And if we take it to SRC our monitor takes it there.... Well, it (then) goes to, say if it is on the uniform, it goes to the uniform committee. And they might decide to change it or they might decide to say that they don't want to change it and that they are happy with it.

:::

Bernadette Well, if it was (something we wanted to change) in the classroom you don't have to take it to SRC. You can just talk about it with the class.

Anna So how would you do that?

Bernadette I'd just -when we have a class meeting I would put my name on the agenda and my problem or what I want to sort out.

(Int, Bernadette, 24/7)

Students understood which decisions the class could make and which decisions needed to be taken to SRC and perhaps to other committees. They understood the link between the class meeting and the SRC. Furthermore, students understood the role of the SRC representative and the election process. Students perceived that their role in the decision-making process was important. In addition, they perceived that the SRC's role in the decision-making process was useful "because you might want to solve a problem or want something to change" (Int, Bernadette, 24/7)

Students liked class meetings and thought that they were important. An extract from an interview with Scott, who was new to the school at the beginning of the year, illustrates students' perceptions of class meetings: He explained,

Anna So can you tell me what is good about having class meetings?

Scott Well, you get to have a say in what we want. I mean in my old school we didn't get to do that, it just happened and we had to cope with that. But now we can complain about something or give suggestions to do stuff.

Anna And is there anything bad about the class meetings?

Scott I don't find there is. I reckon it's good.

(Int, Scott, 29/7).

One student stated that although she liked class meetings, she sometimes found them boring when "people talk(ed) about the same things every week" (Int, Sally, 12/8).

The following interview extract with Cathy demonstrates how students had clear conceptions of the various roles they assumed during class meetings. Moreover, the extract shows how the students were able to be autonomous when they assumed the roles.

Cathy Yeah I was observer. ... I had to write down some things I had to look for: body posture, listening, putting your hand up, fidgeting, um I can't remember, one person speaks at a time and eye balling which is eye contact. And I had to put ticks next to the name if the class was doing it good. And if one person was like fidgeting it would still count as good because it is only one person. So just put ticks and if we start to get down in our fidgeting or we start fidgeting a lot or talking, side conversations then I have to cross out a tick and out a cross. And then I have to tell what we have to improve on and what was good about the meeting.

Cathy At the end of the meeting the chairperson says 'Can we have the observer's report' and I just read it out or who ever is doing it reads.

Anna How did you know what to look for?

Cathy We have discussed the rules in the beginning, because it is a new term, of the meeting and um I just got the idea of what we have to look for. So most things we have to look for are eyeballing, body posture, fidgeting and the most one is noise level and putting your hand up to speak.

....

Anna Is it an important job?

Cathy I would say it is because then we know what to improve on the next meeting. You can tell say if we had to improve on the noise level then we have to really try hard the next meeting for our noise level to keep it down.

(Int, Cathy, 29/7)

Students enjoyed assuming the various meeting roles, particularly that of chairperson. Cathy illustrates how students had a clear conception of Gemma's role in class meetings:

Anna What does Miss Hanley do in the class meeting?

Cathy Sometimes she makes suggestions and she most probably like sits down and just watches us because we're are actually running the class meeting not- she is just watching and making suggestions. But we actually run the class meeting. The chairperson is the head person.

Anna And so does Miss Hanley put up her hand and?

Cathy Yes

Anna All the time?

Cathy Not all the time. When she has something to say about the topic or if we are doing something wrong she just puts her hand up to speak like we do.

The perception held by students was that they ran class meetings. In addition, students perceived that Gemma participated as one of them although students' perceptions of Gemma's participation in class meetings varied. Some students, like Cathy, noticed that Gemma did not always raise her hand and wait for the chairperson to select her before contributing to the meeting. Other students did not share this perception. For example, Paul explained that if Miss Hanley wants to talk in a class meeting "she has to put up her hand" (Int, Paul, 12/8). When asked if Miss Hanley always raises her hand Paul stated, "Yes, unless it is something like an emergency. ... Like if there is a fire or flood or something" (Int, Paul, 12/8). Another student, Julian, perceived that Gemma helped the chairperson if they had trouble keeping control of the class (Int, Julian, 20/8). Interestingly, I observed many occasions when Gemma contributed to the meeting uninvited by the chairperson (Field notes 29/7; 12/8; 20/8).

Class meetings were a structure for making decisions related to the class and for participating in the decision-making process of the school. Some decisions made in class meetings were taken for further discussion to the SRC. Other decisions that were made as a class were meant to be implemented. However, I observed that the class did not follow up on some decisions or refer to them again in subsequent meetings. Thus although the class made decisions to bring about change, the change did not always occur. There was not a system in place by which students monitored decisions and ensured they were followed through.

Class meetings provided an opportunity for students to learn and continually practise skills such as listening and respecting opinions. In addition, class meetings provided students with the opportunity to see things from their peers' perspectives and allowed them to build on others' ideas. Moreover, class meetings encouraged students to assume responsibility for the classroom and school.

The class meetings provided students with a forum to participate actively in the decision-making process and provided a safe environment in which students were able to express their voice, namely their opinions. Students gained a sense of power-to in class meetings, as they perceived that they were able to and capable of initiating and contributing to the decision-making process. The students who assumed allocated roles also gained a sense of intrapersonal empowerment. Moreover, the class meetings provided students with a sense that they shared the ownership of the class with Gemma. Therefore, class meetings facilitated students to gain a sense of power-with.

The power relations that occurred in class meetings were complex as the perceptions held by Gemma and the students did not reflect my observations. Gemma and the students generally perceived that the chairperson ran the meetings and had power-over the other students and Gemma. Gemma assumed a participative leadership role helping to establish a power-with relationship with the students. She helped enable the chairperson to gain power by providing him/her with support such as the script for running the meeting and by teaching social skills necessary for the position. However, although Gemma did share her power with the chairperson she was not always consistent in doing so. On occasions, Gemma reclaimed her power in explicit ways but interestingly the students did not perceive that she did this. So, what does this mean in terms of student empowerment? The chairperson was

empowered in both an interpersonal and intrapersonal sense and although Gemma regained her power on occasions, the students did not perceive that this altered the power held by the chairperson. Therefore, what is probably important is that students perceive that they are empowered.

Games

The class played games on many occasions, such as when they were waiting for Gemma, at the end of the day, between sessions when they were waiting for other students and after class meetings. The Person of the Day or the chairperson of class meetings took full responsibility for choosing and facilitating the games. Facilitating the games involved gaining the class's attention, informing the class of the game to be played, and beginning and maintaining the game. Gemma did not participate in playing games with the students, but rather she continued other activities such as work whilst they played. At times, Gemma provided support to the Person of the Day and chairperson when she thought it was required. For example, on one occasion the Person of the Day was having trouble gaining the class's attention. Gemma intervened by obtaining the class's attention and explaining that they should show respect for the Person of the Day (Field notes, 11/8).

Students showed much enthusiasm for playing games as they participated eagerly. One student, Sarah, suggested that teachers should arrange for students to play games to help them have fun at school and prevent them from thinking school is boring (Int, Sarah, 14/8).

The games contributed to the interpersonal empowerment of students. When the students played games, they had power-with each other. Gemma did not exert her power when students played games except when she perceived that students required

some support. The student who facilitated the game had power-over peers but he/she shared this power with them when playing the game. Playing games provided the students with further opportunities to have social interaction because the games were social in nature. Additionally the games seemed to contribute to the cohesiveness between the students, which could be important to students to gain interpersonal empowerment.

Summary

In this section, I have described the structures established in the classroom from the students' perspective. The structures described were the Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meetings and games. The main issue to emerge is that the structures enabled students to become empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally. Gemma shared her power with the students by establishing and encouraging the use of the structures. Students gained a sense of power-to, as they were able and capable of using the structures particularly as Gemma supported them to do so. Additionally, the structures facilitated power-with relationships between Gemma and students, and students and students. An exception was the structure of the Person of the Day, which helped establish a power-over relationship among students. Nonetheless, although Gemma shared her power with the students she retained ultimate power.

Processes: Ways Things Happened in the Classroom

In the previous section, I presented the structures that supported the processes, which I describe in this section. The processes established in this classroom were managing student behaviour, giving rewards, solving problems, decision-making and group work. This section describes and illustrates these processes.

Managing Behaviour

There were rules displayed in the classroom that related to student behaviour. The students seemed to have a clear understanding of what was acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and they seemed to understand the purpose for the rules. Yet when asked what the classroom rules were the students gave different versions of them. Marie illustrates one version:

Anna What are the rules?

Marie To respect other people's property, to not tease like, when someone else is talking for you not to talk because that's like you are not respecting them. And that's about all.

....

Anna And how does it help the class?

Marie Mm, by doing the right thing and trying to like follow the school rules so we are all like safe and everything.

(Int, Marie, 29/7)

If students felt other students were not treating them with respect, which was one of the classroom rules, they usually informed the teacher who determined the consequences if deemed appropriate. A conversation held with Sarah and Karen highlights how the behaviour management procedures were perceived by students to support their right to be respected.

Anna You know if someone put you down in the class, what would you do about it?

Sarah Um, usually tell the teacher.

Anna What does the teacher do?

Sarah Well she says "Go and do..."

Karen Or sometimes she says “Get the um, go get whoever it is, I dunno.”

Sarah Yeah, and then she’ll have a talk to both of you and usually, lots of the times it turns out that they’ve done something first to that person, so that’s why they’ve done it.

Anna Yeah and what would happen to them?

Sarah Um, usually, sometimes they get a straight timeout if she’s in a really bad mood. (laughter)

Anna What if it’s really bad?

Sarah They’ll get um get um, a warning.

(Int, Sarah & Karen, 18/8)

The students had a clear understanding of the behaviour management procedures. Students knew what the consequences were for breaking rules and did not appear to fear them. Gemma gave consequences daily. From interviews and observations, it was apparent that Gemma spoke to students with respect using a firm voice. Scott illustrates students’ experiences of the behaviour management procedures and students’ reflections upon it.

Scott was new to the school at the beginning of the year but had established friendships. He had a vibrant personality and appeared confident in most situations in the class. I spoke to Scott following his return from timeout.

Anna Can you tell me what happened to you with the consequences today?

Scott Oh, when I got a warning? Oh, I got two warnings, which means I get a timeout to sit and I have to fill in this sheet, I’ll go get it if you want. ((Scott obtained the timeout reflection sheet from his file.)) So I got this sheet which says um, I have to fill in the questions and it says for when I get a warning,

what did I do to get that warning? And what I was doing was talking and the rule about it is to “respects others”. So I just had to fill that in. And it’s the same with the timeout. You have to fill that in as well. And then ... it has another question which says “What are you going to do in the future?” and I wrote “Respect others and speak when it is my turn to speak”. And then I signed it and Miss Hanley signed it and I put it in a file where I’ve got all my timeout sheets.

Anna Oh, yeah. So did you take this to Miss Hanley?

Scott Yeah, after I’d finished.

Anna And what did she say to you?

Scott She said that “That’s good. I’m glad you knew what you did wrong”, and said, “Put it in the file”.

....

Anna So were you happy with that? Like do you think it’s fair?

Scott Yeah.

Anna ... So what happens next?

Scott If I get another warning I have to get another sheet, which is yellow and it has a whole lot of other questions on it. And it’s about, and it’s called “Planning Centre” and I have to go to another class to fill that in. And then I come back to this class and then after Miss Hanley sees it I have to go up to Mr Black (the principal on leave) and he sees it, the principal.

Anna And are you worried about that?

Scott No.

Anna No?

Scott I don’t think I’m gonna get one.

(Int, Scott, 11/8)

Later, Scott approached me explaining that he wanted to talk to me. Scott had been reading and someone in the class went over to show him something. At this

time, the class was not supposed to be talking and Gemma saw Scott talking. Scott received another consequence, which meant he had to go to the planning centre. It is interesting that having received two consequences Scott chose to talk at a time he should not have.

This interview with Scott took place the following day.

Anna Right Scott, you were going to tell me about yesterday.

Scott Yeah, after I got the timeout I told you that about the consequence of getting a timeout and I didn't think I was going to get the next step and I did. Which meant I had to go to another classroom, fill in another form, and then talk to that teacher and then come back to my classroom after about 20 minutes and talk to Miss Hanley about it. And normally I would go to the principal, but Mrs Lane (the acting principal) wasn't here today, so I had to talk to Miss Hanley about it. And then after I talked to her about it I just went on with my work. And if I got another warning after that I would have had to get my parents called up, and that's *not very good*.

Anna Yeah. So what happened? How did it all....?

Scott Well, I was talking again when I wasn't supposed to and so Miss Hanley gave me another warning which meant I had to go to the other classroom. I got the paper, went to the other classroom and filled it out. And then that teacher in that classroom, a Mr Wood, he signed it. And then I came back to Miss Hanley and she read through it with me at lunchtime and then I went off and played at lunchtime. And then when I say that we went through it, she just talked to me about what I did wrong and to see if I understood what I did and everything.

Anna Yeah. And did you?

Scott Yeah.

....

Anna And how did you feel about it all?

Scott Well, it was my second one this year. ... I was used to it. I felt nervous the first time and then the second time, you know, I wasn't 'cause I (had) done it before so I knew ... what would happen and everything.

Anna And what, if you go to the principal, what does the principal normally say, do you know?

....

Scott If Mrs Lane (Acting Principal) was here she would just talk to me about it like Miss Hanley did as well.

....

Anna So how do they speak to you?

Scott Well, just kind of in a firm voice but not too firm, they're just normal.

(Int, Scott, 12/8)

Gemma used this episode with Scott to provide an example of how the behaviour management process helped empower students.

I mean an example (of empowerment) was Scott the other day. He got a warning and a time out just for chatting and things, and then he got another one for talking to someone who came and showed him something. And he, you know, you could see he was so annoyed with himself for doing it. He wasn't angry with me or anyone else, he was, he just filled it out and he was like, and he'd been working. So when he came back and talked to me about it ... he said, "I did actually speak to him. But I was actually saying, 'Well I didn't think the book was very good and, but don't show me because I'll get in trouble'". But he said, "I was talking and I did make one comment about the book so yeah, I probably did. But ... I told him not to show me and take it away because I didn't want to get a planning centre." And I said, "Well what do you

think we should do with this? Should we ... not have this planning centre sheet, or should we um, continue, finish it off by going up to Mrs Lane's?" And he said, "No, I think I probably deserve it." ... He had the choice then to say no, you know, most kids could say, "Put it in the bin!" ... But at least he had tried not to get into it (the conversation), so he had taken control of himself to keep out of it. So it (the behaviour management procedure) had given him some control. (Int, Gemma, 13/8)

Notwithstanding the progressive seriousness of the consequences that Scott received, it is clear that Scott perceived that he had control over the situation and accepted responsibility for his actions.

On some occasions, steps for consequences were "skipped" and students did not accept the consequences given as readily as they did when Gemma followed the steps. One particular episode illustrates this. Larry and Brigitte had a fight and Gemma sent them straight to timeout, "skipping" the warning. On reflection of this episode Larry explained:

Larry And then we just both had to go to timeout, straight to timeout. It was something physical that we both did.

Anna And how did you feel about that?

:::

Larry I didn't think I should have gone straight to timeout I think she should have just gone straight to timeout because she did it for a purpose and I just did it to get her back and that. I go for Port Power (a football team) and she goes for Essendon. And I don't know- I think she is a bit upset that Port Power lost- um that Port Power won over Essendon. I don't know.

Anna So did you think it was fair what happened?

Larry Some ways I think it was fair but some other ways I don't.
 Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

(Int, Larry, 29/7)

Gemma used the behaviour management procedures consistently, yet there were occasions when Gemma used different forms of discipline. On these occasions, students seemed uncertain as to fairness of how they were treated. A conversation with Simon demonstrates this:

Anna Simon, I wondered if you could tell me what happened this morning, you know how you were sent to sit on the floor?

Simon 'Cause I found my pencil case open on my desk and um, Larry, um, 'cause the Base Group that was sitting there, I think it was the "Twisters", and Larry said that Carl opened it. And I asked him if he was like, really telling the truth when he said "yes". And I told the teacher. And then he said "no". ... And then she (Gemma) said, "That's the end of the subject", and I just said to him, "Did you really open it?" And then she (Gemma) said, "Sit on the floor" like that.

Anna And what happened then?

Simon Um, I just sat there and then she said "Are you ready to get on with your work without causing any problems?" and I said "Yes".

:::

Anna Does that mean that you were in timeout when you were on the floor?

Simon Um, no, if I got a timeout I'd fill in the sheet.

Anna So what were you doing on the floor do you think?

Simon I think she just, no, she didn't tell me, she just said sit on the floor, so....

Anna Do you think that was fair?

Simon Maybe.

Anna Yeah?

Simon Maybe, maybe, yeah.

(Int, Simon, 19/8)

On the few occasions when the consequences were “skipped” or different from the normal procedures, students were less certain about the fairness of receiving different consequences. So, what effect do these different consequences used for managing student behaviour have on student empowerment? Are students more empowered at some times more than others are?

Gemma also used other strategies for managing behaviour and resolving conflict. She did not take responsibility for the students but rather encouraged students to take ownership of their own behaviour. Gemma used counselling skills to address conflict by asking questions to ascertain the problem, the involvement of each participant, the feelings of participants and choices the participants could have made and the consequence from the discussion. Questions Gemma asked included:

- What happened?
- How do you think (name) felt about that?
- That was your choice wasn't it?
- Is that fair?
- What could you have done?
- What is the consequence of all this?

The following reconstructed dialogue illustrates Gemma's interaction with students in such situations. Gemma listened to students and allowed them to speak openly without fear of recourse. She elicited lines of reasoning and drew the

students' attention to their responsibilities such as to the feelings of others. The language used by Gemma indicates that she valued the students.

At recess time, David was walking back to the classroom when Antonio and Marie ran up to him. Antonio tried to "dack" David, that is pull his pants down. Then Brigitte joined the group and Marie told her to dack David as well. Brigitte tried to dack David. Soon after, David elicited Scott's help and together they dacked Antonio. When they returned to the classroom, students informed Gemma of the conflict. She called a meeting with all the participants involved. Gemma used an eliciting style of questioning.

Gemma What happened at lunchtime, first to start all of this?

David Well, at the end of lunch, recess really, we were all going over to the hall. Well when the bell went ... I was walking back and then Antonio and Marie started running towards me. And then Antonio grabbed me around the neck and started pulling me round and everything.

Gemma Is that right Antonio?

Antonio I did that (demonstrated what he did), I went like that (demonstrated further) but I didn't exactly pull him around but I did grab him.

Gemma Yeah, what did you do Marie?

Marie And then Antonio tried to dack him and like David was just hanging on to his pants and then Brigitte came and....

The conversation continued until Gemma ascertained what happened and who was responsible for what. Antonio admitted to trying to pull David's pants down. Gemma then asked Antonio how he thought David felt to be dacked, checking with David if that in fact was how he felt.

Gemma How do you think David felt about that?

Antonio Afraid and upset, and angry and embarrassed.

Gemma Is that true?

Gemma then questioned Brigitte and established that Marie told Brigitte to dack David. Gemma explained to Brigitte that she chose her behaviour and asked her what a better choice would have been.

Gemma All right, so that was your choice wasn't it? You chose to do what Marie said. She didn't make you do it did she? To make you she would have had to get your hands, and put them on his pants and pull them down. That was your choice. Did you make a good choice?

Brigitte No

Gemma What choice should it have been?

It then unfolded that Marie had held David. Gemma asked Marie and Brigitte how David could have felt during this time. She then asked Scott about his role in the conflict and he explained what happened. Gemma further asked what else he could have done. The conversation ended with Gemma reminding the students to consider other people's feelings. Scott added that they should "try and make the right choice" (Interaction, Gemma, Antonio, David, Marie, Scott & Brigitte, 20/8).

When helping to resolve conflict, students thought that Gemma spoke to them in an "almost firm" manner. With Gemma's guidance, students retained ownership of problems and decisions made. An interview held with David after resolution of the above conflict illustrates how students perceived that Gemma was "serious" during interactions with them.

....

David Um, we just had to, we just had to tell her what happened and see what we could do about it.

Anna Yeah, and how did she speak to you when she was speaking to you?

David Well not heaps firm, but a bit firm.

Anna Yeah. And does she do most of the talking or does she sort of listen or...?

David Um, she just asks us to tell her what happened.

....

Anna Yeah. So, like, has the problem been solved or have you got some ideas of what you can do or?

David Yeah, it's sort of, yeah I think it's mainly been solved.

Anna Yeah. And does Miss Hanley tell you what to do or...?

David Um, no, she just asks us like, "What can you do to resolve this problem?" and then we like say "Don't do other things to people that you wouldn't want, that you wouldn't want to do to you".

Anna Oh, right. So you come up with all the things do you?

David Yeah.

Anna And who makes the decision at the end?

David Miss Hanley. Oh, well she says like, what shall we do about this. And um, we just have to make a decision what we should do.

....

Anna Do you feel as though you've made the decision, or do you feel as though Miss Hanley has told you?

David No, I think we make the decision, but I think she just tells us to make a decision.

....

Anna How does she treat you when she talks to you in those serious conversations? How does Miss Hanley treat you?

David Yeah okay.

Anna What like? Can you explain it to me?

David Um, she treats us just like normally, like she would when we were working or something.

(Int, David, 20/8)

Gemma taught students social skills as a means of managing students' behaviour. The following interview with Michael illustrates students' perceptions and conceptions of learning in this way.

Anna Michael, what I want to ask you, you know this morning you did all that stuff about listening, why do you reckon you would have been doing that?

Michael Because we were talking too much in our classroom and we were not listening properly.

Anna So what was the activity, what did you have to do?

Michael We had to get in groups and like talk about something. We talked about disasters. Like one minute one person talks, another minute someone observes, another minute someone listens.

Anna Right and do you think it helped?

Michael Yes, some people it probably did.

Anna How would it have helped?

Michael To help us concentrate on our work more.

Anna Has it helped you?

Michael A bit yeah.

Anna How has it helped you do you think?

Michael By concentrating. And when you are talking, to face someone properly.

(Int, Michael, 12/8)

Michael explains in this interview how Gemma taught the students skills of communication with a secondary aim to reduce the noise in the classroom. Students understood Gemma's intentions and perceived that the process was beneficial.

In summary, students clearly understood and appeared comfortable with the behaviour management procedures. They perceived that the procedures supported the classroom rules. Students also accepted other methods used by Gemma to manage behaviour although they were uncertain as to their fairness. They perceived that Gemma spoke to them firmly regarding serious issues and they sensed ownership of their problems and decisions.

It seems that the students had a sense of power-to in relation to their behaviour. They clearly understood what behaviour was acceptable, particularly because they helped determine this, and the consequences that would be imposed if they chose to behave inappropriately.

The power relations associated with the process of managing behaviour were complex. At times, it seemed that Gemma shared power with the students facilitating a reflection on behaviour such as when she counselled students. At other times, Gemma assumed a more power-over relationship with students such as when she isolated Simon. So, it would seem that the power relationship between the students and Gemma varied in the management of student behaviour. However, the power relationship between students did not alter very much. The process of managing behaviour seemed to facilitate power-with relationships between students. The

process discouraged students from exerting power-over peers in a detrimental manner and encouraged students to respect each other.

Gemma used the school behaviour management system effectively and the students accepted this. The students also accepted when Gemma used some of her own methods for managing behaviour, but some methods they did not accept. For example when Simon was placed into isolation but not timeout it seems he was disempowered because he did not know what was happening and did not perceive that this action was fair. If Gemma had consistently used the school behaviour management system the students would have been able to make informed choices about whether they would break the classroom rules because they would have known what the consequences would be. However, altering the way in which behaviour was managed meant that students could not make informed choices. Students did not perceive such action was fair. This suggests students were empowered when the behaviour management system was used but not when other consequences were imposed because the students lost their power-to.

Yet, the incident with Scott, who perceived he had control over the situation and accepted responsibility for his actions, raises a question: does this control constitute empowerment or rather was Scott subtly forced to comply with the system resulting in a loss of power-to? If so, then this suggests that although the school behaviour management system is empowering it can also be disempowering.

Giving Rewards

The Person of the Day gave rewards to students for exhibiting “good” behaviour when they were sitting on the carpet and occasionally when they were settling down to work. Data analysis showed that students clearly understood procedures of the reward system. They knew how the system worked and what their

role was within it. The role of students in the reward system included recording their names on the board and choosing a privilege when they had collected ten coupons. The Person of the Day distributed rewards in the form of counters (or tokens) and arranged coupons for Gemma to sign. An interview with Karen illustrates students' conceptions of the reward system:

Karen You get the counters if you are being good and the Person of the Day gives you one. And after the teacher has finished speaking you have got to go and put your name up on the board. And if you get a tick, you get a coupon. If you get ten coupons you can go on the computer, have a chocolate or teach a lesson.

Anna Yeah, and how many coupons have you got?

Karen Ten, so I can do that but I haven't done it.

Anna When are you going to do that?

Karen I don't know.

Anna Who decides when you can do it?

Karen We do but you have to do it in silent reading time.

Anna And so what are you going to do? Get the chocolate or teach a lesson or...?

Karen I don't want to teach a lesson. I am trying to decide on the computer or the chocolate. I like chocolate.

Anna When did you get your ten?

Karen The other day. I think on Monday.

Anna Right, and how did that feel?

Karen Exciting. Sarah has got nine.

Anna So do you like the system of getting...

Karen Yes ... Because you still get rewarded for doing good things.

Anna What sorts of things do you get rewarded for?

Karen The first four people on the mat when the teacher wants you to come down get to put their name on the board. And if you are listening well or something. And you can get a coupon.

....

Anna And how does it help the class do you think?

Karen Because people are quieter and better at doing stuff. And they act nicer because they want to get coupons so they can do these things.

Anna Has it changed the way you are in class? Have you changed because of it?

Karen A bit, because normally I go down and talk to Sarah but I just sit there and I get counters, sometimes.

(Int, Karen, 12/8)

This interview also illustrates how students positively perceived the reward system. Students enjoyed receiving counters and furthermore, they enjoyed giving them out as Person of the Day. Students thought the system was good for individuals and the class as they encouraged students to exhibit “good” behaviour.

A few students, however, perceived that there was a negative aspect to the reward system concerning equity. Sarah explained:

When we used to get them, the teacher used to only give them out to the really good people. Except the Person of the Day seems to give them out heaps. Like they just throw them out and give them to their friends first. ... A few of the not so popular people in the class do (miss out).

(Int, Sarah, 12/8)

When the Person of the Day gave students counters, they did not usually inform students of their reasons for doing so. An extract from an interview with Scott, the Person of the Day, illustrates this:

- Anna Have you given out any counters?
- Scott Yeah I gave out four or five.
- Anna And what did you give them for?
- Scott I gave two for listening, one for coming down to the floor
when asked really quickly and two for tidying up really well.
So there was about five.
- Anna And did the people you gave them to, would they have
known what they got them for?
- Scott No, I don't tell them, I just say, "Here you have been really
good."
- (Int, Scott, 4/8)

Thus, although students received rewards in the form of counters, they could only guess as to why they received them. Yet, the Person of the Day gave counters for specific behaviours he or she thought were "good".

It would seem that the only person to gain power by this process was the Person of the Day. Clearly, Gemma shared her power with the Person of the Day who then had power-over his/her peers when distributing rewards. The other students did not seem to gain much power from this process probably because giving rewards is a method for controlling students. The students were not able and capable of getting rewards as they wanted and they were not always aware of the reasons for receiving them. Yet, the students were able to select a privilege from some options and decide when they would have it, giving students some sense of power-to. Can such power gained by the Person of the Day, be described as empowerment?

Solving Problems

From analysis of data related to solving problems, two main types of problems were identified: (a) personal and social, and (b) academic and procedural. Students dealt with both types of problems differently and hence, I discuss them separately.

Solving Personal and Social Problems

Students were clearly aware of different avenues for gaining support to solve personal and social problems. The following extract from an interview with David demonstrates this awareness:

Anna What sorts of things can you do in your class if you have a problem?

David Go to our base groups. That is what the teacher got our base groups for. Because if we have a problem we can go to our base groups any time. ... If the teacher has spare time and if it's big you go to the teacher and tell her. ... You can tell your friends about what is happening and they might help you. ... If it's really bad you can go to Mr Black (the principal on leave) and he talks. He'll bring you up, who is the problem (the person(s) involved with the problem) and he will sort it out. He makes this chart on the board and you have to say what you have done. Like he'll write down what the person who has been hurt has thought that the other people have done and you have to say what you've done and he'll tick that off. He'll just decide what has to happen. (Int, David, 28/7)

Other avenues available to students included solving the problem by one's self or discussing the problem at a class meeting. Many students preferred to discuss problems with their base groups and a few preferred to speak to Gemma.

Students appeared to assume responsibility for solving their own problems readily. They perceived that it was possible to solve their problems and were confident at doing so. Furthermore, students perceived that it was normal to seek support in the process of solving problems and were confident at supporting others. Antonio explained his perceptions of solving problems in this class and he described how Gemma helped the students solve their problems:

She taught us to first of all try and work it out by yourself. So normally we have a base group meeting and if we can't solve it we'll go and tell Miss Hanley and she'll say like, "Okay, if that's such a big problem we'll go and talk about it." ... They would just talk until they could solve it. ... It's different (in this classroom), because in my other classrooms I used to straight away, go and tell the teacher and say, "This person's doing this and this and this." But in this class I feel that I should do it myself and just um, try and sort it out myself instead of going to Miss Hanley. (Int, Antonio, 31/7)

The following interview extract with Lucy further illustrates how Gemma encouraged students to solve their own problems. In addition, this extract demonstrates how social skills helped students in the problem solving process.

Lucy started at the school at the beginning of the year.

Anna So, if you have a problem in this class, what do you do Lucy?

Lucy Well, I try doing it by myself and then go to the teacher.

Anna Yeah, and what does Miss Hanley do if she hears you have a problem?

Lucy She asks me if I have done every step, and then she sorts it out for us.

Anna What steps are you talking about?

Lucy Like, what if, I mean, how do you say it? I can't say it. You give them an I-statement and tell them to stop it. That sort of thing.

Anna What, you're suppose to give an I-statement and ask them to stop, yeah?

Lucy And if they keep going, well then try to get on with your work. But if they still keep doing it, then you go to the teacher and they usually deal with it.

Anna And have you tried giving I-statements?

Lucy Yeah.

Anna Do they work?

Lucy Yeah, sometimes they work.

Anna Can you tell me what an I-statement is?

Lucy It's when you look the eye and you say, "Can you please stop it. I am very angry, you're annoying me and I need to get on with my work".

Anna Oh, and had you heard of them before coming here?

Lucy Not at this school, but at the other school I had.

Anna Oh, right you haven't heard of them from here.

(Int, Lucy, 5/8)

Students perceived that Gemma would support them if needed as indicated by Lucy. Furthermore, students perceived Gemma to be a good listener. They respected Gemma's requirement for time to discuss problems with them and students attempted to choose appropriate moments to approach her. Additionally, they were prepared to wait for discussions. The following interview extract demonstrates this perception held by students.

She (Gemma) is really good (at listening) when it comes to serious things and that. But if I had a problem in the class and I say it or something, she

would say “Well, I’ll talk about it at Silent Reading”, ‘cause that’s when she gets lots of time. So that’s when she normally says things like that, but she’s a really good listener. (Int, Marie, 19/8)

Solving Academic and Procedural Problems

Students were also clear about their options for gaining academic and procedural help. Options available to students included: (a) solving problems themselves, (b) seeking help from the teacher, and (c) seeking help from peers such as neighbours, group members or friends. Most students preferred to consult with the teacher as they were more confident that she would respect them and that they would obtain the correct information. However, Gemma encouraged students to seek help from other class members. Some students found seeking help from peers a quicker way for solving their problems. Carl explained:

Carl I would either walk up to the teacher and ask her, or I could either ask a person in my group, which I would usually ask the person in my group.

Anna You would ask them first would you?

Carl I wouldn’t copy them, but I would do what they told me to. ‘Cause it saves time walking up to the teacher and you miss out of a lot of work when you’ve got to walk up and down.

Anna Yeah, and what does Miss Hanley like you to do if you need help?

Carl Um, well sometimes I ask her and she says “I’m busy” and she says um, “Go and ask somebody, ask a person in your group or on your table”.

Anna ... So she wants you to ask other people?

Carl Yeah, when she’s busy.

Anna Yeah, and which do you feel safer doing?

Carl Um, well, I feel safer asking the teacher, but I'll ask the other people 'cause it saves some time.

Anna And why do you feel safer asking the teacher?

Carl Well, 'cause what that person told me might be wrong.

(Int, Carl, 11/8)

Students readily sought support from other class members to solve academic and procedural problems and assistance was freely given. The following incident illustrates how students who had trouble gaining the attention of the class sought support from the Person of the Day. I observed:

Students were getting ready to work. The students taking the lunch orders to the canteen asked loudly, "Any more lunch orders?" ((They did not ask the teacher if they could do that.)) When they did not get a response, they went to the Person of the Day, Sarah. They asked Sarah to clap to get everyone's attention and ask if anyone had lunch orders. Sarah did this. (Field notes, 23/7)

Students used the various options available to solve academic and procedural problems. The majority of students had the necessary skills to seek help and give appropriate assistance. On a few occasions, I observed that students did not obtain the help they required and participated in a variety of off-task activities. For example, I observed:

11:50 p.m. I have just joined a table doing measurement. Paul, Aaron, Julian and Tom are sitting at this table. They are playing with the equipment and are not on-task yet. They don't know what to do. A couple of times they asked the rest of the group sitting at another table what to do.

11:53 p.m. The group here is not on-task. Aaron is singing. They are now starting to get a strip of paper organised for an activity although I do not think they know what the activity is. Paul is measuring a one metre strip. (Field notes, 5/8)

This incident shows that the students did not seek help at first and they participated in off-task activities but after a short time, members of the group sought help. The help they received enabled the group to begin working, yet they still did not fully understand the activity. Following is another example of a student who did not obtain the help he required:

Michael came to me. He said, “Do you understand this?” I said, “No, I haven’t read it.” Marie piped up, “Ask Miss Hanley.” Michael wandered off to other desks. He is wandering around. (Field notes, 23/7)

In this incident, Michael required academic help. He sought help from me and was not successful. In a subsequent interview, Michael stated that he usually sought help from those around him or from the teacher (Int, Michael, 11/8). Nevertheless, on this occasion Michael did not approach those people.

In summary, students were encouraged to seek support for solving both personal and social problems, and academic and procedural problems. There were many avenues available to students to seek support and students were clearly aware of these avenues. Students readily accepted taking responsibility for their problems. Usually students sought support from their peers yet they perceived that Gemma would provide help if required. Although students attempted to obtain help, there were a few occasions when they did not receive the help they required.

The students clearly seemed empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally by this process. Enabling and encouraging students to solve their own problems particularly with the help of peers gave students a sense of power-to and power-with. Students were able to choose an avenue for gaining help and they retained ownership of their problems and the solutions.

However, what about Michael? Michael required academic help. He sought help from me and was not successful even though he said that he usually did get help from peers around him or from the teacher. It would seem that Michael did feel as though he was able to obtain help but he was not capable of doing so.

Decision-Making

In the classroom, decisions were made in four ways: (a) by students, (b) by the teacher, (c) by the teacher and students, and (d) randomly. First, I will describe students' conceptions of the decisions that they made.

Decisions made by Students

Students provided many examples of decisions that they made from the range of choices Gemma gave them. Marion explained some of these:

Well, this week we got a choice of (sitting at) our own tables because it was the first week back (from holidays) and Miss Hanley thought that would be nice. And um, we get lots of choices like how we want to present our work. When we did our name tags for our trays we got to choose whatever we wanted and we were allowed to use the coloured printer. We choose our own jobs. Because we sit at our desk and Miss Hanley will call out a name and ... with a partner you have to say a job. And she'll write it down and we do it until everyone is finished. Um, sometimes we choose where our work hangs up in the classroom. And

we choose sometimes what we want to show for assembly if we want to share something. Sometimes when we do research things in the library, like one time we did feral animals on farms. Miss Hanley chose our groups but she said, 'Next time we can choose our own so it is fair'. Um, we choose who we can play with. ...When we want to go in groups and base groups and things we get to choose who we want and we give them to Miss Hanley and she decides like who will go in your group. But first of all we choose who we want and then she puts the people together. ... Well, another thing we get to choose, I remembered, well this term we got to choose what we wanted to do (for society and the environment) and the highest was out of disasters and man made. We had about three pages with ideas of what we could do on this term. We got to choose all the ideas and then we got to vote which one we wanted to choose. And it ended up being disasters and we got it. ... There were all sorts of ideas. And we kept on voting until it just came down to a few and we chose. There were about eight really, really good ones and Miss Hanley said we'll have disasters this term and we'll choose out of those eight for the next term. (Int, Marion, 25/7)

From this interview extract, it is evident that students made a variety of decisions as Gemma presented them with a range of choices. Decisions involved all aspects of classroom life, such as who students worked with, where students sat, how students presented work and where students displayed work.

Students also made decisions regarding aspects of their life in the classroom, without restrictions from Gemma as Gemma encouraged students to show initiative and make decisions for themselves which students did. For example, on one occasion the class was changing the seating arrangements. Marie was temporarily absent when this occurred and thus would not know where she would be sitting when she returned. Karen, who was to be sitting next to Marie obtained a piece of masking tape

and stuck it to the spare place at her group of desks. She wrote Marie's name on it (Field notes, 11/8). On this occasion, Karen made a decision without consultation with others and implemented that decision.

Decisions made by the Teacher and Students

Gemma and the students made decisions together either by formally making decisions together or by Gemma making decisions in consultation with students. Gemma and the students often formally made decisions together by voting. Marion described how votes were organised:

Well sometimes, when we are in class meetings and we need to decide on something the chairperson will say, 'Out of this and that'. And we just say 'yes' or 'no' quickly around the circle. So, whatever the majority is wins and things. Or we put our hands up if we want something, like that's in the classroom as well. But how we did it last term, we sat down on the carpet and there was paper on the board thing and Miss Hanley wrote down all the ideas that everyone said. And then we had to put our head down and she would say one and we would have to vote for it. And at the end of each page, because we had three of them, we were allowed to put up our head and see what had got the highest so far. And that is how we usually do it. (Int, Marion, 25/7)

The class, including Gemma and the students, made decisions in class meetings together by having a vote as described by Marion. However, on some occasions during class meetings, Gemma made a decision in a manner that seemed to lead students to believe that they made the decision. A reconstructed episode from the field notes demonstrates this.

The class was participating in a class meeting. The chairperson was selecting students who had raised their hands to make comments about an

issue. Then Gemma spoke without being asked, 'Is everyone happy that Paul brings that up at SRC?' No one responded but Gemma seemed happy. The meeting continued with students discussing another issue. A student asked Gemma a question and she responded, "I can't answer you, because I don't make the decisions. The kids make the decisions." (Field notes, 29/7).

This episode demonstrates how Gemma made decisions for students. Although Gemma invited students to have a say, she provided no real opportunity for the students to participate in making the decision. Furthermore, this episode reflects how Gemma sometimes presented students with a confusing message. On the one hand, Gemma said that the students were responsible for making their own decisions, but on the other hand, Gemma made decisions giving the illusion that students made the decisions.

Informally Gemma made decisions in consultation with students. The following extract from the field notes illustrates this:

The class has returned from fitness. Gemma is standing in front of the board. She is discussing with some students whether to have maths, as there is not much time before the break. A student says, "It's not worth it." Gemma gained the attention of the class. She says, "Okay, eyes and ears this way."

Scott, the Person of the Day, claps to help gain the class's attention. Gemma says, "... I've talked to a few people and we've decided we haven't time for maths. (Field notes, 4/8)

Students appeared to accept the decisions Gemma made in this manner (Field notes, 23/7).

On occasions, students made requests for change upon which Gemma acted. For example, Marion asked Gemma one morning, "Miss Hanley, can we change tables today?" Gemma answered, "Yeah, we can do that." (Field notes, 11/8).

Gemma also informally made decisions when selecting students for such activities as presenting items at assembly. On these occasions, Gemma asked the students who would like to do the activity and then she chose someone who had raised his or her hand.

Gemma selected students for some activities, although for most activities students were selected in a prearranged order. There were many rosters for students that informed the class who was going to have the next “turn”. These rosters ensured all class members had a turn and students checked the rosters themselves to determine whose turn it was.

Decisions made by the Teacher

Gemma made some decisions without consultation with students. When Gemma made decisions without consultation, students explained that she usually gave reasons for them. Students appreciated it when Gemma gave reasons for decisions she made and they seemed more ready to accept the decisions. An extract of an interview with David demonstrates this:

Well, it helps us more understand what her reasoning is. But if she doesn't give us a reason, we just think, “Oh well, why did you say that?”
(Int, David, 19/8).

Giving reasons for decisions also appeared to improve the relationship between the teacher and students. Marie illustrates this as she explains why she perceives Gemma giving reasons helped her:

Cause some teachers go, “Nah, I don't want to hear it.” ‘Cause then you feel like, oh they didn't really want to listen to you. So when Miss Hanley said because the reason (is ...), that shows that she was listening to you

and she is hearing what you say. I don't really like it when teachers say, "No." Because you feel like, "Oh, I may as well not tell her anything. She never listens." (Int, Marie, 19/8)

This interview extract suggests that because Gemma gave reasons for decisions she made, students perceived that she listened and valued their suggestions. Consequently, it appeared that students were more likely to make suggestions to Gemma.

Decisions made Randomly

A few decisions were made randomly in the class such as those related to the seating arrangements. Students selected a coloured token, which determined where they would sit. However, afterwards Gemma would rearrange some students so that there were at least two boys or girls sitting next to each other (Field notes, 28/7). Students also made some decisions randomly. For example, during prayer they sometimes selected others to read a prayer by pulling their names out of a "hat".

In summary, decisions were made in four ways: (a) by students, (b) by the teacher, (c) by the teacher and students, and (d) randomly. Students made decisions regarding all aspects of classroom life. They made some decisions guided by choices Gemma gave them and others were self-initiated. Often Gemma consulted the students when she made decisions. When consultation did not occur, Gemma provided reasons for her decisions, which the students seemed to appreciate. Gemma and the students also made decisions together in both a formal and informal manner. Formally, Gemma and students made decisions by a vote and informally, Gemma made decisions in consultation with students or as requested by them. Finally, the class made some decisions randomly.

Hence, decisions were made in many ways and students participated in the decision-making process to various extents. Interestingly, although students perceived that they had a say in the decision-making process, they also perceived that “the teacher always has the overall say” (Int, David, 6/8).

Students seemed to have varying levels of power-to in this process because at times they were more able to make decisions than at others. However, when students made decisions Gemma respected them and supported them to carry the decisions out. Gemma assumed a facilitative role helping enable students to take control of their learning.

Gemma clearly shared her power with students in the decision-making process. She used a democratic style actively involving the students. Nonetheless, students had varying levels of power-with depending on the way decisions were being made. When Gemma made decisions without student input, she informed them of the decisions often explaining why she had made them. The students accepted this and liked the way she informed them. This seems important, as teachers have to make some decisions due to their obligations as a teacher. Explaining decisions made to students seems to be a way of helping to empower them as it shows that the teacher recognises the importance of the students when making them. It seemed that the students perceived that they were empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally at varying levels in the decision-making process.

Working in Groups

Most students said that they preferred working with others rather than individually and they were able to give reasons for this preference as Carl illustrates in the following interview:

Anna Do you think you learn more working by yourself or with other people?

Carl Working with others.

Anna Yeah. Why would that be?

Carl Because ... I might put a mistake. ... And 'cause I read the instructions and I do it differently from what I understand. But I might not do it properly, but other people that understand -they might tell me.

Anna So if I was to tell teachers, because they all have to learn how to teach. ... Do you think that they should learn that kids learn better with other people, or do you think, you know how some teachers like kids to work by themselves? What would you tell teachers if you had to tell them about it?

Carl Um, it would be better for kids to work together.

Anna And how would you explain why?

Carl Well, I would say that working in a group, children working in a group, they can help each other and they can get to know each other better and stuff.

(Int, Carl, 11/8)

Students gave other reasons for preferring to work with others, which included that they learn more, do not have to do as much work, can talk and because it makes for a better environment. Some students explained that although they preferred working with others they completed more work on their own.

A few students explained that they liked to work on an individual basis. One student, Brigitte, preferred working on her own when she felt confident at achieving success. Brigitte said she liked writing stories on her own "because I can do everything, it's like mine. I can make up the characters and everything" (Int, Brigitte, 24/7). However, when Brigitte felt she was not very good at the activity she preferred

working with others. Similarly, two students, Scott and Larry, stated they preferred working on their own and one reason they gave was that “you can take all the credit” (Int, Scott, Larry, 28/7). Interestingly, when Scott and Larry told me this both students had chosen to work together for the lesson.

Gemma usually expected the students to form their own groups. Many students were happy with this arrangement because they liked to choose their friends. However, there were occasions when students were not included in the arrangements or the arrangements were unsuitable. The following incident illustrates this problem and demonstrates how Gemma dealt with such situations.

Gemma explained to the students that they were required to plan a prayer session to run later. She asked the students to choose a different partner from with whom they worked last time. After the students began working, Gemma noticed a few students had formed a group of three and that a couple of other students were on their own and had not found a partner. Gemma established with the class who was absent and therefore, whether there was a need to form one group of three. She identified those students who were not in a pair and asked them to arrange themselves into pairs. Some students identified with whom they wanted to work. Damien, a member of the group of three, asked Gemma:

Damien So does that mean we can be a group of three?

Gemma No, you need to be in pairs. Someone has to go with Simon.

Right Damien, no Bill would you go with Simon please?

Students groaned and then Bill complained that the new grouping arrangements were not fair. Bill began to cry. Gemma then asked to speak to Bill, Simon, Damien and Julian.

Gemma All right, now there's a problem here. Now the reason why last time there was a group of three boys was because ... Antonio was working with the girls. So that made the (number of other) boys odd, so that's why there was (a group

of three last time). So you were right in saying that (there was a group of three), ... but this time Antonio is working with the boys, so now the (number of) boys are even. It just means that when you go to do it (run the prayer session) that none of you have a job to do in groups of three. Um, I only chose Bill just 'cause I chose Bill, not for any particular reason or anything. And also because you and Damien do a lot together and I just thought it would be good for you to work with different people. Would you like for me to pull it out of a hat (randomly choose the group by selecting names from a hat) or something instead?

Julian I will work with Simon. I worked with Damien last time.

Gemma You worked with Damien last time? Okay, is everyone happy with that? Are you happy with going with Bill? Are you happy going with Julian? Are you happy going with Damien? Okay, thank you for that Julian. Well done. It's great to hear people are (doing that).

(Conversation, 13/8)

Although most students seemed happy with being able to form their own groups, this incident demonstrates that there were problems for some students. One student, Simon, was not included in the grouping arrangements. One of the three students had to join Simon, but the students did not want to work with Simon. Intervening, the teacher chose Bill to work with Simon. Bill was not happy with the new arrangements, which resulted in a discussion with all concerned. In the discussion, Julian offered to work with Simon. Later, I interviewed Julian who reflected on the above incident.

Anna Can you tell me what happened please?

Julian Um, well I was partnering up with Damien and then ... he asked if he could be in our group. So we said, "Yes". And then the teacher spoke to us and she said that we couldn't have a group of three. So since I worked with Damien before, I said that Bill would be, I suppose that it would be nice if Bill could work with Damien. But the teacher said - I would work with Damien 'cause Bill worked with Damien a lot, 'cause they're really good friends. So I said 'I think it would be better if I went with Simon 'cause, um, Bill really wanted to go with Damien, sort of, yeah.

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Julian It doesn't worry me that much, even though I'm not that much a friend with Simon, but um, I decided it would be better if Bill would go with Damien.

Anna And when did you decide all that, was that when you were talking with Miss Hanley?

Julian Yeah, um, yeah, I decided 'cause Bill was pretty sad 'cause they're really good friends together and they do a lot of things together. So I wanted to be Damien's partner and Bill's, but (pause then laughter).

Anna It didn't work out. And so was Bill sad because Miss Hanley said he had to go with Simon?

Julian Yeah, he was a bit sad because I think he might have, 'cause the teacher just picked Bill because, like no for a special reason for anything, she just picked Bill to go with Simon. And Bill doesn't really like Simon that much, so he wasn't too happy about that.

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Anna Well, you know how you ended up going with Simon, what did you think of that in the end? ... How did you sort of react do you think?

Julian Well, um, well 'cause it's Simon's first year at this school I don't really know him that much. And um, I don't know 'cause Bill and Damien - Bill's been here for a while and um Damien is here since Year 3. So I sort of know them a bit better. And um, like, they're in my soccer team and um, well, we do a lot of things together. And well, Simon has some friends that I don't really like that much, um, and I don't think Simon likes me that much either.

Anna Mmm. So were you happy about it or not?

Julian Um, well, ah, ah, I want to work with Bill and Damien, but it doesn't worry me that much if I work with Simon one time.

(Int, Julian, 14/8)

Therefore, although Julian had agreed to work with Simon, it appears that he was not very happy to do so. So what about Simon?

Interestingly in the above incident, Gemma asked how Damien, Bill and Julian felt about the suggested solution of Julian working with Simon, but not Simon, especially as Simon was the student who was originally left out of grouping arrangements. Simon was a student who did not have many good friends. In an earlier interview, Simon explained that he preferred random selection of groups. He said, "I like it when she (Gemma) pulls them (names) out of a hat 'cause then I get to work with different people. It's not like working with the same people all the time" (Int, Simon, 11/8).

Gemma usually expected the students to form their own groups and random grouping was not used often. As already stated, many students were happy with this arrangement because they liked to choose their friends. However, there were occasions when students were not included in the arrangements. The following interview with Larry further illustrates this problem, as Larry reflects on an episode

involving a student, Cathy, who was upset because she was left out of grouping arrangements. Larry stated that his peers used to leave him out of grouping arrangements but he said that it was not happening as much any more. He explained if you did not have a partner, you were “put with someone no one else wants”.

Larry Well, about a couple of weeks ago, maybe before this term, um, I was just someone who was like invisible. Like nobody wanted to do anything with me. They would never kick the ball to me in football or do anything with me. And they kept on annoying me, and um, you know, just teasing me and all that, picking on me whenever they could. And I don't think Cathy was like me, because I think she just didn't get picked for an actual group. I think like, they didn't want her in their group now, but they would if there was someone else away or something.

Anna So what used to happen to you when you were choosing groups?

Larry Oh, like, I asked people (to form a group) and they said, “No, I don't want to be with you.” And then I had to go with people, like the leftover people ... You just think “one of the leftovers” you're not a “pick” like for a second or third pick or something like that.

Anna Yeah, and how did you used to feel when that happened.

Larry Oh, I dunno, just horrible.

Anna Mm. And does that still happen?

Larry No, not any more.

Anna So what, so how did it all change?

Larry Oh, Mr Black (the principal on leave) heard about it and so he wanted to talk to them and so then, they talked to him and then it was all over.

- Anna You know how sometimes the kids choose the groups and sometimes the teacher chooses the groups and sometimes she pulls things out so it's just like, you know, just like a chance, which way do you think is the best way that the groups should be chosen.
- Larry I like to choose (groups) myself, 'cause then I want who I want and when I want.
- Anna And what about if it was a while ago when you weren't being chosen, what would you have said then?
- Larry Teacher choose. I wished the teacher would put me with someone like a popular person, 'cause I was unpopular back then.
- Anna Yeah. So if you were a teacher and you were trying to do the best by all your students, what would you do?
- Larry If I heard about someone being picked on or something I would just have a talk to them. And if they kept on doing it, take them up to the principal talk to them and then pick the groups, you know. (Int, Larry, 1/8)

When the teacher placed students without a group into a group, it appeared some students were not happy to accept the rearrangements. This seemed to cause distress to the students if they were not wanted. Clearly, those students who had friends and were included in the arrangement of groups were happy with being able to select groups themselves. Those who were left out of groups were not satisfied with the practice.

In summary, most students preferred working with others. They also preferred to choose their own groups although on occasions this caused distress to some students.

It seemed that most students were more empowered intrapersonally and interpersonally when they had opportunities to work with others. However, when students chose their groups most were empowered but some were not. Those that were not empowered lost power-to and power-with and therefore they could be described as being disempowered by the practice.

Summary

In this section, I have described the processes in which students were involved in the classroom. The processes described were managing behaviour, giving rewards, solving problems, decision-making and working in groups. The main issue to arise is that the levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment varied. Gemma shared power with students by establishing the processes, some of which were identified in the literature. In particular, problem solving was empowering. Additionally, decision-making and working in groups were likely to enable student empowerment. However, it is less certain that the processes managing behaviour and giving rewards enabled student empowerment. On one level, managing behaviour and giving rewards provided students with a framework of what was expected and what would happen if students did not meet the expectations. Therefore, students could make informed choices about their behaviour. On another level, this could be viewed as controlling for obedience rather than for self-regulation (Brophy, 1999; Weinstein, 1999). However, it is clear that establishing clear processes enabled Gemma to share power with students.

This section also shows how many of the processes relied on use of the structures to be successful. The Person of the Day was important to the success of the process giving rewards, base groups were important to the process of solving problems and class meetings were important to the process of making decisions.

Environment: The Social, Emotional and Physical Context

In the previous sections, I described the structures that Gemma established enabling the processes to occur. I also discussed the processes including how students perceived and used them. In this third section, I describe, with a focus on the students, the environment including the class, student-teacher interaction, whole class interaction, student interaction, and student movement. It becomes clearer how the environment supported the students to employ the structures and processes.

Perceptions of the Class and Related Activities

Students perceived the class positively. They generally liked their peers, Gemma and what they did in the class. Simon and Lucy illustrate reasons for these positive perceptions held by students. Simon said that he liked the class because “everyone is nice and if you’ve got a problem they always keep it (secret)” (Int, Simon, 25/7). Lucy said, “I think it’s a nice class ... I do fun activities ((laughter)). I just like this class” (Int, Lucy, 5/8).

Students had a positive attitude to learning. Generally, the students enjoyed most subjects, but some did not enjoy Mathematics. More specifically, students seemed to enjoy work they could understand and work at which they thought they would experience success. For example, David explained why he especially enjoyed Spelling:

I found it easy to do. And um, it's just more- like more exciting than all the other activities, like maths and everything because I can understand everything. And I just like doing the activities like um, dictionary meanings and like fancy lettering and all that. (Int, David, 4/8)

Students perceived that they had adequate time to complete work. Students did not complain about time constraints. Students did not rush to complete work but rather took care to produce work to a standard with which they were pleased. Sometimes Gemma told students that they had a certain amount of time remaining to complete their work. On such occasions, some students worked faster compromising the standard of work they wished to achieve. A conversation with a group of students demonstrates this point.

This conversation occurred while the students were painting during an Art lesson. At the beginning of the lesson, Gemma told the students that they had 45 minutes to complete their work. (Field notes, 18/8)

Sandra I hate it when like they say, "You've got so and so minutes left" cause that kind of rushes people and makes people do worse.

Antonio Yeah, 'cause- yeah, that's true.

Sandra 'Cause they do their work quickly and they don't put too much detail in.

Karen Like I did.

Sarah Mmm. But usually when they say things like that they give us extra time anyway and then you've sort of wrecked your picture a bit.

(Conversation, 18/8)

Students' positive perceptions of the class and related activities helped them gain power-to and power-with. It is likely that if they did not have such positive perceptions the students would have been less likely to be empowered.

Student-Teacher Interactions

Students had positive perceptions of Gemma. They perceived that Gemma was “nice” and a “good teacher” who helped them learn a great deal and made learning fun. Furthermore, students thought Gemma helped them solve their problems by being understanding and a good listener.

Students usually arranged times to meet with Gemma to discuss personal and social problems. Students perceived that Gemma was a good listener when they met with her to discuss “serious” issues. An extract from an interview with Marie illustrates how students perceived Gemma to be a good listener and she explains why this was important.

Well I think she's really good as a listener, 'cause she focuses on you, ... and she doesn't really stop to talk to another person in the class unless it's really important. But, yeah I think she's a really good listener. She really focuses on you and makes sure she hears every thing that you say. If you like mumble a word ... she says, “What was that?” So I think she's a really good listener. ... She is really good when it comes to serious things and that. But if I had a problem in the class and I say it or something, she would say, “Well I'll talk about it at Silent Reading” 'cause that's when she gets lots of time. ... But she's a really good listener.

....

I think it's really important (that the teacher should listen) because the children could have a problem that is really serious. And, yeah, I think no

matter if the person, like a child wants to talk to you, that they should just stop whatever they're doing and just listen. So yeah, I think it's a really important job as a teacher to listen to other students, no matter if they've done the wrong thing or something like that.

(Int, Marie, 19/8)

Most students perceived that Gemma did listen to them however, some students perceived that there were occasions when she did not listen carefully. The following interview extract with Antonio illustrates how some students perceived that Gemma did not always listen attentively during general class interaction.

Antonio If someone's talking to her (Gemma), like on the carpet, she might see someone doing a hand signal to someone. And she'll just quickly pick them out and go "Warning" and "Warning" and she won't let the person finish (speaking). She should let them. I think that she should let them finish (speaking), and then go "You've got a warning".

(Int, Antonio, 19/8)

An extract from an interview with David demonstrates some students' perception that Gemma did not listen carefully when talking to individuals:

Anna David I was wondering if you could tell me what Miss Hanley was like as a listener?

David Um, yeah, she's okay I guess. But sometimes she just, um, like sort of, she doesn't listen to us but just makes up excuses or something. ...You might be standing next to her and saying something and then she'll say "Yes" to what you said. And then she'll forget or something. And then you'll come

back and she'll say that ... she was talking to someone else or something - after she said like "Yes" to you, kinda thing.

(Int, David, 19/8)

Some students perceived that occasionally Gemma did not actively listen to them, however these students also thought she was generally a good listener.

Gemma showed concern for students who were unhappy or had a problem and discussed problems until they were resolved with the relevant students. Furthermore, I observed that Gemma always responded to students' enquiries, answering questions by providing explanations and relevant information.

The students perceived Gemma to be a good communicator. She communicated with the class and individuals or groups of students effectively. This communication seemed to help students gain a sense of power-with Gemma. Additionally, the students were able and capable of communicating with Gemma. Hence, the interaction between Gemma and the students enabled students to become empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally.

Whole Class Interaction

The ways in which the class communicated as a whole group varied according to who was conducting the session and to the extent that the students would be expected to interact with each other. When Gemma interacted with the whole class, the students usually sat as a group on the carpet, but when students had to interact with Gemma and each other, the class sat in a circle. The class sat in a circle for activities such as prayer, class meetings and when students shared work. At other times, the class sat as a group on the carpet in front of the teacher and the Person of the Day.

The students perceived that both ways of sitting as a class were beneficial. The perceived benefits for sitting in a circle were that all students could see each other. Students perceived that when the class sat as a group on the carpet it was better for the teacher because it was easier for her to talk to the class and the students could see the board easier. Sarah demonstrates the students' perceptions for both ways of sitting as a class:

Sarah Ah, it depends what we're doing. 'Cause if we're doing a class meeting I would say we would be better to be in a circle, but if the teacher's doing things with the board it's better just to be sitting in a group.

Anna Yeah, what's better about sitting in a circle?

Sarah Well, 'cause you can see everyone and um, it's easier to discuss if we're gonna go- have a vote sort of, sometimes we go round the circle and say yes or no, so that's better.

Anna What's good about sitting as a group?

Sarah Well, you can see the board better. 'Cause the people that would be sitting here, if the board was there, those people would be facing that way so they wouldn't be able to see. But if you're sitting in a group, yeah, you can see the board and that.

(Int, Sarah, 14/8)

Interestingly, Gemma rarely used the white board although students sat as a group on the carpet in front of it regularly. One student commented that they sat as a group because "She (the teacher) wants us to put up our hands and tell her instead of the class" (Int, Kerry, 14/8).

There were occasions when students became restless as they sat as a group on the carpet. This usually occurred when students sat longer than usual and were

passive participants in the activity. For example, Sarah explained that she became bored “when we sit on the carpet for a long time and the teacher's just talking to us. I get bored when we're doing that” (Int, Sarah, 14/8).

This aspect of the environment facilitated varying levels of empowerment for the students. When the students sat in a circle communicating with each other, they probably had a greater sense of power-with peers and Gemma than when they sat as a group in front of Gemma and the Person of the Day. When sitting as a group, the students would have sensed that Gemma and the Person of the Day had power-over them and they would have had less of a sense of power-with each other. In addition, when they sat as a group students probably had less power-to because they did not feel as though they could contribute as freely or effectively. Therefore, the students experienced different levels of empowerment when interacting as a whole class mainly depending on the format for communication.

Student Interaction

Throughout the school day students interacted with their friends and peers. There was only one occasion when students were not allowed to communicate with each other and that was when a National English test was administered but usually students could initiate interaction as they wished. Sometimes lessons were structured so that students had to work with others (described in a previous section). In fact when working, students expected to be able to collaborate with each other and competition between students was not evident. Students seemed happy to work with everyone but they tended to work with their friends who were usually of the same gender or with peers located near them. Students were usually able to choose with whom they would work, but sometimes this choice was restricted. For example in

Mathematics, Gemma placed students into groups of about eight and then they selected whom they would work with from within that group.

Being able to interact freely with peers seemed to affect students' perceptions of subjects and facilitate friendships. Students seemed to prefer subjects in which they could interact freely with peers, particularly friends. A reason provided by some students was that they did not get bored when they were able to interact with others. Students also perceived that they were able to facilitate their friendships in the classroom by being able to interact regularly with each other. Tom explained:

Anna What about your friends and that, um, do you stop being friends when you come into the classroom, or do you...?

Tom No.

Anna No? So how do you keep your friendships up in the classroom? What sorts of things happen?

Tom Um, sitting near them, talking to them.

Anna And do you think that's important, that you can sit near them and talk to them?

Tom Um yeah, 'cause I think we should be able to develop um, sort of like, social skills.

(Int, Tom, 13/8)

It was clear that students respected and valued each other. Students did not openly reject any peers but rather accepted each other for who they were. Generally, students communicated in a positive manner and they demonstrated a caring attitude by readily helping and supporting each other. When discussing issues related to peers, students considered each other's feelings. Students readily shared ideas and accepted differences in perspectives and opinions.

Social skills helped students interact and develop positive relationships with each other. For example, students were assertive with each other in trying to meet their needs as illustrated below:

Michael and Antonio were sharing a table and Michael was swinging on his chair.

Antonio “Can you stop doing that Michael?”

Michael “Why?”

Antonio Because the table is rocking up and down.”

Michael stopped swinging on his chair.

(Field notes, 30/7)

Occasionally students were off-task, but usually not for very long. Students held each other accountable as they expected each other to contribute. I observed students ask peers who were off-task to return so that they could continue with their work. For example when Simon came into the room from next door, he said to Tom, who was helping Damien on the computer, “Tom you are suppose to be helping us in our group”. (Field notes, 6/8). I also observed students encourage and help peers who did not have as well developed social skills to participate in discussions rather than be passive. There were, however, some exceptions when students were off-task or did not actively contribute for long periods (See the following section for an explanation).

Students provided support and encouragement to each other to achieve success. The following incident illustrates this:

The group I am sitting with is timing each other to say things for a Maths activity. The group decided to say numbers backwards. Damien tried first

but had trouble doing this. Aaron said to Damien, “Why don’t you time me instead.” Aaron tried and was very slow. Stephen said, “Don’t worry that was much better than my first go.” It was like Stephen and Damien wanted Aaron to be successful, and they kept encouraging him to have another go. (Field notes, 19/8)

This incident also demonstrates how students seemed happy to take risks. Moreover, students accepted each other and did not put each other down.

The interaction between students whilst they worked varied. Students discussed issues related to their work, organisation, and life in the classroom. Furthermore, students often talked aloud to themselves, verbalising their inner speech. Most conversations between students were either on-task or exploratory in nature. The following reconstruction of an episode that took place during a spelling lesson illustrates the interaction between students whilst working.

Students were at their tables working on spelling. Carl, Jack, Tom and Antonio sat at one group of tables. These students were not good friends with each other. There was much discussion between these students mainly about their work.

Jack was completing his word list. Tom, Carl and Antonio were working on activities. Carl was looking for a red pencil. Tom looked in his pencil case to see if he had one. Carl decided that it would be all right to use a red pen instead.

The group fell quiet.

Jack asked Antonio what activity he was doing. Antonio explained the activity. Tom joined the conversation. Jack and Tom said that Antonio should be writing a song and not just a rap or a poem. The conversation moved on to a discussion about the poems they had found on the Internet last week. Antonio was absent and asked about the poems. A man entered the room to check the computers. The group discussed who he could be.

Antonio asked the group, “What could I draw for climate? Clouds, rain or sun?” Someone responded, “Sun”. Antonio said “Okay” and then asked the group, “Can I please borrow a yellow pencil?” Tom gave him one.

Jack asked what the activity Pictionary was. Carl said he did not know. Tom explained it to the table.

The group continued with their work throughout the conversation. Carl began talking to himself aloud while he was working. Then Antonio said to himself, “What other kind of weather? There’s lightning...” The others at the table began listening to Antonio. Tom asked Antonio what he was doing. Antonio explained and the group gave some advice. Someone suggested Antonio should draw thunder but someone else explained that you could not draw thunder.

The group continued working quietly. Then Antonio asked Tom if he should draw an engineer which was a word he had chosen for his list. Antonio and Tom discussed this for a while and then they fell quiet. Antonio began talking again saying that he did not know how to draw an engineer. Tom suggested Antonio looks up engineer in the dictionary and then he will know how to draw it. Antonio did not move to find a dictionary so Tom fetched one and brought it back to the table.

Carl told Jack that he wanted to do an activity with him.

Tom read the definition of an engineer in the dictionary aloud to Antonio. Antonio was not really listening. Tom gave the dictionary to Antonio and told him to read the definition.

Carl said to Jack, “Are you ready Jack?”

Jack replied, “No.”

Carl said, “Maybe I could do look, cover, write, check.”

Antonio began talking again, about how he could draw an engineer.

Carl announced to Jack, “Ok, I am ready.”

Jack said, “I haven’t written ‘What’s the word’.”

Carl left the table to speak to Gemma and returned explaining to Jack what they had to do. Jack asked if they had to use their list words and Carl said they did.

Tom left the room to take the communication bag to the office. Marion approached Antonio and explained how she wanted them to organise prayer.

Carl and Jack began playing “What’s the word”. Tom told Carl he wanted to play as well. Carl could not see Jack’s book so he stood up and moved so he could see it. Carl then announced, “We’ve finished!”

Gemma stopped the class and gave some instructions about what they were going to do next. When Gemma had finished speaking, Carl discussed with Jack the activities they still had to complete by Friday. (Field notes, 13/8)

This reconstruction illustrates the manner in which students communicated with each other. Students demonstrated respect and provided each other with support. Moreover, students did not seem to be afraid to take risks and they were able to monitor their discussions so that they came back on task.

This reconstruction also illustrates the content of student discussions. Firstly, the content of discussions often related to their work. Students showed interest in and concern for each other’s work. Additionally, students readily sought and received help and feedback from each other, discussed ideas, clarified tasks and discussed the point at which they were working. Secondly, students also discussed organisational matters such as borrowing items and arranging to work with each other. Thirdly, students talked about issues related to life in the classroom, including other lessons, activities, peers and duties. Finally, students sometimes verbalised their inner speech, which on occasions was the stimulus for further discussion.

On reflection of the episode described above Tom perceived that he had not completed much work. The following interview extract illustrates this:

Anna You know this morning in spelling how there were four of you sitting around the table, do you think you felt like you’d done a lot of work this morning or...?

Tom No, not this morning.

Anna Why not do you think?

Tom Cause I was talking to Antonio.

Anna Yeah, what were you talking to him about?

Tom Um, Um, I can't remember, I know I was talking to him though.

(Int, Tom, 13/8)

It appears that Tom has connected talk with off-task behaviour when in fact the talk was on-task and exploratory. The extent to which students connected talk with off-task behaviour remains uncertain. However, it seems that Tom is not aware of the benefits of on-task and exploratory discussion when working.

In summary, students were able to interact with their peers throughout the day. They interacted in a variety of ways. Students tended not to take advantage of this freedom in a negative manner, but rather used it to enhance their learning and relationships.

The high quality interaction that occurred between students helped enable them to become empowered, as they were able to and capable of communicating with each other. Additionally they gained a sense of power-with each other.

Student Movement

Students were aware that they could move as they required and thus there was much movement of students around the classroom for the most part of every day. Students entered and exited the room to attend lessons or to perform jobs as required. Additionally, students moved out of the classroom around the unit to access computers and to work in available areas. Within the classroom students moved around freely, mainly to talk with the teacher or another student, or to obtain something needed. In addition, students moved to perform their duties, to prepare for

such events as prayer or to hold a base group meeting. During most lessons, students could choose where they worked and thus, often students moved to work in other places in and out of the classroom.

Students understood that this described movement could generally occur without interaction with Gemma. Students decided when they would move and did not seek permission to do so. Sometimes students were not free to move around the room, particularly when students were participating in whole class activities. For example, when the students were sitting on the floor as a group during prayer they did not move around the room unless it was necessary to the prayer session. At these times, Gemma did not tell students that they could not move but the students seemed to know that it was an inappropriate time.

Student movement was usually purposeful and related to work, but there were a few occasions when student movement was not related to work. I observed three students in particular, Aaron, Michael and Anthony, who were often off-task and sometimes wandered around. On some of these occasions, the teacher did not seem to notice these students. The following reconstructed episode is provided as an example:

The class is working on activities for Society and the Environment. Gemma is talking to two students working at a computer. Michael and Aaron are outside the classroom playing with ants. After approximately five minutes, Michael and Aaron returned to the classroom without Gemma noticing. They explained that they often go wandering when they are bored. They said it is easier to wander when there is a lot happening in the room because the teacher does not notice them. If a teacher finds them outside the classroom and asks what they are doing, they say they are just going somewhere. The teacher usually only asks them to go back to their room. (Field notes, 29/7)

In a subsequent interview, Michael further explained the students' decisions to be off-task. He said that it was possible to wander when "the teacher's not concentrating on you, she's like over helping someone else or gone out of the classroom and talking to someone else" (Int, Michael, 11/8). Michael said there were only a few students who took advantage of such opportunities.

Gemma shared power with students enabling them to move as needed. This particularly helped students gain power-to. However, some students used this power to be off-task. Does this constitute as student empowerment? If so is this what is best for them and who should decide?

Summary

In this section, I have described aspects of the environment established in the classroom. The aspects described were the students' perceptions of the class and related activities, student-teacher interaction, whole class interaction, student-student interaction and student movement. The main issue to arise is that Gemma shared her power with students by creating an environment that supported the students to be able to gain a sense of power-to and power-with. Additionally, the environment enabled students to employ the processes and structures effectively and confidently because, for example, they had positive perceptions of the class, and could interact and move as required.

Students' Conceptions and Perceptions of Power

In many interviews, students discussed issues related to power. The data collected were in response to an English lesson on power taught by Mark in the third

week of fieldwork. Presented in this section are the students' conceptions and perceptions of power.

Conceptions of Power

Students held varying conceptions of power, many of which were similar. Students described someone who has power in the following ways:

- Having control over other people, or being in charge,
- Telling others what to do,
- Being older,
- Having something that another person does not have or something better,
- Being higher up, that is having a better position in the hierarchy,
- Being physically stronger than others,
- Being confident and good at doing something, and
- Making decisions especially final decisions.

Students had a clear understanding of the notion of power although at times they seemed to have some difficulty explaining their thoughts. Most conceptions of power involved having power over another but there was some awareness of power-to as indicated by the last two points.

Perceptions of who had Power

The students perceived that teachers, some students and people who are older had power in the classroom. They explained that teachers had power because they could give students consequences, tell students what to do, make decisions and because they were older. Therefore, they perceived that teachers had power-over students.

Students thought that some peers had more power than others did due to (a) their personality or ability and (b) the status of the role they assumed. Students said that the students who were popular had more power than quieter students did. In addition, they considered that those who were good at something such as football had power. David illustrates the perception that popular students had power:

Anna So why do you say that Tom has a lot of power?

David He's just like seems to be the biggest in the class, like not as in how big he is, but like just- I dunno. ... When we do group things, everybody goes to him. ... He doesn't ever have to be left out of a group. ... All the boys just rush to him and say, "Tom, can I be in your group", that sort of thing. And then he just picks who he wants to be with. And then like, it seems that's the final decision.

(Int, David, 7/8)

This interview extract also illustrates how due to personality or ability, some students emerged as having power. Students seemed to be aware of who had power in this form of personal kudos. The following extract of an interview with Paul further illustrates how students emerged to have power.

Anna Are there any kids that have more power than others?

Paul Sometimes Tom because he's like, he's the strongest in the class. And he like - in football he doesn't kick it from far away, he just like charges through people, like he's playing in rugby. And he just kicks it when it's about this far away from the goals, so he doesn't miss.

Anna Would there be anyone else?

Paul Maybe Aaron, cause he kicks from real far away and always gets it. I had a lot of power once because I kicked it from a long way away.

Anna Are you talking about physical power?

Paul Both.

Anna Oh, both, oh right. So can you describe the power that they have?

Paul Well kind of like, they feel like they're really wanted. Like kind of - like they really want to be part of it, so they try their best and then they make an effort. And then they usually mark it and kick it and then they get credit for it.

Anna From the other people?

Paul Yeah.

Anna And is that what makes them powerful?

Paul Yeah, and that makes them makes them feel wanted, (receiving) good comments about kicking and stuff.

Anna Ah, and you said that's happened to you?

Paul Yeah, once. It was on, not last Wednesday, but the Wednesday before.

Anna Mm.

Paul And I kicked a very long kick from here to probably where the clock is in our classroom is ((Paul indicated the distance)).

Anna Ah, yeah.

Paul Yeah.

Anna And how did you feel powerful?

Paul Everyone says good comments and you feel really good about yourself, that you made an effort and that you tried your best.

(Int, Paul, 7/8)

Students also perceived that when they assumed certain roles they had power. The students explained that the Person of the Day had power because he/she controlled who received rewards, thus they had the power to indicate to students whether they were good or not. Additionally, the Person of the Day had the power to get people to do things such as gain the class's attention, give instructions, and choose and organise games. Students explained that the Person of the Day would have had more power if he/she could have enforced the classroom rules. Students thought that when they assumed the role of chairperson of class meetings they had power because they had to run meetings and the teacher acted like a class member. Some students explained that the SRC representative, another role a student assumed, had power. Finally, when students talked to the class or were the leader of a group they perceived that they had power. Subsequently, in assuming these roles students were ascribed power by the teacher and peers.

Finally, students described their perceptions of the power relationships in the class as a hierarchy. They thought that the teacher had the most power, then Person of the Day and then students. However, during class meetings students had different perceptions of the hierarchy of power. Some students thought that the teacher and the chairperson shared power but others thought the chairperson had more power than the teacher did.

Hence, in summary, students' conceptions of power were predominantly concerned with one person having power over another. Amounts of power varied due to a person's personality or ability and the status of the role they assumed. Sometimes the teacher assumed more power than at other times, but the teacher retained ultimate power.

Summary

This chapter has described the students' life in the classroom with Gemma as the teacher and it included their perceptions and conceptions of this life. First, I described the structures established in the classroom from the students' perspective and established that they seemed to enable the students to become intrapersonally and interpersonally empowered. Second, I described the processes in which the students were involved in the classroom. I ascertained that their levels of empowerment varied and that many of the processes relied on the use of the structures to be successful. Third, I presented aspects of the environment established in the classroom. The main issues to arise were that Gemma shared her power with the students by creating an environment that supported the students to gain a sense of power-to and power-with, and the environment enabled the students to employ the structures and processes effectively. Finally, I offered the students' conceptions and perceptions of power and established that they related mainly to power-over.

Furthermore, this chapter has contributed further to a greater understanding of what student empowerment is and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom. It is essentially descriptive but I have begun to offer a third layer of interpretation more explicitly. In the next chapter I will continue this interpretation and describe what was going on in the classroom when Mark taught from both Mark's and the students' perspective.

CHAPTER 7

MARK

Employed to teach the class for two days a week for the period of one school term, Mark attempted to provide students with continuity by teaching in a similar manner to Gemma. As my focus during data collection was on Gemma and when she taught, I did not collect as much data related to Mark. However, the data analysis shows that data collected from Mark and at the times he taught is important to this study as they highlight many issues regarding Gemma and student empowerment.

I present this chapter in a manner different from the previous two chapters because the findings that emerged from data analysis led to a variation in style. In this chapter I describe Mark in the classroom, highlighting similarities and differences to when Gemma taught and the effects these had on classroom life. Additionally, student reflections on this experience are provided.

This chapter is important because through Mark's teaching we can gain a greater understanding of what student empowerment is and additionally it highlights how Gemma empowered students, which I make explicit in the following discussion chapter. I present significant episodes that occurred while Mark taught providing a basis for interpretation of the findings related to Gemma presented previously. The particular episodes I have chosen to tell in this chapter are analysed and interpreted, providing another building block towards a greater understanding of the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom.

Mark was in his early twenties and had taught in a variety of settings. Without initial intentions to pursue a teaching career, Mark completed a degree in middle school education with majors in drama, and society and environment. Since

graduation, he had approximately three years teaching experience, including at a country high school, a city Catholic college and an intermediate school in New Zealand. Mark had taught years seven to ten in subjects such as society and environment, drama and adaptive education. In particular, Mark enjoyed teaching drama, and society and environment.

The school in which this study was conducted initially employed Mark two days a week to teach a year four class. He was then asked to teach the year five class two days a week. This was Mark's first employment in a primary school setting, but he was familiar with the school and had some experience with primary students before starting to teach the year five class with Gemma.

Mark's Transition into Teaching Gemma's Class

Mark faced many new challenges on employment at the school. Firstly, this was his initial job in a primary school. Secondly, Mark found the policies and practices of the school in some areas different from what he had experienced, especially the behaviour management policy, and the collaborative learning and computing practices. Thirdly, many aspects of the teaching and learning in the year five class were new to Mark. Nevertheless, Mark attempted to implement the policies and adapt his teaching to incorporate many of the practices of the school, and he attempted to integrate many aspects of Gemma's teaching.

Gemma expected Mark to incorporate many of her classroom practices and she informed Mark of her expectations. The following interview extract demonstrates Gemma's expectations and reasons for the expectations:

Hopefully with the kids because they are ... fairly independent in the classroom, ... they know how the classroom runs, they know what is

happening and they know where to go and that they will be able to keep some of what I do during the two days that I am away. And also it is really important ... because it is only for a term, if it was all year they could do different things on that day and it wouldn't matter. But I think for a term that we need to try and keep continuity. So it is really important for Mark and I to work together and plan together and try to keep some of our teaching methods similar. ... I mean I like kids having a choice or to be working in partners and pairs and then all of a sudden Thursday 'I've got to do my own work' and I think that would be really hard. I mean if it is slightly different, I think they will cope but it would be good if it was similar so then we could keep going on next term. It is a lot of (planning) to make it work ((laughter)). And also (we need to) ... follow through and do similar activities so the kids can see that we are actually working together and not as totally separate identities. Like the Maths, they will do some of the maths- we have planned a bit together - so it will run over into Thursday and also Society and Environment we're doing the same thing together. Catching up (is important) ... - leaving lots of notes ((laughter)) and make sure we know where we are up to. (Int, Gemma, 24/7)

The students did help Mark keep some continuity as Gemma thought they might. For example, the students continued activities such as prayer, base group meetings and spelling as they would with Gemma. This was probably because the students had established routines to follow for these activities requiring little input from Mark. Students also encouraged Mark in subtle ways to keep things the same. For example, on Mark's first day when he addressed the students who sat as a group on the carpet, he sat on the chair on the right. Gemma always sat on the chair on the left-hand side and the Person of the Day sat on the right. I noted:

The children came in from recess. There was only one chair at the front of the class, in which Mark sat. Paul, the Person of the Day, came in and

grabbed another chair immediately. Mark left his chair to do something and Paul moved into Mark's chair- the one on the right in which Mark had originally sat. (Field notes, 24/7)

In addition, the students told Mark what should happen and how things should be done. Mark seemed to accept the students' remarks when they did not relate to teaching. For example, "Michael found library books in the lunch order box. He took them out and told Mark the books should be returned to the resource centre. Mark said that Michael could return the books" (Field notes, 31/7).

In brief, Gemma thought it was important that Mark kept continuity by teaching in a similar manner to her for the sake of the students. Mark agreed to try to keep continuity and the students played a role in helping him achieve this. Nevertheless, what really happened when Mark taught? In the following section, I present Mark's beliefs as they informed the way in which he taught.

Mark's Belief System

From interview data, it was possible to infer Mark's beliefs about teaching and learning. Furthermore, on many occasions Mark mentioned areas on which he was working, possibly reflecting his beliefs about what is important regarding teaching and learning. Mark did not seem confident about his beliefs about teaching and learning, as he considered himself a learner attempting to develop various aspects of his teaching. He stated, "There are parts of my teaching performance that I'm really happy with and there are other parts that I really know I've got to work on" (Int, Mark, 21/8). Therefore, I present Mark's beliefs followed by the areas on which Mark said he was developing.

Teachers should be enthusiastic about teaching all subject areas. By being enthusiastic, Mark believed he could “make a difficult situation into a positive one” (Int, Mark, 1/8). For example, Mark explained that students do not like learning areas such as poetry and therefore he should work much harder at showing enthusiasm which should in turn encourage students to be more positive about the area.

All lessons should have a clear focus. When planning lessons Mark thought it was important to consider, “What’s the real bottom line?” (Int, Mark, 21/8) that is, “What are they going to get out of this (lesson)?” (Int, Mark, 21/8). Mark said considering the purpose of lessons in this manner enabled him to have a clear focus for them.

Students should have opportunities to work as individuals, in groups and as part of the whole class. Mark explained that “all different types of learning are valid whether it be on your own, in a group or as a whole class” (Int, Mark, 21/8). Therefore, he attempted to provide different activities to enable students to learn in these ways.

Teachers should assume nothing when working with students. For example Mark said, “You can’t just assume that because they’re in year eight they can line up outside and come in quietly. You can’t just assume because they’re in year four they know the alphabet” (Int, Mark, 25/7).

Teachers should interact with all students during lessons to monitor and direct their learning. Mark believed that students need a lot of direction and that he could provide this direction by interacting with all students while they worked and giving them ideas. Furthermore, Mark thought he should set goals for students that meet their individual needs. Mark explained:

If writing a page and a half is too much for Student A, well you've got to meet their needs. ... Well you don't say "You can't write a page and a half because you're dumb" or something like that. You've got to say, "Well... why don't we try and get you to do this?" And it gives them ideas. ... And then you've given them some scope and maybe they'll do more than you expected. (Int, Mark, 21/8)

Students want to achieve and receive the teacher's recognition for their achievements. Mark thought that it was important to students that they achieve something such as "a big tick and a nice comment next to the poem that you wrote" (Int, Mark, 21/8). Furthermore, he thought he should give students feedback about their work, especially praise. By receiving recognition from a teacher, the student could be proud of his/her achievements and when students receive praise about their work, they might attempt to achieve more on future occasions.

Mark as a Learner

Mark perceived himself as a learner attempting to develop various aspects of his teaching. He explained, "I'm still learning in the primary setting" (Int, Mark, 21/8). In interviews Mark often mentioned areas which he was "working on". Mark identified the following areas that he was developing:

- Moving from an authoritarian teacher to a caring teacher,
- Becoming more organised, particularly by providing necessary resources for students,
- Having a clear focus or objectives for every lesson,
- Improving questioning techniques,
- Displaying student work to make the classroom look more like a learning environment,

- Providing students with feedback,
- Evaluating himself as a teacher,
- Managing the classroom more effectively, in particular student behaviour, and
- Encouraging isolated and rejected students to be accepted as part of the class community.

The areas on which Mark claimed he was working could reflect what Mark thought was important in teaching and learning and therefore possibly reflect his beliefs. It seems that Mark is still developing his beliefs about teaching and learning and at this stage they focus on his teaching more than on the students and their learning. Can a teacher whose beliefs are very teacher focused enable students to become empowered? Further exploration into how Mark espoused his beliefs will help answer this question.

A Reflection on the Notion of Student Empowerment

In interviews, Mark discussed issues of power and empowerment. From the analysis of the resulting data, it was possible to provide a summary of his reflection on the notion of student empowerment.

In discussing issues of power, Mark explained that “powerful people know what they want” (Int, Mark, 21/8) and that people can use their power for “good means or bad means” (Int, Mark, 21/8). Mark stated that both teachers and students have power in the classroom and “the best way of picturing it in the classroom is through leadership” (Int, Mark, 21/8). He believed that in classrooms there was a hierarchical power structure, with the teacher having the most power followed by the established student leaders and then the followers. Mark thought that some students had power because they were high achievers, vivacious and outgoing, “a bit

clownish” and keep peers entertained, or have a physical presence. “Then you have the teacher as well who’s trying to get on top of all that” (Int, Mark, 21/8). Nevertheless, Mark said that there can be power struggles between students and the teacher, students can have power over the teacher and they can have power over other students.

Mark thought that as a teacher he is able to choose how to wield his power. He can use his power in an authoritarian or encouraging manner. He felt that when students are “hanging on every single word that’s the most amazing kind of power you can have” (Int, Mark, 21/8). Conversely, Mark explained when he did not have power. He said:

Where my power is at its ... worst is when ... I know that there are things that have to be done. I know that right, ... I'm getting better I must admit, but right they're not listening, I've asked them to sit down, they're not listening, I've got poking and shoving and stuff like that, so I've got to get on top of it. ... But as I said I can just sometimes know I get a bit carried away with something and, and you know, just lose track of things that are going on around me. But it's only because I just get swept up in ... what kids are saying and that. (Int, Mark, 21/8)

Mark explained that he shared his power with established student leaders and with those students to whom he assigned leaderships roles. In addition, Mark shared power with the Person of the Day. He was wary of sharing power with all students because he thought that some students did not have the necessary skills to be leaders such as the “silent achievers”. Mark also explained that he shared power with students by having them work with various peers, and by providing opportunities for students to have a real purpose for their work such as performing a play. Mark gave

an example of what was not sharing power with students and that was by selecting two captains of teams and who then select their teams.

When reflecting on the notion of student empowerment Mark explained that he had not given much thought to it previously. However, he conceived students to be empowered when they are independent learners seeking help as required and can work as individuals or as a member of a group.

Mark thought that he could empower students by:

- Encouraging students to strive for their best,
- Providing students with a sounding board,
- Working with students to monitor their performance,
- Providing students with stimulating work that extends them,
- Encouraging students to take control of their learning, and
- Praising students for their work and helping them see that they can improve.

Mark's notions of empowerment were very different from that of Gemma's as Mark's related to academic achievement whereas Gemma's related to social as well as academic achievement. In addition, Mark's notion of student empowerment would be likely to have left students in a position of the powerlessness because the teacher would have significant power-over the students. Such "empowerment" can be described as token empowerment (Burkill, 1997).

Instrumental Case Studies

The episodes that follow reflect Mark and the way he taught and they provide a window on Gemma's teaching. Each episode is reconstructed as a description directly from field notes, audio recordings and interviews. Following the description an interpretation of each episode is provided in an attempt to gain a greater

understanding of what was happening when Mark taught and provide a greater understanding of what was happening when Gemma taught. Such an understanding will contribute to a resolution to the substantive problem of what is the nature of student empowerment and how a teacher can enable student empowerment in a primary school classroom.

Adopting Gemma's Teaching Strategies: Clapping

10:10 am

As a conclusion to a lesson, Mark asked the students to bring their books and sit on the floor. When the students had sat on the floor John, the Person of the Day, clapped a rhythm to gain their attention. Only a few students responded. Mark asked John to try again. This time more students responded. Mark asked everyone to swap books and read what each other had written. The students continued swapping books reading each other's work.

John clapped a rhythm but few students responded. Mark then clapped a rhythm and spoke directly to the class not waiting for a response. He said, "If you have someone's work in front of you who has done an interesting job we might hear them." A student began to read someone's work to the class. Many students continued talking while the student read. Mark said in an angry voice, "We can't hear because of these clowns over here! If you keep talking I will have to give you a warning!" Students continued to share work and others continued talking. It became very difficult to hear the students read. Mark told the students that he was disappointed with all the people speaking. Some students continued to whisper to each other while more students read work. It was still difficult to hear. Mark addressed the class again and the students continued to talk to each other. The students then returned the books to their owners.

10:23 am

In this episode, Mark tried to gain the students' attention by clapping a rhythm or by asking the Person of the Day to clap a rhythm for the students to copy. Mark

adopted this strategy of gaining attention from one of many strategies Gemma used. Mark frequently used “the clap” for this purpose of gaining attention but he also used it to try to manage student behaviour. Mark took much longer than Gemma to communicate with the class as a whole, for example to give instructions, and the students often stopped giving their attention to him while he spoke. Instead of using the school’s behaviour management procedures or other ways of managing behaviour, Mark clapped in an attempt to regain attention. As time went on Mark seemed to find it harder to retain some of the students’ attention and clapping to gain attention became less and less effective for him. Nevertheless Mark continued to use this strategy and after clapping a couple of times he would speak regardless of whether students were paying attention or not (Field notes, 8/8). The clap was particularly ineffective when Mark tried to gain the students’ attention while they worked as many students usually continued what they were doing. Some students commented that they thought Mark clapped too often and that he should use other strategies for gaining attention or managing behaviour.

Over time, Mark’s ability to gain attention deteriorated because he did not insist that all students give attention, and in addition, he used the clap so often that it quickly became ineffective. Gemma also began to have problems with this method of gaining attention. When she used the clap, the students began not to give their attention as quickly causing Gemma to try a variety of ways often resorting to more authoritarian means. On one occasion I noted:

Gemma Okay, when you are sitting down I will hold out the paintings.
 ((Gemma called out))

Gemma waited in the middle of the room.

Gemma Okay year fives.

Gemma then clapped a rhythm and some of the students copied.

Gemma Sit down and be quiet. ((Said more seriously))

The students were quiet.

(Field notes, 28/7)

The “Clapping” episode also demonstrates how Mark had difficulty in effectively managing student behaviour. Many of Mark’s problems related to gaining and maintaining attention and hence, Mark spent most of his time trying to manage associated behaviour. Lessons continued although Mark seemed to be uncomfortable with some students’ behaviour.

It appears that Mark did not have effective power-over or power-with the students. Mark tried to gain power-over the students but had difficulty doing so. It is becoming apparent that for a teacher to share power with students he/she might initially need to establish power-over them. That is, in order to share power one must have power.

The following episode, a continuation of the last, highlights how Mark attempted to use various strategies to manage student behaviour. In addition, this episode illustrates how Mark tried to employ teaching strategies similar to those that Gemma used.

Adopting the Processes: Designing a Game

10:23 am

Mark asked everyone to come closer. The students slowly moved closer to Mark. Mark clapped a rhythm. Some students responded but many continued talking. John, the Person of the Day, called out all the names of students who did not repeat the clap or continued to talk. As he did this some of the students stopped talking. Mark commented about the way students did not stop and repeat the rhythm. Mark clapped again. Most students repeated the clap.

Mark Antonio why did you start talking?

Antonio Um, because...

Other students contributed some responses for Antonio.

Mark Come over here Antonio- just over here.

Antonio moved to where Mark indicated.

Mark Maths- this is what I want you to do. (Students talked in the background) First of all you've got to finish the work from last lesson. Right, and I know there are plenty of people who are in that situation. If you have finished, this is what I want you to do. Work with a partner- no more than a pair- no threes. And on a piece of scrap paper first- Anthony listening- I want you to create maths games.

Student Cool!

Mark Okay the way I want you to do it is I want you to use two dice- two dice okay- two dice- just a normal six sided dice. I want you to create like a board game where you've got like squares and you've got to move around. So okay, you've got to draw the board on paper. You use two dice and this is what I want you to think about is a game to help you learn how to either do addition, subtraction, or times-tables using dice and moving counters around the board. Okay, so I will just quickly write that up.

Mark recorded information on the white board. When he began writing the students started talking to each other.

10:26

....

Mark It is not an English game or a general knowledge game. It is a maths game. It is to see if you can test or learn your times-tables, adding or subtracting. It is like a board game with squares that you can move around. Obviously, you two can not sit next to each other- so move right apart. Right bye-bye.

The students moved apart.

Students Bye-bye (many students called out imitating Mark)

Mark Dice times two and you can move a counter around (Spoken loudly over students talking). The most important thing is, how are you going to know if you have won? So it's a game for two people (Mark was still recording notes on the board). Then if you can get them written up then hopefully- maybe sometime today maybe after drama, we can actually play them. (Mark had not timetabled for this activity) And you can give them to somebody to try out. So you have to have clear rules. There is nothing worse than playing a board game and not having clear rules. Who knows how to play Cluedo?

Students What Cluedo? (Many spoke at once)

Mark Right listening. Eyes this way (Most students stopped talking). I have never been able to play that game because of the rules- I have never been able to understand the rules. So I have missed out of years of fun. (Students continued to talk to each other) I want you to have a few rules (Mark spoke over the students talking). Now Marion had a question I think – Can you test all those three things? Is that right? If you can- do it!

Sandra discusses an idea with Mark. Other students are talking. Mark stood up probably because he could not hear the student talking.

Mark (said to Sandra quickly) That sounds good. So – Listen- Shh- Right listen- and again.

Mark said to the Person of the Day, indicating that he wanted John to clap for attention. The Person of the Day clapped a rhythm. The students clapped and fell quiet.

Mark That's better. I really want to see how you can use dice and questions to help you as well when you organise the game. All right, organise it first on a piece of scrap paper or lined paper. Find a partner and I will come down with some dice- you won't need them straight away. You can work on the

floor, the table - spread yourselves out. And we will see if you can get it done in half an hour. Off you go!

The students formed pairs and prepared themselves to work on the activity. Some students obtained scrap paper from the scrap paper box. Most students got on task quickly, but Aaron and Jack took about five minutes after playing around a table.

Fifteen minutes into the lesson Mark clapped to gain the class's attention. He explained that he was pleased with the activity going on and he wanted to check they were on the right track. Some students did not listen. Not all students stopped working. Mark then said they had another ten minutes.

Jack, Aaron and Robert were playing again- they were off task.

10:55 am

John (Person of the Day) clapped a rhythm six times trying to get the class to copy. Mark then said loudly, "If you don't do it this time we will wait until the bell goes and try again." John clapped again and everyone joined in. Mark told the students to pack up and asked John to look for a table that was ready. Mark asked John, "Which table is ready?"

11:00

The students went out to recess.

After this episode, Mark commented to me that he was pleased with this maths lesson. He said he had done the same activity before, but on that occasion he had given the students a board to use. This time he thought the students could design their own board, which would give them "more freedom" (Field notes, 1/8).

Two main issues are raised in this episode. The first issue relates to discipline and the second to teaching strategies. Mark thought that it was good that the whole school adopted the behaviour management policy. He said that he felt comfortable with the policy and it provided effective procedures for managing behaviour. Mark reflected on how the school policy had influenced the way in which he managed student behaviour. He said, "it (behaviour management) has been an area that I've

always had to work on. And it is only now, because it (the behaviour management policy and procedures) is something that works. It's only now that I'm really feeling comfortable with it (behaviour management)" (Int, Mark, 15/8). Having said this, Mark did not use the behaviour management procedures as the policy stated. This episode illustrates how Mark used three main strategies to manage student behaviour: (a) Mark ignored students; (b) Mark used threats; and (c) Mark took action.

Mark often ignored student behaviour. In particular, Mark ignored students who talked while either he or another student addressed the class. On such occasions Mark usually continued talking even when students did not pay attention. In addition, he ignored some situations students brought to his attention. For example:

Students were sitting on the floor and Mark was explaining what the students had to do. Paul complained to Mark about Bill who kept kicking his paper. Mark looked and then continued talking. He did not acknowledge or address Paul's complaint (Field notes, 14/8).

Marks' lack of action affected the students in many ways. Some students lost power-to and power-with whereas others gained power-to and power-over. For those students who gained power-to because they gained a capability to do more of what they wanted, like talk and play, does this constitute empowerment? To what extent were the students empowered by Mark ignoring their behaviour? Moreover did Mark's lack of effective control over the students talking enable student empowerment? If so, then is this the type of student empowerment educators are advocating? These questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

Mark threatened students with action that was and was not part of the school behaviour management policy. This episode illustrates how Mark regularly threatened students with action that the school policy did not advocate, such as

keeping the students in class after the bell when they repeatedly did not copy the clap. On another occasion when Mark was not happy with the students' behaviour he said, "If I have to stop again we will go straight back (to the classroom). The squashing must stop! I might have to send people to the side if they can't watch, can't listen" (Field notes, 1/8). When Mark became extremely frustrated with student behaviour, he also used physical and verbal pressure to try to gain compliance. For example, on one occasion Mark stood up and said sternly to Michael, "If you don't want to be here I can arrange for that" (Field notes, 7/8).

Mark also used the behaviour management system to threaten students. For example:

Mark was addressing the class who sat on the floor and he thought the students were "getting silly". He said to the class, "I have already given out one warning and I might have to give another and I don't want to do that". The students continued to giggle and throw pieces of paper around. Within a minute later, Mark said to the students, "The next time I have to stop, there will be a warning". Some students kept giggling. Larry turned around and said, "Shut up you guys". The students quietened. A few minutes later Mark said, "I am going to have to give you a warning Sally". Sally stopped giggling and messing and she did not receive a formal warning. (Field notes, 24/7)

This incident also demonstrates how Mark's strategy of threatening the students with the consequences was not particularly effective, however it seemed more effective than his strategy of ignoring the behaviour. In fact, it seemed that Larry's comment had more impact on the students' behaviour. Mark continually sought compliance from students, but many of them did not respond and he rarely followed through with his threats. Nevertheless, Mark did take action on occasions.

On the occasions that Mark took action, he used a few different techniques, but none regularly. Some of the actions Mark took were as follows:

- He asked the students to go back to desks and come to floor again if too loud or slow (Field notes, 25/7).
- He asked to speak to some students after sitting on the floor (Field notes, 31/7).
- He asked groups to stay separate (Field notes, 31/7).

Mark rarely took action by implementing the school behaviour management procedures. On Mark's fifth day of teaching the class, the students explained that he had only given one time-out (Field notes, 7/8). When Mark did implement the behaviour management procedures, he seemed very reluctant to do so. For example on one occasion Mark said, "Robert stand up and give me a good reason why I shouldn't give you a warning". Robert did not give Mark a reason. Mark gave Robert a warning" (Field notes, 14/8).

In summary, Mark did not use the process of behaviour management that Gemma used and he did not have well-established techniques for managing student behaviour. In addition, Mark spent much time attending to student behaviour but he was generally ineffective. Mark did not have power-over the students like Gemma did. He tried to establish this power or control this but was not overly successful. In the following chapter I will consider how Mark's inability to manage student behaviour impacted on the students' empowerment.

The second issue this Maths lesson illustrates is how Mark tried to employ teaching strategies similar to those Gemma used that were more student-centred and involved more student choice than what he normally employed. When Mark employed teaching strategies similar to those that Gemma used the students seemed

more engaged. For example, many students were clearly not interested in the conclusion of the previous lesson described as “Clapping” as they continually talked with each other and they did not participate actively. The students could have behaved this way because although they were required to participate by reading each other’s work it was not necessary for them to listen to peers sharing work. Mark did not instruct the students to listen and he did not provide them with a purpose for listening. Gemma, on the other hand, would have asked the students to listen for a specific reason. When the Maths lesson began, however, the students’ behaviour indicated they were interested in the activity. This lesson possibly appealed to the students because they were free to make decisions and the task was very student-centred, that is they had a sense of power-to.

However, Mark did not teach many lessons that were similar to how Gemma taught. One subject area Mark planned and taught in a manner very similar to Gemma was Society and the Environment. Gemma guided Mark in his planning for the term’s work to prepare many open-ended tasks from which the students could choose. Mark explained that planning in this way was new to him and he had not previously used such a style of questioning as was suggested by Gemma. Mark thought that such tasks encouraged the students to take responsibility for their learning in Society and the Environment. He explained,

The (students) were definitely responsible for research, for presentation, who they worked with, ... and the whole outcome. ... I think that's probably the best part about it, is that they, they just had so many choices. ... It wasn't just teacher directed, it was totally student oriented, all we had to do was give the questions. (Int, Mark, 15/8)

In these lessons students worked enthusiastically and Mark had fewer discipline problems.

Often Mark gave students an open activity in which students were required to make many decisions. However, as the lesson proceeded Mark restricted the students' freedom to make these decisions by giving students more instructions that reduced students' choices. In addition, when students sought help Mark tended to tell the students what to do rather than support them to make their own decisions as Gemma and many of the students would do. For example, on one occasion the students had to draw a symbol that represented them. Marion wanted to draw a mouth so Mark drew one for her to trace into her book. In the same lesson, David approached Tom, who was recognised as a good artist, saying he was going to draw hands. Tom gave David an idea of how to draw hands. He suggested to David that he hold his hands in front of him to copy (Field notes, 7/8). This example shows how Mark told students what to do and how to do it whereas the students supported each other leaving the person seeking support in control of their own work. This was probably one way that Mark used to keep a sense of perceived control over the work students did and in doing so he limited the students' intrapersonal empowerment.

However, many lessons and activities which Mark planned for students required a great deal of teacher direction although he intended the students to work independently. Often students were unable to understand the task without help from the teacher. For example, Mark planned some Maths tasks for students on the topic of angles. The students did not fully understand the tasks and they found them very difficult. When Gemma was teaching, she found she had to spend a great deal of time with the group working on angles whereas the other groups were very independent because they understood what to do. When the students participated in activities they found difficult to understand they seemed less interested and tended to spend more

time off-task. Requiring such teacher direction hindered students from gaining power-to.

This episode also highlights how Mark regularly interrupted the students working even when all the students were on task. Sometimes Mark interrupted the students working to provide more instructions, to establish the point at which the students were working and to invite students to share their work. Students often ignored these interruptions and they appeared to perceive the interruptions as distracting rather than valuable to their learning. Gemma, on the other hand, rarely interrupted students while they worked. Gemma usually asked students to share their work at the end of a lesson and she approached individuals to obtain other information. Some students indicated that they preferred teachers not to interrupt them while they worked because they got more work done. It seems that Mark used this strategy of interrupting students while they worked to try to retain a sense of control. Students probably sensed this attempt at gaining power-over them thus restricting their sense of power-with. Moreover, interrupting students while they worked would have affected their intrapersonal empowerment because it inhibited their capability of getting on with their work.

Interrupting students while they worked was one way in which Mark exerted his presence, as his physical and verbal presence was much more noticeable in the classroom than Gemma's presence. Mark did not usually physically get down to the students' level like Gemma did and he called across the room rather than approach students to speak to them. In fact, when Mark talked to someone in the room one could always hear him. It seems that exerting his presence was another way of retaining a sense of control. Hence a teacher's presence can influence student empowerment because a teacher who exerts his/her physical and verbal presence is establishing power-over students. Whereas a teacher is more likely to establish a

power-with relationship with students when he/she does not have a dominant physical and verbal presence in the classroom.

Mark imposed time limits on students to complete work that did not seem realistic. In this episode Mark gave the students half an hour to design and construct a game. At the end of this time the students packed up their work and went out to recess. Mark did not ascertain who had completed their work and he did not give the students further opportunities to complete or play the games. This example reflects Mark's teaching because such incidents occurred on many occasions. The students ignored the time limits Mark imposed, as they seemed to work at their normal pace and students often did not complete their work. Mark rarely checked whether students completed work and he did not provide opportunities for students who had not completed work to do so later. On the other hand, Gemma provided students with time to complete work and she monitored their progress. One student explained that Gemma was a good teacher because "when she gives you an activity she gives you pretty long to do it. Unlike some other teachers, you only have a set time like something like five minutes, but with her you get something like forty minutes" (Int, Robert, 25/7). Setting unrealistic time limits and not providing opportunities for students to complete work seems to impact on student empowerment because students were less capable of completing work and therefore they had less power-to.

Initially in this episode Mark told the students that they had to complete work from the previous lesson, but it seemed that Mark did not really expect anyone to do that work because he did not mention it again. This illustrates how Mark had an intention to conduct a different Maths lesson to what he would normally do, that is his *agenda* (Manke, 1997) was for the students to create games during the lesson. On this occasion, the students seemed happy to adopt Mark's agenda because they did not complete the work as they should have and immediately began planning games.

Thus, Mark attempted to employ teaching strategies similar to those employed by Gemma which required him to give students more freedom and as a result he relinquished some of his control and shared power with the students. Mark seemed to regain some control or power-over the students by restricting the students' freedom as a lesson continued, interrupting students as they worked, and by imposing short time limits on students to complete work. Mark did encounter some difficulties incorporating Gemma's teaching practices, which the following episode further illustrates. In addition, the experience of one student demonstrates the impact of such difficulties on the students and the classroom environment.

Losing Control: Pursuing the Teacher's Agenda

Mark asked the students to work in pairs to plan a game for the physical education lesson to be held later in the day. Carl and Simon worked together. Carl explained:

We chose a partner and we started making it (a game) up. And my partner liked baseball and I liked soccer. So I wanted to make up a soccer game and he wanted to make up a baseball game. And I told him, "Why don't we have a cross between baseball and soccer?" ... He said, "Yeah, okay". So we drew out the field and then we writ (sic) down the rules. And then Paul wanted to join us and so we explained it to him and he came up with a few good ideas. And then we finished that. (Int, Carl, 18/8)

After the students had spent about 25 minutes planning their games, Mark gathered the students on the floor in a circle so they could share their ideas. About three pairs of students explained their games and then Mark said, "We will have to finish there." The students pleaded, "Oh, please?" Mark said, "Alright." The students cheered. A few more students shared their games. Then Mark asked everyone to record their names on their plans and give them to

him. A student asked, “Are we going to vote?” Mark replied, “No we will wait until after reading.” It remained unclear how a plan would be selected.

After lunch while the students read Mark looked through the game plans. Ten year seven students joined the class for the afternoon as they needed supervision while their teacher was out but Mark did not interact with these students and he did show an awareness of them.

When the students finished reading, Mark asked them to sit on the floor. Mark told the class that he had looked at all the games and he really liked a couple. Mark explained one of the games. Michael called out, “That is already a game!” Mark ignored Michael’s comment and went on to explain the other game that he liked, which was Carl and Simon’s. Michael called out again, “They were supposed to make their own (game) up. They are already games!” Again, Mark ignored Michael asking some students to collect some equipment. Brigitte told Mark, “We have already got sports monitors!” but Mark did not appear to hear her.

The class went out to the oval. Two of the year seven students hid in the classroom and did not go with the class. It became clear that Mark had selected Carl’s game to play as he began to explain it to the class. Later, Carl explained that he was happy that Mark chose his game especially as he thought that someone else’s game would be chosen (Int, Carl 18/8). While Mark spoke to the class many students chatted to each other and did not listen. The game started. Mark did not invite the year seven students to join the game. Most of the year sevens played on the nearby playground equipment but two ran away from the area. While the year five students were playing many sat on the edge of the oval waiting for a turn and some began throwing pieces of bark at each other. Mark asked the students to stop but they did not. Mark threatened to stop the game, return to the classroom and play the game at lunch the following day if the students did not stop throwing bark. Carl said, “Good!” However the game continued.

Some students rejoined the class after participating in a cross-country competition. Mark did not acknowledge these students although students waiting for a turn to play asked them about the competition. Some more year seven students came and then left without speaking to Mark. It appeared they too had returned from cross-country and came to be supervised.

Mark stopped the game and sat the students down. He explained in a serious manner that he was very disappointed with the students because they were being silly, yelling and throwing bark. While Mark was saying this, some of the students were laughing.

The class returned to the classroom. On the way back to the classroom, two year five students ran ahead a different way to the rest of the class. On returning to the classroom, Carl sat at his desk looking very upset and near tears. The students packed up ready to go home before having prayer in the room next door. Carl was supposed to organise prayer but he just sat at his desk. I asked Carl if he was okay and he said that he was not. I asked Carl if he wanted to speak to me or to his base group. Carl said he would speak to his base group. Carl approached Damien, who was the only base group member present on the day, and the two went to the other side of the unit and sat down to talk. Interestingly they did not check with Mark whether they could meet and furthermore Mark did not seem aware that Carl was not at prayer even though he was one of the organisers. (Fieldnotes, 14/8)

Later Carl reflected on the incident:

Oh, well, everybody played it (the game) and everybody thought it was pathetic. ... They were saying, they were saying it to me. And I tried to get some defence players, but they, but they wouldn't, no one wanted to be defence and we put out the defence idea. ... (I felt) upset ... (because) every time I make up something everybody hates it. ... We told Mr Church. ... He said that he'd talk to them, but I don't know what happened. (When we came back) I told Mr Church and he talked to them. And I just wanted to sit there quietly ... and think about it. ... I was supposed to do prayer, but I didn't. ... (Then) I told him (Damien) what happened and he said, "Just ignore it". ... He's my best friend. And I (also) talked to Bill 'cause ... we were sitting down and he was turning off the computer next to us and I talked to him too, 'cause he's my good friend too. ... He said the same thing as Damien. (Int, Carl, 18/8)

Many issues arise from this episode. First, the lesson was organised in a manner with which the students were familiar, as students were able to work collaboratively to design the game, they were clear about the purpose for the activity and they were relatively free to make decisions regarding their work and thus had power-to. In this lesson, the students were engaged. However, at the conclusion of the lesson, many students expressed disappointment at not being able to share their games and one student questioned whether they would vote on a game to play as they would normally do with Gemma. Mark dealt with these concerns by agreeing to allow more students to share and by delaying making a decision regarding which game to play.

Mark often made decisions in a manner different from Gemma. In this episode, Mark made the decision about which game to play whereas Gemma would have arranged for the class to vote. In addition, Mark did not communicate how or why he made decisions clearly to the students. Until Mark explained the game to the class on the oval, it was unclear which game he had chosen to play. Some students did not seem to accept Mark's decision. The students, who were more familiar with a democratic style of decision-making, expressed concern to Mark when he made decisions they were used to making collectively. Mark ignored their concerns. It appeared that Mark did not know how to cope with such a democratic style of teaching. Mark did not explain most decisions he made and students often resented his decisions probably because they were disempowered due to a loss of power-to and power-with. Students appreciated Gemma giving reasons for decisions she made which helped them understand and accept them and this seems important to the empowerment of students.

Occasionally Mark made decisions in a manner that was more democratic than in the above episode, but he seemed to find the process difficult to manage. For

example, on one occasion Mark began to teach a science lesson on bridges, when the students stated that they had already learnt about bridges. Mark decided then that they could do something on disasters instead and he asked the class for suggestions about what they could do within this topic. Mark recorded the suggestions on the board and then students voted on what they wanted to do. During this decision-making process Mark had difficulty retaining attention and the students did not respond to Mark's requests for quiet. Mark continued anyway (Field notes, 21/8). Therefore it seems that effective classroom management techniques could be important to teachers who want to empower students.

"Losing Control" also illustrates how Mark seemed more concerned with what he did than the students and what they did. Mark continued with what he had planned disregarding the students' comments and reactions. Mark did not seem to care about the individual student. For example, Mark did not demonstrate that he cared when students were upset and furthermore, Mark did not show concern for the year sevens at all. It was as though these students did not exist. The way in which Mark dealt with the year seven students shows how Mark focused on himself and his teaching rather than on the students for whom he was responsible. Clearly Mark did not acknowledge responsibility for these students and did not consider their safety. It would appear that Mark was more concerned with his teaching plans than with the students, that is Mark was pursuing his own agenda. By pursuing his own agenda, Mark was probably trying to retain a perceived sense of control.

Mark progressively had difficulties in gaining and maintaining control. Students began to behave in ways that were very different from when Gemma taught. They seemed to be testing Mark's authority and testing the boundaries. Mark did not assert his authority effectively and he did not set and maintain clear boundaries for student behaviour. In addition, although Mark employed a variety of discipline

strategies he did not use them consistently or effectively. Mark's attempt to move from an authoritarian style to a more caring approach to behaviour management could explain his lack of consistency. He had not developed effective ways to manage student behaviour and resorted to using external control strategies in order to gain compliance and regain power-over the students. Possibly Mark perceived he had a lack of control which could account for Mark's focus on his own teaching as such a focus could have helped him gain a sense of perceived control.

This episode also demonstrates how aspects of the classroom environment changed when Mark taught. One aspect was the nature of student-teacher interaction. The way in which Mark interacted with the students was different from how Gemma did, as he did not treat the students with the same care. In this episode Carl thought Mark cared, demonstrated by him seeking support from Mark, but there was no evidence that Mark attended to Carl's concern. Furthermore, Mark did not pay any attention to Carl when he was clearly upset. The way in which the students interacted with Mark was also different, as some students did not always treat Mark with respect. For example, students were sometimes "cheeky" to Mark and as he did not effectively deal with such behaviour, it continued. The nature of student-teacher interaction is important to student empowerment because it can help the establishment of power-with relationships between the teacher and the students.

Another aspect was the quality of student-student interaction which deteriorated as students often reverted to lower levels of functioning and there was a sense of uncertainty regarding what was going to happen and how things were going to happen. For example, students sometimes openly rejected their peers and they communicated in a manner that was not respectful. Initially in this episode, there was a positive classroom atmosphere as the students worked collaboratively with each other, planning games independently from the teacher. At first Carl was proud that

Mark selected his game, but it seems that Mark could in fact have set Carl up for failure and jeopardised the positive atmosphere. He did this by selecting a game without student consultation and then by not dealing with the students' concerns or with the negative student-student interaction. It seems possible that the students could have rejected any game chosen in this manner. Consequently, Carl was the recipient of the students' expression of unhappiness. When Mark taught, the students began to show less respect for each other as there were many occasions when students teased peers and put peers down. Moreover, the environment seemed to become more risky for students as it became less certain and more unsafe. Such destructive interaction rarely occurred when Gemma taught and if students were not happy with how their peers treated them, they were proactive in dealing with the behaviour knowing they had support from Gemma. Carl did seek support from Mark but was uncertain of how Mark dealt with the situation. Interestingly, Carl did not immediately use the structures in place such as his base group to gain support, but he did after it was suggested to him. Such a breakdown in functioning suggests that student empowerment is fragile. Students began to lose a sense of power-with each other.

This episode also demonstrates the importance of the structures to student empowerment. Carl's base group provided him with a means of gaining support for dealing with his problem. However, it seems that Carl required prompting to use the structure. Therefore, it seems that the environment and in this case the teacher and/or student interaction could have supported Carl's empowerment.

Exerting Control: Overriding Decisions

In the morning, Sally entered the classroom before the bell rang. She announced to no one in particular that she was on prayer. Mark responded to

her by asking what day it was. Sally said she did not know. Mark told Sally that it was Mary MacKillop day³. Sally quickly told Mark, “We are doing a prayer on Mums.” Mark responded by giving Sally some prayers on Mary MacKillop and encouraging her to use them.

Sally joined Marion, Bernadette and Marie in the room next door, who were writing the words to a Spice Girl song on an overhead sheet. Marion and Bernadette were helping Sally and Marie organise the prayer session. Marie explained how they planned the session:

Well, we were going to do it (the prayer session) on Mary, but then we asked Miss Hanley to get our song because she did not have it in the classroom she never got it. ... We had to change the subject on (to) mums. And that was her (Sally’s) favourite song and it involved mums and that’s why we were gonna use it.

Sally began organising the session and obtained some objects to use as a centrepiece. Sally had brought some items from home to use in the prayer session including some candles, a cross and a cassette tape with the song to play.

Mark entered the room. Sally asked him if they had to use the prayers on Mary MacKillop. Mark said, “Yes”. After Mark left the room, Sally indicated to the others that she did not want to use the prayers he gave her.

Marie and Sally decided that they wanted some containers that were different sizes for the centrepiece. After arranging some containers, they placed cloths over them. They then tested the overhead projector and focused it. Marion asked, “Can I do it? Can I do the overhead thing?” Sally explained to the others that she chose the song because it was about mums. They then played the music and discussed various film clips.

Marion said to Bernadette, “We had better go and do some work.” Marion and Bernadette went back to the classroom.

³ Mary MacKillop is a saint.

Marie asked Sally if she had the prayer. Sally said, “We have that stupid Mary MacKillop prayer”. Marie asked, “Do we have to (use it)?” Sally said, “Yes.”

Marie and Sally had the class tin of students’ names. Sally pulled out names from the tin, as a way of selecting students they would ask to say prayers. They kept pulling out names until they had three boys and two girls. Sally said to Marie, “Now who is going to blow out the candles?” Marie responded, “I don’t care.”

Sally then wrote the response for the prayers Mark had given them on an overhead projection sheet. Marie and Sally discussed how the sheet should look. Sally wrote the response again. Marie gave her a lined pad of paper on which to work so the writing would look neater.

Sally went to find Marion and Bernadette. She returned with Marion. Both Marie and Sally showed Marion what they wanted her to do with the overhead projector.

The class came into the room. Mark checked with Sally and Marie if they were organised. Mark spoke to the class about moving quickly between rooms. While Mark spoke Marie lit the candle. Sally gave some students prayers to say.

Marie and Sally began the prayer session with the song Sally had brought from home. One student read his prayer. The class did not say the response so Mark explained to the class what they had to do. Then the students read the prayers and the class responded after each one.

Immediately following prayer, Mark spoke about sharing work at assembly. He did not speak to the students who organised prayer.

(Field notes, 8/8)

Marie and Sally reflected on this episode in an interview.

Anna So Marie and Sally, how did you enjoy preparing prayer?

Marie I liked it ‘cause I liked the song.

Anna Yeah?

Marie Yep.

Sally Yeah, it was good.

::::

Anna ... And how did you feel when Mr Church asked you to do a different prayer.

Sally Oh well we felt okay 'cause we didn't even have a prayer but we...

Marie ...we were going to make one up but we really wanted it just to be based on mums and then we added Mary MacKillop. It was okay I guess.

Anna So did you feel that it, the prayer was your prayer, or do you feel that you sort of shared it.

M&Sally Shared it.

Anna Which would you have preferred?

Marie Probably just our own.

Sally Yeah

Anna ... How did you think it went?

Marie It went pretty good.

Anna Yeah.

Marie Except no one was singing.

(Int, Marie and Sally, 8/8)

On many occasions, Mark tried to influence or override students' decisions. This episode illustrates how two students had made decisions about the prayer session, in a prior lesson with Gemma, gone to some effort to organise it and then Mark told them to do something else. Mark did not acknowledge the students' right to own the session, and he influenced what the students did to suit his wishes. Usually Gemma let students take ownership of their work by allowing them to make their own decisions that she upheld. However, on a few occasions Gemma also influenced what the students did, but when she did this she explained her reasons so

that the students could understand why she wanted something. Students seemed to accept when Gemma tried to influence what students “owned” more readily than when Mark did, suggesting that providing explanations for wanting students to incorporate teacher’s decisions is more acceptable to students. By influencing or overriding students’ decisions, Mark took away power from the students so that they had less intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment.

In addition, this episode illustrates how Mark did not acknowledge students’ efforts to arrange things for the class. This was different from Gemma who would have thanked the students for organising the session at the end of prayer. Furthermore, she might have commented about the way in which the students had organised it or even made comment about the content of the session.

The notions of student and teacher agendas (Manke, 1997) are applicable to this episode. The students’ agenda was to conduct a prayer session on their chosen theme of mums. On the other hand, Mark was pursuing his own agenda which was that he wanted the students to organise the prayer session around a theme of his choice using prayers he had selected. Mark’s and the students’ agendas were in conflict. The students attempted to encourage Mark to accept their agenda, but Mark insisted on the students accommodating his. Interestingly, the students accepted this and worked Mark’s agenda into their own. The following episode illustrates what can happen when the teacher and students have agendas that remain in conflict.

Retaining a Sense of Control: Conflicting Agendas

On Thursday morning, Mark began the day by addressing the students who sat as a group on the floor. Mark had recorded the programme for the day on the white board and spelling was not included as an activity. Some students asked Mark if they could have spelling as they normally did on a Thursday.

Mark tried to establish how much work the students had done and then said, "We might squeeze some in."

The class then had prayer. After prayer, Mark told the students they would then continue with Religion. Some students said, "Ohhh!" Mark asked what the problem was. Jack said that he had lots of work to do on spelling. Mark told them they would do some spelling later.

About one hour later, after the students finished religion and they were sitting on the floor, Jack said to Mark, "You haven't got spelling on the board!" Mark replied, "Just press pause on that for the moment!"

The students did not have spelling that day. (Field notes, 7/8)

One student in particular, Jack, showed concern about spelling not being on the programme for the day. Jack later explained his concern in an interview:

Anna What are you worried about today? Can you tell me?

Jack Oh, I- I just need, I've just got heaps (of spelling work) to do.
 ... (If you don't get it finished) sometimes you can get off
 (not get into trouble) 'cause you did something (some work),
 or you just get this red slip and the teacher has to sign it and
 ... your mum signs it. And then if you get two in two weeks, I
 think, ... your mum and dad have to have a meeting with
 your teacher.

Anna Mmm. Are you worried about that.

Jack Nah. I haven't got one yet.

....

Anna And so what are you worried about today, 'cause you keep
 asking Mr Church? Can you tell me now?

Jack Yeah, I haven't, I've only started one activity- because- and
 I've got four. Yeah.

Anna Right, and what's happened, have you got spelling today?

Jack Um, we should have, but he (Mr Church) hasn't got it up on the list.

Anna Yeah, and is that what you keep asking him about?

Jack Yeah.

Anna And so what do you want him to do.

Jack Just let us have a lesson of spelling.

Anna And has he said he will or not?

Jack Nup. He said "Keep it on pause".

Anna And what does that mean?

Jack I don't know, keep it on hold or something. ((Jack explains the work he has done and the work he has yet to do))

Anna So you've got lots to do?

Jack Yeah. ... I'll probably have to stay up pretty late doing homework a lot, yeah.

Anna And how do you feel about that?

Jack Oh, it's alright if I've got nothing else to do.

....

Anna So you're not sure whether you're going to get it (a spelling lesson) or not?

Jack Yeah. I don't know if we're gonna get it today or not. I think a fair few people have still got a fair bit to do.

(Int, Jack, 7/8)

In this episode, Jack and other students clearly wanted time to complete their work. Mark had agreed with Gemma to provide time for students to continue their spelling work on Thursdays. The students expected this to happen and persisted in trying to influence Mark to let them have spelling. Interestingly, during the five weeks of data collection Mark did not programme for spelling on a Thursday, but did for spelling tests on Fridays as also planned with Gemma.

Mark, on the other hand, seemed as though he did not intend to give the students time for spelling. Initially Mark did not answer Jack's questions and he indicated that the students would have spelling at some stage. Mark appeared to have made his plans for the day which he did not seem to want to alter. This further indicates Mark's attempt to have power-over the students rather than power-with them.

This episode demonstrates how Mark and the students often had conflicting agendas. It seemed that when these situations arose Mark rarely altered his agenda to accommodate the students' agendas. In this episode, Mark had an agenda which was hidden, or concealed (Manke, 1997) and did not include spelling. Many students however wanted him to allocate time for them to continue their spelling work. In the pursuit of their agendas, the students attempted to expose Mark's agenda by confronting him with enquiries and expressing concern regarding the allocation of time to spelling. On occasions such as this, both Mark and the students had agendas that were in conflict and they were not prepared to alter them. The way in which Mark kept his agenda concealed leading students to believe they could have spelling was probably a means of retaining a sense of control.

Pursuing the Students' Agendas: Calling Base Group Meetings

11:21 am

After recess, the students were to continue with Maths activities. Mark asked the students who were not sitting at their own tables to return to their own. A few students asked if they could change the seating arrangements. Mark ignored them.

Students began calling base group meetings. John informed me that he was calling a base group meeting, and he invited me to listen. John then returned to say that they would be holding the meeting later because someone

else wanted to use the room. Cathy's base group called a meeting and they met in the room next door where John had wanted to meet.

Antonio's group then called a base group meeting and Antonio invited me to listen. Antonio approached Mark to check whether he could have a meeting but Mark did not want the group to meet. Antonio told Mark that I wanted to record the meeting. Mark then agreed to let the group meet. The group met on the stairs in the shared open space area.

Another base group was also holding a meeting. In addition, some other students asked Mark if they could have base group meetings. Mark said they could not. It seemed that if Mark consented, most of the class would be holding a meeting at this time.

11:48 am

After Antonio's group meeting finished I returned to the classroom and John informed me that his group were going to meet in the room next door . The meeting finished at approximately 12:00 pm.

(Field notes, 21/8)

This episode illustrates how on one occasion the students seemed to call base group meetings to avoid their work. It is possible that the students were not able to pursue their own agendas in the classroom with Mark so they used the processes and structures available to enable them to pursue their own agendas. This was the only obvious occasion that students called base group meetings to avoid what was happening in the classroom.

Although the students seemed to use base group meetings to enable them to pursue their own agendas, the meetings followed normal formats, the students were on-task and they took the meetings seriously. Possibly, the students had problems they wished to discuss at some time with their base groups and took the opportunity during this lesson because they were not interested in what was happening in the classroom.

Mark handled this situation in a different manner to Gemma. Gemma always allowed students to meet with their base groups when they requested, whereas Mark did not allow some base groups to meet on this occasion. This seemed to be Mark's way of dealing with the situation. Additionally, Mark did not seem to examine more closely the students' reasons for wanting to be excused from the happenings in the classroom.

It seems important to student empowerment that students be able to pursue their own agendas. This episode shows how the structure of base groups and the process of solving problems enabled students to pursue their own agendas and thus facilitated student empowerment. Additionally, the episode demonstrates how the teacher's role is important but not essential to the effective functioning of the processes and structures. The students were empowered, by Gemma, to use the processes and structures independently of the Mark however, with support from Mark they probably would not have taken advantage of such opportunities.

Summary

In this chapter I have described Mark in the classroom by providing episodes to highlight the similarities and differences to when Gemma taught and the effects these had on classroom life. The main similarities between when Mark and Gemma taught were that the structures that Gemma had established were still available to students and the physical environment remained the same. The main differences were Mark and Gemma's beliefs, the way Mark did not adopt the processes as Gemma used them with the students, and other aspects of the environment changed. Mark's beliefs were very teacher focused and related to academic achievement whereas Gemma's beliefs focused more on the students and related to both academic and social achievement. The structures that Gemma established in the classroom were available

to Mark and the students when Mark taught the class. Mark adopted the Person of the Day and games and the students had access to the other structures, although he did not encourage their use. For example, the students continued their class duties and they occasionally called base group meetings suggesting that the students were empowered to some extent to use the structures without Mark's support. Mark shared power with the Person of the Day and with students when they played games but regained his power when he wanted. It was as if he in fact *lent* power to students. The processes were available to Mark to adopt and he did adopt several to some extent but he did not do so confidently. For example on occasions Mark attempted to adopt the process of managing behaviour but he was not effective or consistent. The physical environment remained the same when Mark taught however other aspects changed. This chapter shows how such aspects of the environment are important to student empowerment such as student-teacher interaction and student-student interaction. These differences clearly impacted on student empowerment highlighting the importance of the dimensions. Many of the differences related to the processes and the environment seemed to stem from Mark's inability to manage the classroom effectively.

Mark did not have effective power-over students and he kept striving to gain this. In fact, Mark might have needed power-over students to be able to effectively share power with students and enable them to become empowered. In trying to establish control or power-over students, Mark inhibited the students' ability and capability to gain or even retain intrapersonal empowerment. Additionally, power-with relationships were unable to be successfully established. Therefore the levels of student empowerment varied due to the influence of the teacher.

Another issue raised in this chapter was the notion of teacher and students' agendas. Mark often had his own agenda that he pursued and he was not willing to

change it. The students also had their own agendas that they pursued. Sometimes the students seemed happy to adopt Mark's agenda but there were occasions they were not. The students seemed to manage ways of pursuing their own agenda or they were persistent in challenging Mark's agenda. Possibly Mark was trying to retain a sense of perceived control by consistently pursuing his own agenda.

Having described Gemma and her teaching, life in the classroom from the students' perspective and then Mark and his teaching, in the next chapter I bring these findings together and discuss them in light of the research questions.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

The preceding three chapters have described and increasingly interpreted the happenings of the classroom with a focus on Gemma, the students and Mark. In this chapter, the approach will be more analytic as I discuss these preceding chapters in light of relevant literature. The discussion that follows focuses in turn on agendas and goals to provide an organising framework through which the findings of the study can be interpreted, examining what student empowerment is and the dimensions of enabling it.

This discussion reveals that students who are able and capable of pursuing appropriate achievement and social goals that are complementary and conducive to learning are likely to be intrapersonally empowered. Additionally, students are likely to experience interpersonal empowerment if they have a sense of collective autonomy through the pursuit of goals that are complementary with those pursued by peers and the teacher. Students who are empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally are likely to realise their goals and meet their needs. This discussion then argues that student empowerment can be enabled by the teacher holding beliefs that are conducive to student empowerment and by establishing structures, processes and an environment to facilitate students to become empowered.

Agendas

In the previous chapter, I raised the notion of teacher and student agendas and I will now consider the notion in more detail. An *agenda* is someone's plan of things to do to achieve an outcome or goal. I chose to use the term "agenda" over "plan",

which motivational psychology literature often uses, because it is useful to gain a greater conceptual understanding in explaining the findings of this study. I have adopted the notion of an agenda from Manke (1997) and Oyler (1996) in preference to other possible notions because it is useful in explaining how the participants went about trying to achieve their goals. Goals cannot be seen, but the pursuit of goals or people's agendas are more explicit. In addition, the notion of an agenda, or plan, is used in motivational literature to gain a greater understanding of people.

Manke (1997) found in her study that the teachers' agenda was to "control student actions to facilitate learning" (p. 9) whereas the students' agenda was "to act without constraints of adult responsibility, seeking to 'have an interesting day'" (p. 9). In this study however, it seemed that Mark and Gemma's agendas were different from each other's and to the findings of Manke. Mark's agenda was primarily concerned with his teaching and indirectly with student learning and it did not seem to be very flexible. On the other hand, Gemma's agenda focused more on the students and their learning. In addition, Gemma's agenda was flexible as she often negotiated with students until they had agreed upon an agenda together. The students may have had agendas similar to those of students Manke studied, but they undoubtedly had agendas that went beyond her findings, as many agendas were academic and socially related. For example, in the episode called "Conflicting Agendas" Jack's agenda was for Mark to allocate time for spelling so he could complete his work. Clearly, Jack's agenda was academic in nature. The students did not always share the same agenda. In "Losing Control" Carl did not have the same agenda as the other students when the class was playing the game. It seemed that Carl's agenda was for his peers to accept and play the game, whereas the other students' agenda was for the game to stop. The findings of this study suggest that teachers' and students' agendas are more complex than Manke suggested.

Establishing agendas seemed to occur in a variety of ways. First, individuals sometimes established their own agendas and hence they were often different from each other's. Second, the teacher and students sometimes negotiated their agendas between them. Third, on occasions individuals accommodated another person's agenda by adapting their own. Fourth, it is likely that students and teachers sometimes adopted someone else's agenda because they had not set one for themselves and an agenda presented to them sufficed, or they were flexible and happy to change their own. Thus, the teachers and students formed agendas by establishing their own, negotiating, accommodating or adopting someone else's.

When individuals established their agendas, they were often different from each others. On some occasions, the different agendas were not in conflict with each other and individuals were able to pursue their own agendas without a negative effect on others. Nevertheless, there were occasions when the different agendas were in conflict such as in "Conflicting Agendas". Mark in particular often had an agenda that was in conflict with some of the students' agendas.

Gemma and the students seemed happy to negotiate their agendas. If Gemma had a different agenda to the students or set an agenda without negotiation with the students she usually explained it to them. On such occasions, the students seemed happy to adopt her agenda or rework their own agendas to accommodate it, as their agendas rarely seemed in conflict with Gemma's agenda.

Mark, on the other hand, was more reluctant to negotiate his agendas with the students. In fact, Mark focused on his agenda rather than considering the students' agendas. The students sometimes accommodated or adopted Mark's agendas, possibly because he seemed unwilling to negotiate as in "Overriding Decisions".

Goals

As the intention of this study is to examine student empowerment, it is important to consider why students establish agendas. As already stated, an agenda is a plan of how to achieve a goal or goals. What are goals? Motivation literature informs us that students have purposes for what they do, that is they establish and pursue goals. The two main types of goals, achievement and social goals are relevant to this study. Achievement goals are academic in nature and are concerned with “perceptions about the broad, overarching purposes of achievement behavior” (Urdu, 1997, p. 101). On the other hand, many social goals are interpersonal in nature and can be broadly defined as the intended outcomes of behaviour when interacting with other people (Pervin, 1989). Students simultaneously pursue multiple goals (McCaslin & Good, 1998; Wentzel, 2000) and the goals are “fluid and dynamic” (Dweck, 1996, p. 190). Namely goals are not set, but rather students are constantly establishing new goals, modifying or abandoning them (Dodge, Asher, & Parkhurst, 1989; Dweck, 1996).

The findings suggest that Gemma enabled students to pursue both achievement and social goals in the classroom and she probably helped them to coordinate these goals. Students were able and encouraged to set and pursue achievement goals particularly as they were required to make many decisions regarding their work. Additionally, Gemma facilitated students to establish and pursue social goals principally by promoting the development and maintenance of peer culture (Bank, 1997; Corsaro, 1985; Danielewicz et al., 1996; Davies, 1982). The peer culture in this class coexisted with the school culture which probably helped the students to coordinate their social and achievement goals. Additionally, Gemma probably helped students to coordinate their personal goals by not imposing her goals on to the

students but rather allowing students to set their own and attempting to negotiate or influence others.

Depending on how well the students are able to coordinate the different goals, the pursuit of social goals and achievement goals can be either complementary or conflicting (Dodge et al., 1989; Urdan, 1997; Urdan & Maehr, 1995). When students pursue social and achievement goals that are complementary, their motivation and achievement are likely to be enhanced (Urdan, 1997). Yet, if students pursue social and achievement goals that are in conflict, their motivation and achievement can be undermined (Urdan, 1997). However, teachers can help students coordinate goal pursuit (McCaslin & Good, 1998). In this study, it was more likely that the students pursued goals that were complementary when Gemma taught than when Mark taught. When Mark taught, students sometimes seemed to pursue goals that were conflicting such as in “Pursuing the Teacher’s Agenda” Hence, students were more likely to be motivated, that is invest and participate in learning activities, and achieve more positive intellectual outcomes when Gemma taught than when Mark did.

In enabling students to pursue both achievement and social goals, Gemma was not only allowing but also encouraging the pursuit of multiple goals in the classroom. Students who pursue multiple goals simultaneously and those who pursue both social and achievement goals have been found to be more successful at school (Wentzel, 1996). Moreover, enabling students to pursue both types of goals facilitates “optimal school adjustment” (Dweck, 1996, p. 183). Therefore, it seems probable that when Gemma taught, the students were more likely to achieve success at school.

This discussion of goals provides an organising framework through which the findings of this study can be interpreted. Although I did not question students regarding the goals they pursued, I did obtain data concerning how the students

pursued their goals, that is, their agendas. Therefore, I will now discuss the findings with this framework in mind.

Gemma catered for students who were probably all pursuing different achievement and social goals whereas Mark did not. Gemma seemed to accept that students set their own personal goals and tried to support the students in their attempts to achieve their goals. Gemma attempted to empower students to be more able to pursue their own goals successfully by enabling them to pursue their own and negotiated agendas and effectively managing the students in the process. A teacher, such as Mark, who had trouble managing various student agendas, would probably not adequately cater for students pursuing various goals. Mark was more concerned with his own teaching than to enable students to pursue successfully their personal goals. For example, in “Conflicting Agendas” Jack seemed to be pursuing an achievement goal when he expressed his agenda for Mark to allocate time for spelling. Mark did not support Jack in trying to achieve his goal. Hence, Gemma facilitated students to pursue their personal goals, but Mark did not facilitate pursuits as successfully and as such, students were more likely to be engaged in activities and achieve positive learning outcomes when Gemma taught than when Mark did.

Although the students were able to establish and pursue their own goals, Gemma actively influenced the pursuit of them. We know that students choose goals that are either appropriate or inappropriate (Dweck, 1996). Gemma tried to guide students towards pursuing appropriate goals by expecting suitable academic and social behaviour and helping those students who did not exhibit such behaviour. For example, in the “dacking” incident that occurred when Gemma was teaching, the students seemed to be expressing behaviour related to achieving social goals that were inappropriate (Dweck, 1996). In discussing the incident with the students, Gemma challenged the students’ goals and influenced them to set goals that were

more appropriate. Furthermore, Gemma led the students through a process that required them to take into account other people's needs and goals which is a requirement of successful goal coordination (Dodge et al., 1989). Such teacher mediation is said to help students learn to coordinate goals and deal with conflicting goals (Dodge et al., 1989). In addition, Gemma probably helped students further coordinate the pursuit of social and achievement goals in a complementary manner by employing cooperative learning strategies (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). It has been found that students who successfully coordinate appropriate goals, in the way Gemma promoted, are more likely to achieve at higher levels (Phelan et al., 1991; Phelan et al., 1994; Urdan & Maehr, 1995).

Finally, how does the pursuit of goals relate to student empowerment? It seems that by enabling students to pursue social and achievement goals, a teacher is enabling students to become intrapersonally empowered because they are likely to experience power-to. Moreover, by helping students to coordinate such a pursuit of multiple goals, a teacher is taking steps to ensure that they have the capability to be successful in their pursuit, further enhancing students' intrapersonal empowerment. It is evident that the students were largely empowered in this study because they were able to and capable of, for example, solving their problems, making decisions about all aspects of classroom life, and contributing to the management of the classroom. However there were times when some students gained power-to in ways that were perhaps not educationally beneficial such as when students gained a capability and ability to pursue inappropriate social and achievement goals when Mark taught. Hence this study suggests that intrapersonal student empowerment can be defined as the ability and capability of pursuing appropriate social and achievement goals.

In addition, the findings suggest that on an intrapersonal level, students were more empowered at certain times than on other occasions. For example, when students adopted a role such as Person of the Day and when they participated in some of the processes such as solving problems in base group meetings, they assumed more power-to than at other times. Additionally, students' seemed to have different levels of power-to when Gemma taught to when Mark taught. Students' level of intrapersonal empowerment seemed to vary due to the status of the roles they assumed, their personality and ability, and the opportunities provided by the teacher. This not only supports the claim that students can be empowered at varying levels (Brunson & Vogt, 1996) but also suggests that levels of student empowerment vary. Additionally, this suggests that student empowerment may not be durable across situations such as different teachers.

Assisting students to pursue goals and agendas that are not in conflict with others enhances the interpersonal empowerment of students, as they are more likely to experience power-with peers and the teacher. The findings of this study show that interpersonal empowerment is when students have a sense of power-with or collective autonomy with peers and teacher.

Levels of interpersonal empowerment varied because the power relationships among students changed at different times. For example levels of empowerment varied when students adopted roles and responsibilities, such as Person of the Day, because with the role they assumed a position of power thus gaining power-over peers. Some students were more empowered than others because they were ready to become that empowered or they had the necessary skills. In addition, students perceived that some of their peers had power, because for example they were popular, and thus those peers had power-over those who held the perceptions.

Therefore, levels of interpersonal empowerment seemed to vary due to roles students assumed.

Levels of interpersonal empowerment also seemed to vary due to the teacher. The findings indicate that the students had more consistent power-with relationships with peers when Gemma taught than when Mark taught. For example, in “Pursuing the Teacher’s Agenda” Carl probably did not feel as though he had power-with his peers. This change was probably due to the nature of the social goals that students pursued. The power relationship between the teacher and students often changed, especially for different learning activities. For example, students assumed more power when they ran prayer sessions. When this occurred, Gemma retained ultimate power but shared her power with the students so there was a greater sense of equality in the power relationship. She usually only exerted her power in this type of situation when she perceived students required support. Gemma consciously varied the amount of power she shared, and she controlled this. For example, Gemma assumed more power when she addressed the students on the carpet and less power during prayer, spelling and class meetings. Mark, on the other hand, varied the amount of power he shared but it seemed that he did not plan for this to occur. Sometimes the students took power from Mark by ignoring his requests. It seemed that if Mark had used effective classroom management strategies he would have had more control over the power relationships he had with the students. Hence student empowerment is controllable to some extent by the teacher.

Student empowerment does not appear to be a static state. For example, students who had skills that helped them gain power-to in one aspect of their life may not have had skills in another area. In addition, students who were empowered in the role they assumed may only have been so temporarily, usually as long as they held the role. Moreover, the findings suggest that student empowerment is fragile and

therefore support the call for teachers to be consistent and persuasive backed by a wholehearted belief and approach to foster it (Ashcroft, 1987).

The relationship between intrapersonal empowerment and interpersonal empowerment seems to be very important. Students seem more likely to achieve intrapersonal empowerment when they experience power-with their community members. This is evident because when Mark taught, students began to lose power with their peers and those students also seemed concurrently to lose their power-to. For example, Carl experienced power-to when his game was selected but when he lost support from his peers he also lost his confidence and thus his power-to. Carl began to perceive that he was not able to call a base group meeting until it was suggested to him. Thus it seems that for students to be empowered successfully then both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of empowerment are important.

Therefore, student empowerment consists of two dimensions that is, intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment. Intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of students to pursue appropriate and complementary social and achievement goals through the establishment of agendas. Interpersonal empowerment is a sense of collective autonomy such that the pursuits of goals are not in conflict with peers or the teacher. Student empowerment is a fluid phenomenon rather than a static state as it varies at different times. In addition, student empowerment is a fragile state but it is teacher controllable.

Students who are able to coordinate and pursue appropriate social and achievement goals are more likely to be successful at school due to improved engagement and more positive intellectual outcomes. Enabling students to coordinate the pursuit of social and achievement goals requires facilitating students to pursue their agendas. In the following section, I examine how Gemma enabled such pursuits, but also how Mark did not.

Facilitating the Pursuit of Agendas and Goals: Examining the Dimensions of Enabling Student Empowerment

Gemma held beliefs and established structures, processes and an environment that facilitated the pursuit of agendas and goals. Mark held different beliefs but he had the same structures, processes and physical environment available to him. It seemed that when Mark taught, the students were empowered to some extent but not to the same level or as consistently as with Gemma. I now examine and discuss these dimensions in more detail.

Beliefs

Gemma and Mark's sets of beliefs were very different. Gemma had a set of well-developed beliefs that focused on the students, learning and the classroom environment. Her beliefs were more conducive to empowering students because according to her beliefs it was more likely that students would be able to pursue their goals and agendas and therefore, it was probable that she had an empowering philosophy. On the other hand, Mark seemed to be still developing his beliefs about teaching and learning, particularly as he identified many areas on which he was working, and therefore it cannot be confidently stated that he had a philosophy. Mark's beliefs were very teacher focused and were seemingly not as conducive to empowering students. In fact, he would probably have to alter his beliefs to empower students effectively. This supports the literature that suggests that an empowering philosophy is important to student empowerment.

Gemma's reflection on the notion of student empowerment demonstrates that empowering students was important to her and that her beliefs supported her attempts to achieve it. She explained that her role was to enable students to become

empowered rather than doing something to students. That is, she could establish the conditions conducive to student empowerment, but the students would take up the opportunities as they were ready.

Mark's reflection on the notion of student empowerment indicates that he perceived that he could take responsibility for empowering students by doing or saying things to students. In particular, he believed in sharing power with those students who were "leaders". It would seem that taking responsibility for the empowerment of students contradicts the whole notion of students having power in their lives. Additionally, selectively sharing power with students would not facilitate the development of power-with between students and thus, could help empower some students intrapersonally, but not interpersonally.

Research on teacher efficacy can help us understand why Gemma and Mark's beliefs are important to student empowerment. Teacher efficacy can be described as two-dimensional: teaching efficacy, or the teacher's beliefs about whether they can affect the students' outcomes regardless of environmental factors, and personal teaching efficacy, or a teacher's sense of effectiveness as a teacher to promote learning or successfully manage student behaviour (Ashton, 1985; Soodak & Podell, 1998). Gemma, it seems, had a high sense of efficacy. Her beliefs suggest that she was confident that she could produce student learning and additionally she perceived that she was an effective teacher. On the other hand, Mark possibly had a lower sense of self-efficacy (Ashton, 1985; Soodak & Podell, 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) because he appeared to lack confidence in what he believed and more importantly lacked confidence in himself, his teaching and the students' capabilities. Research suggests that teachers who have a low sense of efficacy use less effective methods of instruction and classroom management (Saklofske, Michayluk, & Randhawa, 1988). For example they may not persist in helping students who have difficulty with their

work (Schunk, 1990), and are more likely to have a less humanistic student control ideology, using negative sanctions to motivate students to work (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Mark did not address students' concerns regarding work, had a less humanistic student control ideology than Gemma, and he used negative sanctions in an attempt to get students to work. Such characteristics of teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy do not seem to be conducive to empowering students because students would be less likely to become autonomous (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1988) or achieve high goals (Ross, 1998). Hence, it is possible that a teacher with a low sense of efficacy is less likely to be able to enable student empowerment than a teacher with a high sense of efficacy is able to.

Structures, Processes and the Environment

The three dimensions, namely structures, processes and environment, were important to enabling the students to be empowered and, as I will determine, interdependent. Therefore, I will discuss these dimensions together. First, a reminder about each dimension and the main issues that became apparent from the findings. The structures that Gemma established in the classroom, that is the Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meeting and games, were for students to use. They enabled students to participate in the processes and facilitated the establishment of the classroom environment. The students were clearly aware of the structures, they knew how to, and they were able to and capable of using them. The structures enabled students to become empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally.

The processes used in the classroom included managing behaviour, giving rewards, solving problems, decision-making, teaching strategies, working in groups, teaching social and cooperative skills, and teacher communication. Gemma established the processes which both the students and she employed. The processes

gave many of the structures a purpose and facilitated the creation of the classroom environment. The findings related to the processes indicated that levels of student empowerment varied particularly as some processes were more empowering than others. Nonetheless, the processes enabled Gemma to share her power with the students.

Aspects of the environment found to be important in this study were the atmosphere, perceptions of the class and related activities, physical environment, whole class interaction, student-teacher interaction, student interaction, student movement and physical presence of the teacher. The environment enabled the participants to employ the processes and structures effectively and confidently. The key issue to arise from the findings was that the environment Gemma established in the classroom enabled students to become empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally.

A number of conceptualisations help us further consider these issues that became apparent from the findings and gain a greater understanding of the importance of these dimensions to student empowerment. These dimensions helped the students establish and maintain a peer culture in the classroom, they facilitated the development of a cooperative learning environment and they enabled Gemma to share authority.

First, the dimensions seemed to encourage the development and maintenance of peer culture. Students construe the world in their own way and develop a shared set of “activities or routines, artifacts, values, concerns, and attitudes” (Davies, 1982, p. 171) that are appropriate and real to the students although not necessarily to adults. This can be described as peer culture as opposed to adult culture (Bank, 1997; Corsaro, 1985; Danielewicz et al., 1996; Davies, 1982). Enabling peer culture to emerge and flourish is important because it has been shown to enhance student

motivation and learning (Danielewicz et al., 1996). Gemma's beliefs were conducive to students establishing and maintaining their own culture. She encouraged students to use the structures, be aware of and involved in the processes and to take advantage of the environment, all of which enabled the peer culture to flourish. This growth of the peer culture particularly occurred because students were able to pursue their own agendas and gain control over their lives more effectively with access to the structures, processes to guide them, and their freedom to move and interact with peers (Corsaro, 1985; Davies, 1982). Hence, it is likely that because the dimensions enhanced the development and maintenance of peer culture the students were able to gain a sense of power-to and power-with and thus experienced some level of intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment. The peer culture in this class coexisted with the school culture. Enabling peer culture to develop and function alongside of school culture can lead to social and cognitive gains (Danielewicz et al., 1996).

The peer culture continued to be maintained to some extent when Mark taught probably because of his attempts to keep continuity with Gemma's teaching. Students were still able to use the structures, some of the processes still occurred and the physical environment remained the same. However, Mark's beliefs were not as conducive to the establishment of a peer culture because his priorities were towards academic rather than social achievement. When Mark taught, students were less able to pursue their agendas and they began to establish some inappropriate goals. Therefore, the nature of the peer culture altered. Students still had opportunities to maintain the peer culture but not to the same extent as when Gemma taught, limiting possible levels of student empowerment and therefore motivation and achievement.

Second, the dimensions seemed to facilitate the creation of a cooperative learning environment. A cooperative learning environment is one in which students

spontaneously cooperate with peers to suit their purposes rather than a teacher initiating student cooperation (Hart, 1992). Such cooperation could contribute to the enhancement of self-regulation. Gemma played an indirect role in promoting such cooperation by creating the conditions that encouraged students to initiate their own cooperation. For instance, the processes encouraged students to cooperate with each other, the structures provided them with an avenue to do so and the environment assisted the students in their endeavours. Moreover, in espousing her beliefs Gemma created a “self-supporting framework” (Hart, 1992, p. 15) so that students could operate independently of her. The dimensions all contributed to the creation of such a framework. Such a framework has been found to help teachers establish a cooperative learning environment (Hart, 1992). By creating a cooperative learning environment, Gemma shared her power with students consistently promoting power-with relationships between students, and therefore interpersonal empowerment, especially as the dimensions encouraged students to collaborate with peers. In addition, the self-supporting framework enabled students to gain power-to, and hence intrapersonal empowerment, because the dimensions facilitated the students to be autonomous in their pursuit of their own goals and agendas.

This cooperative learning environment continued to exist when Mark taught but not as successfully. Students were not able to operate as independently from Mark and they did not have such consistent power-with relationships. Again, levels of student empowerment were inhibited.

Third, the findings suggest that Gemma actively sought to share her authority. Sharing authority involves a teacher and students developing and negotiating a common agenda (Oyler, 1996). Gemma accepted that she had authority or power due to her position as a teacher and she used it to involve students in the process of shaping the classroom and its happenings. From Gemma’s beliefs, it is clear that she

had agendas that focused on the students and their learning, but they were flexible as she often negotiated with students until they had agreed upon an agenda together. In this way, she shared her authority. In addition, the processes particularly supported her efforts to share authority. For example, Gemma adopted a caring rather than a controlling approach to classroom management and promoted self-regulation (Weinstein, 1999). She did this by establishing the processes of managing student behaviour, solving problems and decision-making. Such a caring approach to classroom management reflected Gemma's beliefs about learning. In sharing her authority, Gemma affected many aspects of the environment. For example, Gemma did not dominate classroom talk which is a major way of sharing power (Oyler, 1996). Additionally, Gemma did not dominate the classroom with her physical presence which is another way of sharing power with students. By sharing her authority in this manner, Gemma enabled students to set goals and determine their agendas as they were informed of the processes, aware of the structures and assisted by the environment. Therefore, students were likely to have a sense of intrapersonal empowerment. In addition, as the dimensions were a means of Gemma sharing power with the students and they encouraged the students to share power with each other, the students were likely to experience interpersonal empowerment. However, there were a few occasions that Gemma was not consistent at using the processes and therefore at sharing power, such as when managing student behaviour she gave different consequences or skipped the normal steps. On these occasions, she probably undermined student empowerment to some extent because students were unlikely to perceive a sense of power-to.

Mark clearly did not have beliefs that indicated that sharing authority with students was important to him. Rather, Mark seemed very concerned with maintaining a sense of control reflecting his beliefs that focused on himself and his

teaching, and his low sense of efficacy. Manke (1997) found that maintaining a sense of control is the teacher's main agenda in the classroom. This would explain why Mark's agenda was often in conflict with the students. Moreover, being concerned with maintaining a sense of control probably helps explain Mark's reluctance to adopt the processes confidently, as that would have meant him sharing his authority with the students. An important aspect of sharing authority is to enable students to initiate for process and knowledge (Oyler, 1996). Mark seemed uncomfortable when the students, who were used to initiating for process and knowledge with Gemma, continued to do so when he taught. Mark often ignored students' attempts to do this. It seems that sharing authority with students could require a teacher to have a sense of control and additionally a high sense of efficacy. Mark did share authority with students on occasions, but he was inconsistent. It was clear that the students experienced frustration and confusion and were probably less able to fulfil their agendas and meet their goals due to this inconsistency. In fact, by inconsistently sharing authority when students were used to a teacher consistently sharing authority, Mark undermined the empowerment of the students as they lost power-to and power-with.

It is clear from the findings that the three dimensions, namely structures, processes and environment, were important to enabling students to be empowered and interdependent in nature. The structures that Gemma established in the classroom enabled students to participate in the processes and facilitated the establishment of the classroom environment. These dimensions are interdependent because each one is dependent on the other. For example, processes such as decision-making enabled students to participate actively in making decisions, but without the structures of class meetings and base groups the students would not have been able to initiate this process. Furthermore, without the environment that was supportive and encouraging,

the students may not have initiated or participated in the process. Hence, the structures, the processes and the environment are all crucial to the success of empowering students. Therefore, this study supports the literature which states that processes are important to student empowerment. Although this study has identified some different processes to those suggested in the literature, what is important is that teachers need to establish processes to enable student empowerment. In addition, this study has identified two other dimensions that are important to enabling students to become empowered, namely structures, or organisational arrangements that are established in the classroom, and environment, that is the social, emotional and physical context.

Summary

Gemma held beliefs that were conducive to an empowering philosophy and she had a high sense of teacher efficacy, both of which seem crucial to enabling student empowerment. Gemma espoused her beliefs by establishing structures, processes and an environment, which are interdependent dimensions of enabling student empowerment. These dimensions are important to student empowerment because they helped students establish and maintain a peer culture in the classroom, facilitated the development of a cooperative learning environment, and enabled Gemma to share authority with students.

On the other hand, Mark did not hold beliefs that were conducive to an empowering philosophy. He had a lower sense of teacher efficacy and therefore it was unlikely that Mark would successfully enable student empowerment. Mark adopted some of the structures, aspects of the processes and the environment. What is now clear is that the students were empowered to some extent by the dimensions Gemma established even when Mark taught, but they were often frustrated or

confused when their empowerment was undermined. This suggests that the beliefs are crucial to the success of the interdependent dimensions, namely structures, processes and environment and hence, to enabling student empowerment.

Key Emerging Concepts and their Interrelatedness

The key emerging concepts and their interrelatedness may be summarised as follows (see also Figure 2). Students have needs that they translate into social and achievement goals, which can be “appropriate”. In an attempt to realise these goals students establish agendas, which are plans of things to do to achieve goals. If students are able and capable of pursuing their agendas then they are likely to have a sense of power-to or intrapersonal empowerment. If the students’ agendas are complementary to the peers’ and teacher’s agendas then they are likely to sense power-with or interpersonal empowerment. Students who sense both power-to and power-with are likely to be empowered. If students are empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally then they are likely to realise their social and achievement goals and fulfil their needs. Teachers can enable students to become empowered by sharing their power. They should have beliefs that are conducive to student empowerment and establish structures, processes and an environment to enable the establishment and maintenance of a peer culture, a self-supporting cooperative learning environment and shared teacher authority.

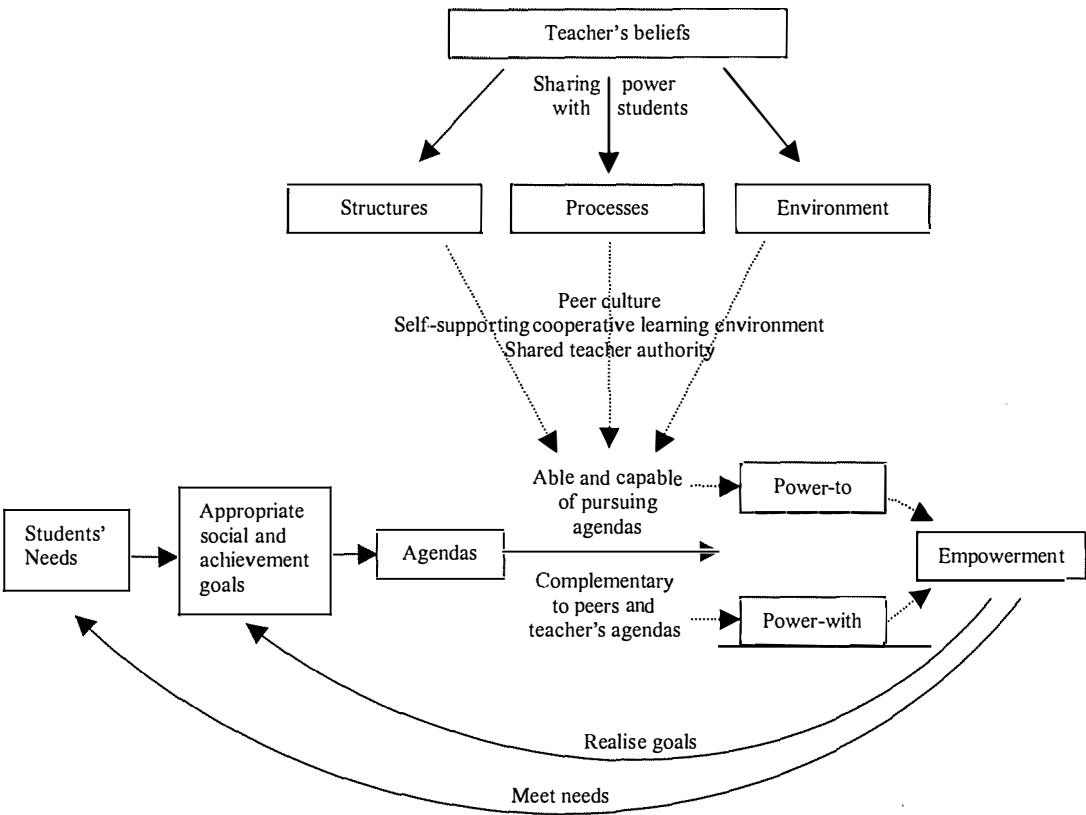


Figure 2. Key emerging concepts and their interrelatedness of what student empowerment is and how a teacher can enable it.

Summary

The main contribution of this chapter is its discussion of the findings in relation to agendas and goals, which provided an organising framework for interpretation. I have brought the findings together and discussed them in relation to the research questions: what is the nature of student empowerment and how can it be enabled in a primary school classroom? The discussion has revealed that student empowerment is two-dimensional. First, intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of pursuing appropriate and complementary goals through the establishment of agendas.

Second, interpersonal empowerment is a sense of collective autonomy through the pursuit of goals that are complementary with those pursued by peers and the teacher. I have also shown that student empowerment is a fluid phenomenon rather than a static state and that it is teacher controllable. Additionally, the discussion has shown how a teacher can facilitate students to pursue agendas to help them coordinate their pursuit of social and achievement goals. Such pursuits can be enabled by holding beliefs that are conducive to student empowerment, establishing structures, processes and an environment that enable students to become empowered. Finally, the discussion has established the importance of enabling students to become empowered as a means of them realising their social and achievement goals and meeting their needs. In the next chapter, I present the conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The previous chapter discussed the findings in relation to relevant literature. This final chapter of the thesis uses that discussion to suggest some tentative conclusions and implications. It begins with an overview of the thesis and a summary of the findings. Then it outlines implications for theory and suggestions for further research.

Overview of the Thesis

Given that there has only been a small amount of research to date examining student empowerment and the importance of empowering students to the present and their futures, I discerned a major need for a study to examine what student empowerment is and how teachers enable students to become empowered in a primary school classroom. This study addresses this need by examining the following questions: What is the nature of student empowerment, for students and teachers, in a primary school classroom environment? How can student empowerment be enabled in a primary school classroom? The study was an attempt to contribute in an original and substantial way to a greater understanding of student empowerment particularly as it considers empowerment from the student and teacher perspective at the primary education level and it is descriptive and exploratory. In addition, the study distinguishes between what student empowerment is and how it can be enabled.

I conducted a descriptive study using ethnographic techniques to gain a greater understanding of student empowerment. One year five class, including the teachers and students, was studied intensively for five weeks. Data collection techniques used

were interviews, observations and field notes. Informal and semi-structured interviews were held with all participants in response to observations to gain perceptions and conceptions of life in the classroom and in particular of empowerment. All semi-structured interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Observations were used to provide a description of the setting, participants' actions, activities and interactions. Field notes were kept to record observations, points for clarification and reflections.

The analysis of the resulting data was an iterative process, building on ideas throughout the study. Regularities, patterns and topics were identified to initiate the establishment of coding categories. Moreover, irregularities were sought. Words and phrases that represented these patterns and topics were then recorded and called coding categories. Initial coding categories were assigned to data to test the "workability" of the categories. Modifications were made which included adding new categories, discarding and merging other categories. Then the categories were clustered into themes or dimensions and verified with the original data. Key events were identified and used as a lens to view the classroom culture. Finally, the teacher was asked to read the descriptions related to her to verify that they contained the essence of her original experiences and whether the interpretations accurately portrayed aspects of classroom life.

In this thesis, I have argued that there are two dimensions of student empowerment, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment. Intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of students to pursue appropriate and complementary social and achievement goals through the establishment of agendas. Interpersonal empowerment is the pursuit of goals that are not in conflict with peers or the teacher. It is a sense of collective autonomy. Student empowerment seems not to be a static state but rather a fluid phenomenon that varies at different times.

Additionally, student empowerment seems to be a fragile state, but also one that appears to be teacher controllable. Therefore, a consistent approach by teachers should enhance the enabling of student empowerment. This description of student empowerment contributes to a greater understanding of the nature of student empowerment in a primary school classroom.

From the findings of the study, I have argued that teachers can enable students to become empowered by sharing power with students. Teachers can facilitate the pursuit of students' agendas to help them coordinate their pursuit of social and achievement goals. That is, teachers can empower students because they can adopt beliefs and establish structures, processes and an environment conducive to student empowerment. Moreover, teachers can negotiate agendas and influence students' personal goals. Enabling students to become empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally is important because it provides a means for them to realise their social and achievement goals and satisfy their needs.

Data analysis confirmed the two dimensions that enable student empowerment identified from the literature and additionally identified two other dimensions. As identified in the literature, the teacher's beliefs, which contributed to his/her philosophy, were crucial to enabling student empowerment and the processes established supported those beliefs. Furthermore, the findings showed that establishing structures and creating an environment that reflected the beliefs ensured that the processes were successful. I define beliefs, process, structures and environment as follows:

Beliefs: Beliefs are strong opinions held by the teachers that guide their decisions. Examples of the teacher's beliefs included "Students should be valued" and "Students should have a say."

Structures: Structures refer to the organisational arrangements, formations or constructions established in the classroom. Structures used by the class included class duties, base groups and class meetings.

Processes: Processes are the procedures, approaches, systems, methods and applications used in the classroom. Some processes included solving problems and decision-making.

Environment: The environment includes the social, psychological and physical aspects related to the surroundings, environs, milieu, atmosphere and climate in the classroom. Examples include student movement and the physical presence of the teacher.

Implications of the Study for Theory

Other studies have identified beliefs and processes as important to enabling student empowerment but they did not clearly indicate the importance of structures and the environment. For example Kreisberg (1992) found that dialogue, trust, voice, assertiveness and openness, shared decision-making and co-agency were important to student empowerment. All of these can be described as processes as defined in this study except trust which relates to the environment of the classroom. Luechauer and Schulman's (1992) study of college students focused on the outcomes of students being empowered. They assumed students who were involved in the teaching and learning process as being empowered. Therefore, this study did not examine what student empowerment is or how it can be enabled. McQuillan's (1995) study in a high school found practices or processes that were important to enabling students to become empowered such as valuing student voice and decision-making. McQuillan did suggest that structures within a school could be used to empower students. In a

study of two elementary school classes, Stephens (1994) found one process of students working in groups that enabled students to become empowered. In another study of four elementary school classrooms, Robinson (1994) found many processes and some environmental aspects that helped enable students to become empowered. The processes were reflective thinking, personal disclosures, and facilitating a sense of ownership, and the aspects that related to the environment were verbal and non-verbal interaction. Finally, Wade (1995) conducted a study with one primary school teacher and found that to enable students to become empowered teachers should reflect on their beliefs and the happenings in the classroom, actively promote student empowerment and encourage students to have a sense of ownership. Therefore, these studies ascertained the importance of a teacher’s beliefs and the processes that they establish to enable student empowerment (see Figure 3).

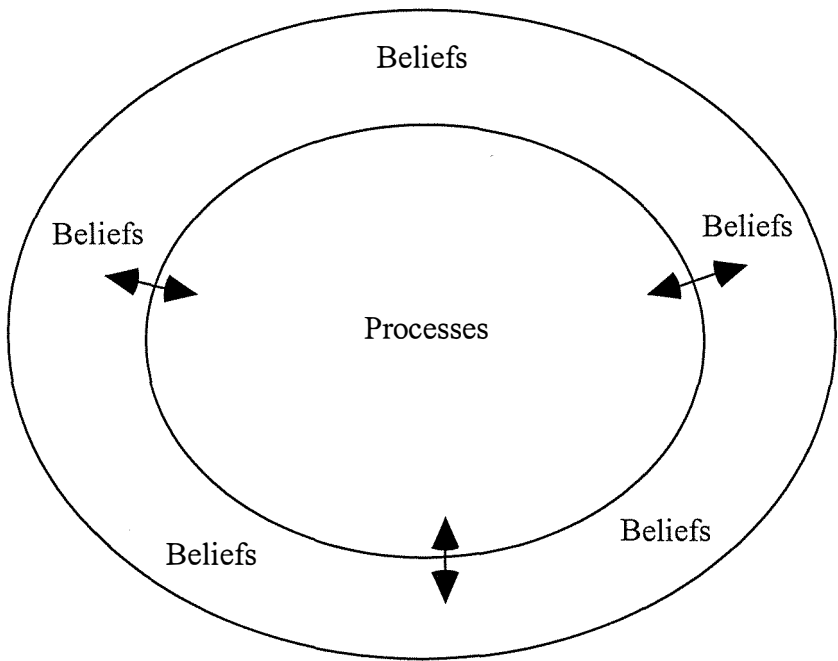


Figure 3. A framework identifying from the research literature the variables of enabling student empowerment and their interrelationship.

Nevertheless, this study has shown that to enable student empowerment, more is required than the two dimensions clearly identified in previous research, namely a teacher's beliefs and establishing processes. This study has identified two other dimensions that seem to be important as they facilitate successful use of the processes, that is structures and the environment. To illustrate the importance of these additional dimensions I will consider the process of solving problems and the teacher's belief that students should be encouraged to seek help and support from each other. The teacher established a structure called *base groups*, which meant that students with a social or personal problem were able to seek support from peers by calling a base group meeting at any time. Thus, the structure enabled students to participate in the process of solving their own problems. Additionally, the environment facilitated this process because it was supportive and encouraging, particularly as students were able to move around the room relatively freely and they interacted positively with each other. Base groups encouraged the development and establishment of peer culture, facilitated the creation of a self-supporting cooperative learning environment and enabled the teacher to share her authority. Moreover, base groups and the environment enabled students to share an intrapersonal concern in the interpersonal domain with peers in a supporting environment. By attending to their concerns in this way students were able to return to their work promptly. The teacher's belief that students could solve their own problems and establishing the process of solving problems in the classroom would not have been enough. The structures and the environment enabled the process to be successful.

Hence, this study is significant because it confirms some of the earlier findings which indicated that teachers' beliefs and processes are important to enabling student empowerment and although there was some indication that structures and

environment can help, these studies did not emphasise the importance of these dimensions. In addition, this study suggests that these dimensions of enabling students to become empowered are interdependent, which the studies mentioned above did not find. Moreover, given the call for students to become empowered (e.g. Kreisberg, 1992; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Yowell & Smylie, 1999) and that there is little research on the area, particularly in primary schools and from the students' perspective, this study contributes to a greater understanding of the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled.

The findings of the study have led to the development of a framework which describes the variables of enabling student empowerment and their interrelationship (see Figure 4). A teacher's beliefs appear to be crucial to all the dimensions of enabling student empowerment. A teacher who establishes processes, structures and an environment conducive to empowering students but does not have empowering beliefs is unlikely to enable students to become truly empowered. The structures, processes and environment dimensions are important and all interrelate with each other. For example for processes to be effective, certain structures need to be in place and an empowering environment should exist. This tentative framework makes a distinct contribution to new knowledge.

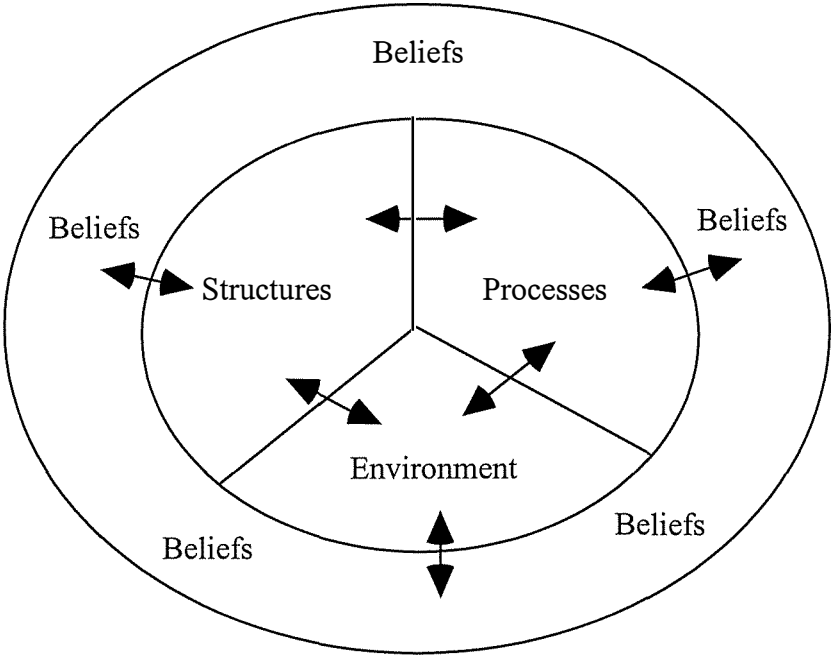


Figure 4. A framework identifying from the study the variables of enabling student empowerment and their interrelationship.

Furthermore, this study contributes to a greater understanding of why enabling students to become empowered is important. Students who are empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally are able and capable of pursuing their agendas that are complementary to their peers’ and the teacher’s agendas. Thus, students are likely to realise their social and achievement goals and fulfil their needs for power and belonging. This is significant because students who can coordinate academic and social goals so they are complementary are more likely to be motivated and to achieve (Urdu, 1997). Additionally, research shows that students who pursue multiple goals simultaneously are more successful at school (Wentzel, 1996). Moreover the extent to which students’ needs are met greatly influences the level of student engagement (Battistich et al., 1997). Thus, the findings of this study indicate

that students who are empowered are more likely to be motivated to participate in learning activities and to achieve successfully at school.

This study indicates the importance to student motivation and achievement of encouraging students to establish and pursue appropriate social goals that are complementary. Typically, schools encourage students to pursue achievement goals but not social goals, hence schools should reconsider this priority. The study highlights the importance of enabling students to establish and maintain a peer culture and establishing a self-supporting cooperative learning environment, which in particular helped students to establish and pursue social agendas and goals. Moreover, the study indicates the importance of a teacher holding beliefs conducive to student empowerment, establishing structures, processes and an environment to enable students to realise their goals and meet their needs.

One of the strengths of the study is the conceptual framework used. Some studies of empowerment in education have used a conceptual framework based on power-over and power-with (e.g. Blase & Blase, 1996; Kreisberg, 1992) and found the concepts useful but power-to has not been included. The concept of power-to has been discussed by some (e.g. Ashcroft, 1987; Clark et al., 1996) but seems not to have been used as part of a conceptual framework in research. This omission suggests that a less adequate form of student empowerment has been considered previously. The findings of this study have shown how power-to or intrapersonal empowerment is important to the construct of student empowerment and how it can contribute usefully to the framework of power-over and power-with as a conceptual tool.

Implications of the Study for Teaching

The findings of this study have significant implications for teaching as the dimensions of this framework of enabling student empowerment seem to be teacher controllable and therefore student empowerment is possible. First, teachers can consider their belief systems so that they are conducive to empowering students. In particular, their beliefs should be conducive for students to pursue their social and achievement goals and moreover, *enabling* students to become empowered rather than doing it *to* or *for* them. Second, teachers can establish structures or organisational arrangements in the classroom such as Person of the Day, class duties, base groups, class meetings and games. Third, teachers can set up processes or ways things should happen in the classroom to enable students to make decisions, solve problems, manage the classroom, communicate and learn. Fourth, teachers can also create a social, emotional and physical environment to support the employment of the structures and the processes. For example, the teacher should consider the atmosphere, physical environment, availability of resources, student and teacher presence and interactions. Therefore, teachers can address the call in the literature for students to become empowered.

Further, the findings suggest that high teacher efficacy is important to enabling students to become empowered. Therefore, teachers' efficacy beliefs should be addressed through, for example, the development of instructional skills, attending to teachers' beliefs about their role in facilitating student learning and creating strong school cultures (Ross, 1998).

Additionally, teachers should probably consider the importance of peer culture, a cooperative learning environment and sharing authority to student empowerment. This study has shown that enabling students to develop and maintain a peer culture,

creating a cooperative learning environment by building a self-supporting framework, and sharing authority by developing and negotiating common agendas facilitated student empowerment by enabling students to pursue both their achievement and social goals. These areas facilitated the teacher to encourage students to pursue goals in a prosocial and responsible manner. In fact, they facilitated student empowerment both intrapersonally and interpersonally, as they required the teacher to share power with the students.

Students' agendas are complex, they can be academic and social, related to learning outcomes for the students rather than just to act without adult constraints as previously found (Manke, 1997). The challenge for teachers is to facilitate a classroom environment in which students do establish appropriate goals and agendas. Additionally, teachers should consider the importance of negotiating agendas with students so that they are complementary. Teachers might be able to establish such an environment by adopting a flexible agenda that focuses on the students and their learning rather than on their teaching.

This study is important as it reports one way in which a teacher helped students to coordinate a pursuit of complementary social and achievement goals addressing a call for more descriptive examination into the influence of teachers on student motivation in the natural context of the classroom (Blumenfield, 1992; Maehr & Meyer, 1997). In order to increase motivation and achievement, teachers should consider how they enable students to establish and pursue both social and achievement goals in the classroom. In addition, they should consider how they help students to coordinate these goals by negotiating or influencing them so that they are complementary.

This study has shown how *base groups* as a structure were powerful in enabling students to solve their own personal and social problems. Base groups have

been advocated in the literature as a means to provide academic and social support (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Johnson et al., 1994). Research reports that at the tertiary education level base groups can in fact provide this support, but also enhance student learning and contribute to a more cohesive classroom environment (Sullivan, 1999). Therefore, teachers should consider establishing structures such base groups in their classrooms to help empower students to solve their own problems.

Suggestions for Further Study

For me, this study has raised many questions. One of the most interesting questions is the change that seemed to occur in levels of student empowerment due to the teacher. How durable is student empowerment? What impact do changes such as these have on student motivation and achievement? How can such changes be minimised? Should they be minimised? The qualitative nature of the study meant that data were collected indicating these changes to levels of empowerment. Therefore, it would seem important that more qualitative research is conducted that involves collecting data from the student perspective to capture such details.

I undertook the study in the naturalistic environment of a normal classroom in a typical primary school and the teacher continued teaching in her usual manner. The descriptive and exploratory nature of the study enabled me to identify potential variables especially related to enabling student empowerment. In fact, the study describes only one way in which a teacher shared power with students to enable intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment. How else can teachers share power with students to enable empowerment? Are the dimensions identified from the data for enabling students to become empowered important in other contexts? To what extent are the potential variables identified in this study applicable in other settings? How can teachers enable students of different ages to become empowered?

Another question that is worth exploring is the impact of enabling students to become empowered on their achievement. This study has indicated that empowered students were likely to coordinate their goals, pursue goals that are complementary and pursue both social and achievement goals and were therefore likely to achieve more (Dweck, 1996; Phelan et al., 1991; Phelan et al., 1994; Urdan, 1997; Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1996). To what extent does enabling student empowerment enhance student learning?

Summary

This thesis reports a study that found that a teacher could enable student empowerment in a primary school classroom. I hope that describing and interpreting life in one classroom with a focus on student empowerment will be useful for understanding further the nature of student empowerment and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom. In addition, I believe this study contributes to a greater understanding of the importance of student empowerment to enabling students to realise their social and achievement goals and meet their needs for power and belonging, thus enhancing motivation and achievement.

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