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Boys' perceptions and experiences of their placement in a secondary school remedial program : An examination of self-esteem, attitude, motivation and reading achievement

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**Boys' perceptions and experiences of their placement in a secondary school
remedial program: an examination of self-esteem, attitude, motivation and
reading achievement**

Angela Milmoe
2003
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

Remedial English education has long focused on the development of students' reading and writing skills, but research suggests that greater emphasis may need to be placed on affective factors such as self-esteem, motivation, attitude and perception. The influence of such 'non-cognitive' factors on any adolescent student's literacy development is often underestimated. For students experiencing difficulties in literacy, the interaction between perceived ability or degree of success in literacy and the affective factors often impact negatively on self-esteem, attitude and motivation. The relationship between self-esteem, attitude, perception, motivation and literacy needs to be explored, especially when dealing with students with literacy difficulties.

This study examines the perceptions of lower secondary school students who had been placed in a remedial English program. It examined not only their perceptions of the program, but also their self-concept as readers, the value they place on reading and their motivation to read. The research differs from much of the earlier research by focusing on student perceptions, attitudes, expectations and recommendations rather than on teacher evaluations of the effectiveness of remedial programs. The case study research was conducted on 24 boys from Years Eight to Ten in an Australian Catholic secondary school. The boys had been placed in a 'Focus English Program' designed to improve the literacy competencies of students who had difficulties with reading and writing. .

The case study grew out of the researcher's concern over the negative effect that placement in the program was having on students in terms of self-esteem, attitude, motivation and achievement. The negative effect on students' achievement was noticeable particularly for those who had been in the program for an extended period of time. A comparison was needed of the perceptions and attitudes of Year Ten boys, who had been in the program for more than two years, with the perceptions of Year Eight and Year Nine students, who had been in the program for less than two years and who had also taken part in a Self-Esteem Development Program.

The research involved two phases. In the first phase of the study two surveys were administered and in the second phase a focus group interview was conducted. The first survey was the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, et al, 1996) which yielded scores on two measures: Value of Reading and Self-Concept as a Reader. The second was a researcher-designed Perceptions Survey in which participants were asked to express their views about the Focus English Program. This survey examined student attitudes towards reading, benefits and disadvantages of the Focus English Program, peer influences and recommendations for change.

The second phase of the study involved the random selection of two students from each of the year groups participating in the study. These students then took part in a focus group which discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the Focus English Program, academic achievement, parental attitudes and the issues students faced as a result of placement in the program.

Results indicated that participants had strong opinions regarding the Focus English Program. All participants identified a number of advantages and disadvantages and aspects they believed were in need of change. The responses indicated that the Year Ten students were negatively affected by the program as they provided a number of strongly negative opinions; while the Year Eight and Nine students provided more balanced perspectives and identified a number benefits and disadvantages.

Overall, the findings revealed the Year Ten group was extremely negative in terms of perceptions of themselves as learners and of the Focus English Program. Conversely, the Year Eight and Nine students were more positive and displayed a greater awareness of their difficulties and reasons for their placement in the Focus English Program. The findings suggest the Self-Esteem Development Program has played a positive role in the achievement and attitude of students; and that students may become more negative if kept in a remedial program for a number of years. The findings also highlighted a need to re-examine curriculum and in particular the type of curriculum presented to remedial students. Participants indicated the need for more visual elements to be integrated into the curriculum as well as more choice in the types of materials assigned.

The study highlights the importance of student perceptions and the influential role self-esteem, attitude and motivation play in learning. It argues that the Self-Esteem Development Program should be continued. It suggests that it would be improved by the introduction of a more consistent behaviour management program and that motivation would be improved by the provision of more computers for student use, more reading materials based on students' interests, increased use of films and videos in the classroom, and more class excursions. It also recommends more targeted in-service programs for teachers dealing with Focus classes.

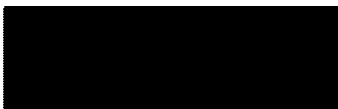
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Signed



Angela Milmoe

Date 26.3.04.....

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Western Australian secondary school syllabus, like those in other Western countries, requires students to have sound literacy skills. Those students who do not possess these skills may find the academic expectations of the secondary school difficult. The focus of the secondary school teaching program is on content, not basic skills; hence the difficulties faced by students with literacy problems are compounded further. For those who are identified as academically at-risk, help is often not at hand in the regular classroom; instead alternative measures are taken, often in the form of remediation programs.

Two traditional approaches to assisting students who are experiencing literacy difficulties in the secondary school are to stream students into classes based on achievement on standardised tests, and/or to withdraw students for intensive remediation. Students' perceptions and experiences of these programs and their impact on factors such as self-esteem, attitude and motivation form the basis for this study. Student perception was seen as the crucial element of this study. The opinions of students in remedial programs have rarely been taken account of by teachers, psychologists and various other administrators who run the programs. It is not often that those most affected have a chance to make a difference in how a service is delivered to them.

The investigation described in this thesis involves the examination of the schooling of adolescent boys, trends in remediation, theories of motivation, attitude and self-esteem and literacy development. This study grows out of, and contributes to, literature across disciplines of psychology, adolescent development, sociology and literacy education.

Remedial programs aim to assist and support students in the development of their literacy skills. The traditional focus of programs has been on the 'mechanics' of literacy, that is, on the teaching of reading, writing and spelling. However, for students to achieve success, a number of contributing factors need to be

considered. These factors include motivation, attitude, and self-concept in regards to reading. Students need to have a belief that they are able to succeed in literacy learning. If a student has a low self-concept as a reader and a negative attitude to the task, based on past experiences, then these will affect his learning. Confidence and a positive attitude are necessary factors in the learning process. For a remedial program to be effective in developing students' skills, the process should include more than teaching of the basic skills. Attitudinal, motivational and self perception factors also need to be addressed.

It has been well documented in previous research that self-esteem, attitude and motivation play significant roles in education (Movitz and Motta, 1992; Cooley and Ayres, 1988; Henk and Melnick, 1995; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1996). There appears to be a positive relationship between these factors and academic achievement (Baker and Wigfield, 1999). Students who are seen as academically at-risk have traditionally experienced many years of failure at tasks that appear to them to have come naturally to their peers. The feelings and perceptions generated by such experiences influence students' attitude, motivation and self-concepts in the academic realm (Henk and Melnick, 1995; Saracho and Dayton, 1991).

The aims of this research were to investigate the perceptions of boys placed in the Focus English Program and to determine the effect the Focus English Program was having on the boys. The research examines whether a self-esteem program was having an influence. The students in this program spent a large amount of time in the Focus English Program and the ramifications of being in a secondary school remedial program can be dire. The effect of such a program on the personal development of individual students is, therefore, a crucial factor to consider. The research sought to give the boys a voice and also to examine the often forgotten factors in the classroom such as self-esteem, attitude and motivation. The study therefore examines a range of factors that influence the achievement of remedial readers and remedial programs.

A Case Study approach was used for researching this thesis. The study was designed to investigate a specific remedial program. The study is not intended to make generalisations regarding remedial education. The recommendations

presented in the body of this text are made to enhance the Focus English Program and to benefit the students involved in the program.

The fields of education and psychology had a strong influence in the development of this thesis. The literature reviewed centred on boys' education, remedial education, self-esteem, motivation and attitude. All of these factors are viewed as central to the research. The theoretical framework of this study is based upon Mathewson's (1985) Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read. The model reflects the position this research takes on the important influence not only of cognitive factors but also of non-cognitive factors affecting reading.

Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to gather and analyse the results. The quantitative measures are presented using a number of statistical measures: Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with a Tamhane Post Hoc and Kruskal-Wallis H Test with a Mann-Whitney U Post Hoc and a Pearson Correlation were conducted in order to compare reading achievement scores of students within year groups with measures of self-esteem. Qualitative measures based on written surveys and the focus group interviews are presented using graphs, tables and extracts from the interviews. The use of various methods allowed for triangulation of the results and thereby ensures greater reliability and validity.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study provides an insight into students' own feelings and experiences regarding placement in a remedial program. It examines how these perceptions affect their learning and achievement. Research in this area has focused predominantly upon the perspectives of educators, parents and administrators (Chapman and Lambourne, 1990). While these perspectives have provided valuable knowledge, the students' perspectives need further investigation. Students who actively participate in such programs provide a different view concerning experiences and issues that affect their learning and achievement. This thesis shows that information from students provides educators with a more holistic view of remedial education and thereby provides opportunities for improving the design and delivery of remedial programs.

The research surrounding self-esteem, attitude and motivation is plentiful and it has strongly indicated that all play a significant role in education (Lawrence, 1988; Morvitz and Motta, 1992; Cooley and Ayres, 1988; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1996). However, the research examining the role of these factors in relation to literacy and remedial programs is not as common. The literature has acknowledged that self-esteem, motivation and attitude play a role in remedial education and that students who experience difficulties generally have negative attitudes and poor self-concepts. There is little research, however, that addresses how being placed in a remedial program affects these factors and how students feel about being placed in such a program. Hanson's (1999) study is one such piece of research. She examined students' perceptions of a secondary school remedial English program through surveys of students', teachers' and parents' perceptions of the program. Her study sought to investigate how a range of different parties viewed the program and it recommended possible improvements to the program such as more parental involvement and input and the need to consider students' ideas and opinions.

Studies of this type can benefit students by helping educators develop their awareness of student perceptions and by developing more effective ways to enhance students' learning and achievement.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of adolescent boys identified as remedial readers in a secondary school remedial program. The study was conducted in a metropolitan Catholic secondary school with a selection of boys in Years Eight to Ten. The program, known as the Focus English Program, involves streamed classes that have a modified English curriculum as well as a withdrawal component concentrating on intensive remediation. The year before this study commenced, a new Self-Esteem Development Program was initiated for the Year Eight students in the Focus English Program. This means that the Year Eight and Nine boys had experienced this program while the Year Ten students had not.

It was expected that links would be made between participation in the Focus English Program and students' attitude, motivation, self-concept and reading achievement. The study focused on boys because most participants in Focus English Programs are boys; in the research population there were only two girls in Year Eight, one in Year Nine and three in Year Ten. Girls often move out of the Focus English Program fairly quickly while boys tend to stay in the Focus English Program for up to three years. The study also examined the effect on boys of being in such a program for an extended period of time in terms of attitude, motivation, self-esteem and achievement.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What are the perceptions of boys identified as remedial readers of their placement in the Focus English Program?
 - a) What are the self-perceptions (attitude, self-concept as a reader, motivation) of boys in Years Eight and Nine who have taken part in a self-esteem development program?
 - b) What are Year Ten boys' self-perceptions (attitude, self-concept as a reader, motivation) after extended placement in a Focus English Program?
- 2) What is the relationship between a reader's self-concept as a reader and his value of reading, comprehension, word recognition and spelling?

1.5 Definition of Terms

To facilitate the reading and understanding of this thesis, the following terms are defined as they apply in the current research.

Attitude refers to a “combination of feeling and behaviours related to specific learning situations which serves as a major factor in the learner’s receptivity to the learning situation” (Thames and Reeves, 1994, p. 293).

IEP refers to an Individual Education Plan which is a “document that assesses and identifies the student’s academic, social and emotional needs. It outlines a continuing program to meet the student’s needs and specifies the resources required” (Brookes, unpublished).

Global self-esteem refers to “an individual’s overall feeling of self-worth” (Lawrence, 1988 p. 8)

Learning Difficulties/Learning Disabilities refers to the marked difficulties experienced by students with achieving in school. It should be noted that the United States and Canada refer to students with learning disabilities in the same context as Australia would describe students with learning difficulties (Ashman and Elkins, 2001).

Reading Motivation refers to an individual’s self-concept and the value an individual places on reading. Reading motivation is influenced by the personal importance and value an individual places on the task (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1996).

Remedial Reader as defined by the school in this study is a student who performs below average on a standardised test of learning ability. The student must also perform two years below his/her chronological age on a range of tests in the areas of oral reading, reading comprehension and spelling. The tests used by the school are:

- *TOLA: Test of Learning Ability (ACER, 1977)*
- *Holborn Reading Scale (Unknown)*
- *South Australian Spelling Test (Westwood, 1993)*
- *Test of Reading Experience (Daniels and Diack, 1976)*

Self-esteem/self-concept refers to the way “an individual perceives him or herself, whether globally or in reference to particular abilities or attributes” (Harter as cited in Elbaum and Vaughn, 2001 p. 304).

Specific domain self-concepts refer to an individual’s feeling of self worth in a specific area such as academic or social domains.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study encompasses a range of different issues including remedial education, reading theory, self-esteem, motivation and attitude. Each of these issues has been the subject of much research. The issues have been presented as separate sections within the literature review. Throughout this review a range of terms is used interchangeably. The first are “self-esteem” and “self-concept” and the second are “learning difficulties” and “learning disabilities”. Both these sets of terms are used at times to refer to the same concept and they are used in accordance with particular studies.

2.2 Remedial Education

Within the secondary school system, there are some students who experience difficulties in learning to read. How to deal with this issue has been the source of fierce debate for many years. Traditionally, remedial education has meant students are withdrawn from regular classes to receive specialised help in what are known as ‘resource rooms’; more recently however the push for inclusion has been strong. It has been argued that inclusion of students with learning difficulties in the regular classroom is more beneficial both academically and socially for students with learning difficulties (Macrine, 1998).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the popularity of resource room programs led to replacement of the previously ubiquitous segregated, self-contained classes. A resource room program is any school program in which a designated person, usually a support teacher, provides education support to students who are at risk of failure. Three main types of services are provided: assessment of students, instruction and consultative support.

These services can be provided in the general classroom or a room designated for that purpose, such as a resource room. The resource room is an important part of the resource program. It is any setting within the school in which students come

to receive specialist support at a scheduled time while receiving most of their education in a general school program (Wiederholt and Chamberlain, 1989).

The rationale for the resource room was that smaller classes allowed teachers to provide specialised help to better meet the social and academic needs of students. This view has been criticised (Bergen, 1995) and it was argued that the resource room model did not benefit students but instead led to students feeling segregated from their peers, lowered their expectations and condemned them to the bottom track. Hence the move was made to mainstream students into the regular classroom (Bergen, 1995)

Mainstreaming or inclusion involves the education of students with learning difficulties and/or handicaps within the general classroom. These students sometimes receive extra support in the form of a learning support assistant who works in tandem with the regular classroom teacher. The students may also work to a modified curriculum within the classroom. It is argued that students benefit more from inclusive models in the areas of social and academic skills and that their peer group develops a better understanding of disability (Farrell, 2001). Research has begun to appear in professional literature, which indicates that students with learning disabilities can be supported in a typical classroom for the entire day and achieve high or higher academic achievement levels than those achieved in separate settings.

The research comparing pull-out and mainstreaming is large and still inconclusive. Numerous studies have been conducted examining the benefits and disadvantages of both forms of educational service. In a study on the effect of inclusive schooling on students with mild to severe learning difficulties in the United States, Waldron and McLeskey (1998) found that there was a lack of evidence that separate classroom placement increased academic achievement. In their study, they compared 71 learning disabled students, from three elementary schools in the same district which had recently implemented an Inclusive Schooling Plan, with 73 learning disabled students from three elementary schools within the same district which had been using the resource room model. Students' results were compared in reading and mathematics using curriculum-based measures. Results indicated that students in the inclusion program made

significantly more progress in reading than those students in the resource model; however there were no significant differences in mathematics. The researchers did not speculate on the reasons for this difference.

The researchers then divided the students with learning disabilities into two groups based on their reading achievement levels. The two groups formed the mild learning disabilities group and the severe learning disabilities group. Their results in reading measures found that students with mild learning disabilities in inclusive settings made more progress than those who were not in an inclusive setting. In contrast, those students with severe learning disabilities did not differ significantly across settings (Waldron and McLeskey, 1998).

The results of this study indicate that students with learning disabilities who were educated in inclusive settings made significantly more progress on a curriculum based assessment than did students who were educated in a non-inclusive, resource setting. While these are encouraging results, it is important to note that nearly 50% of students with learning disabilities did not make progress that was comparable to grade level peers, suggesting that the inclusive setting did not meet the learning needs of all students. However some students were reported to be making good progress and this suggested that a well-developed inclusive setting can achieve positive results with students who have learning disabilities (Waldron and McLeskey, 1998).

Marston's (1996) study comparing inclusion only, pull-out only or combined services as forms of delivery sought to determine the best system of delivery for students. Combined services involved students receiving both resource room instruction and instruction in the general class. Marston's (1996) first study examined the effect of inclusion on the caseload numbers of the special education teachers across settings, instructional time and teacher satisfaction. His second study investigated the effectiveness of the three models in the area of reading. Students were assessed using curriculum based measures in both the autumn and the spring and results were then compared across the three settings.

For the first study, 315 Special Education Resource Teachers in elementary and secondary schools were sent a survey which asked them to: (a) identify whether or not they used an inclusion model and the number of years the model had been in use; (b) to report on the number of Individualised Education Plans that they served in inclusion only, pull-out only and combined services; and (c) to estimate the number of minutes per week they instructed students with and without IEPs in these settings. The results from the first study indicated significant differences in the number of students receiving support in inclusive and non-inclusive setting. Those students who were taught in an inclusive setting had more support teacher contact than those in the non-inclusive setting thereby indicating that an inclusive program was providing more support in terms of time spent on instruction than a non-inclusive program.

In the second study, Marston (1996) examined the reading results in the three settings. Students were given a pre-test in autumn measuring their word recognition accuracy and post-test in spring measuring the same. The study found that the reading progress made by students in the combined services model was significantly better than that of those in the inclusion only and pull-out only models.

Results from the Marston (1996) study indicate that the combined services model appears the best in terms of teacher satisfaction and academic performance. The combined services model provides a continuum of instruction not provided in inclusion only or pull-out. The combined services model provides the best of both worlds, offering students a range of education options that may be missing in inclusion only and pull-out only models. The results of studies comparing the advantages and disadvantages of pull-out programs with mainstream programs are varied, but it has been clearly shown which method of delivery is best suited to students with learning disabilities.

A number of studies have also examined student preferences for these programs. The studies sought to investigate which delivery systems students thought were most beneficial.

In a study examining the preferences of elementary students in the United States, Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen and Forgan (1998) found that overall most students preferred the pull-out model, but there were many children who were also confident that inclusion was meeting their academic and social needs. The small study was based on interviews with 30 students (16 with learning disabilities and 14 without) who spent time in both a pull-out system and an inclusion system. Of the 30 students, 18 said they preferred the pull-out model. Those students with learning disabilities found the pull-out model allowed their difficulties to be identified quickly. They also felt that they received more help and that instruction was suited to their needs. The students without learning disabilities felt the pull-out model allowed those with difficulties to get more help and having those students with difficulties removed from the classroom made it less noisy and resulted in a more productive learning environment (Klingner et al, 1998).

Nine students favoured the inclusion model. Six students with learning disabilities asserted they were able to get enough help in the general class. Five students asserted that they liked it both ways and did not care which program they were in. Even though students favoured the resource room for learning, the majority believed that staying in the general class helped in making friends. Students with and without learning disabilities agreed that there were more students and therefore better opportunities to make friends (Klingner et al, 1998). Overall, both learning disabled and non learning disabled students preferred the pull-out model. The general consensus, however, was that the pull-out model was good for learning but the inclusion model was better for making friends (Klingner et al, 1998).

The results of this study supported the provision of a continuum of services; the preferences of students highlighted how both models of delivery provided for their needs in different ways. Choice of delivery needs to be based on the needs of the students; for some, inclusion with proper support structures may be suitable whereas for other students, the pull-out model of delivery is more appropriate (Klingner et al, 1998). However, the study conducted was a small one involving only 30 students and although from these small groups there appeared to be support for a certain type of instruction it cannot be taken as

applicable to the wider schooling community. A study involving more students across a larger schooling community needs to be undertaken for results to be more generally applied.

In a study examining the perceptions of students with learning disabilities Whinnery, King, Evans and Gable (1995) found that student perceptions of pull-out programs and inclusion programs were not significantly different. It was found, however, that students in pull-out programs felt more left out. The study interviewed 48 elementary students in an American school district. Thirty-two were students with learning disabilities (16 participated in a resource room program and 16 in an inclusion program) and 16 were “regular education” students. Students filled in three forms of a Perceptions Survey which assessed student feelings about themselves, their perception of their classmates’ and teachers’ attitudes toward them and their view of educational services being provided to them (Whinnery et al, 1995).

The results indicated there were no significant differences between responses of students. The majority of students in both groups, as well as the regular education students, felt good about themselves and accepted by their peers and classroom teachers. All students responded positively to questions relating to self-esteem. Students with learning disabilities rated themselves higher on the self-esteem questions than did regular students. These findings challenge the generally accepted belief that students with learning disabilities have low self-esteem. However, the students with learning disabilities rated themselves lower in terms of intelligence; resource room students rated themselves the lowest (Whinnery et al, 1995).

The most significant complaint among learning disabled students who participated in the resource room program was that they felt left out and less accepted by class members. Obviously, these students spend some part of the day out of the class and therefore are left out of some activities. Another explanation may be that students who do not participate equally in all activities are not accorded full classroom membership status by their peers (Whinnery et al, 1995).

This study highlights the importance of student perceptions. Overlooked by many researchers is the fact that student perceptions are a significant variable in determining program effectiveness. It is important that the opinion of those who have participated be considered when developing new programs. For the most part, these results emphasise the importance of assessing students based on individual needs. In the rush towards inclusion we must bear in mind that some students simply cannot make satisfactory learning and social adjustments without significant instructional and program accommodations. Conversely, the role of resource rooms in meeting the social needs of students requires closer examination because education has the responsibility of catering not only for academic but for social needs as well (Whinnery et al, 1995).

It is still unclear what is the best system of delivery. The research is inconclusive in that a continuum of findings exists. Studies have found that students with learning disabilities mainstreamed into regular classrooms with appropriate supports have better self-esteem, are less self deprecating, are less alienated and demonstrate more appropriate behaviour in the classroom than those students who have just experienced the resource room (Noland, McLaughlin, Howard and Sweeney, 1993). Conversely, studies have also found that students in resource rooms achieved better academically due to the extra support they received and that they rated themselves in line with their regular classroom peers in terms of self-esteem (Farrell, 2000).

The inconclusive results of the research on program delivery indicate that different students benefit from different forms of delivery and therefore programs need to incorporate a range of services that cater for both academic and social needs. No matter which form of program delivery is chosen, the majority of programs for students with learning difficulties focus on improving their reading and writing skills. Therefore it is pertinent to consider the process of reading and learning to read.

2.3 Reading Theory

Information about the reading process comes from a variety of disciplines. Throughout the last century, contributions from fields such as education and psychology have laid the foundations; more recent contributors include neuroscience and psycholinguistics (Robeck and Wallace, 1990).

There are four main theories of reading, the Bottom Up Theory, the Top Down Theory, the Interactive Theory and the Socio-Cultural Theory. Each of these theories has contributed to reading research in a number of ways and each has both strengths and weaknesses.

The Bottom Up Theory is a text based model of reading which has an underlying premise that learning to read begins with the recognition of letters, sounds and words. As the name suggests, bottom up means the reading process begins at the bottom that is, with the text. A reader must be able to decode the letters, sounds and words for the reading process to occur. This model implies that meaning is on the printed page and that readers understand the text by analysing the print as they move through successive levels of analysis. This model is very hierarchical in nature; the reader must have the information gained at one level in order to proceed to the next. The process begins from the smallest unit (letters) and moves hierarchically to the largest (meaning) (Weaver, 1988).

Teachers who subscribe to this theory use a skills-based approach for instruction, such as a reliance on phonics instruction. The use of basal readers in instruction is an example of the Bottom Up Theory in practice. Basal readers have controlled vocabulary and have a reliance on grapho-phonetic cues so words in the text are regular decodable words.

There are a number of problems with this theory, the main one being the view that meaning is located entirely in the text. A reader does not read words and letters in isolation but instead reads in meaningful phrases. There is a great deal more to the reading process than is accounted for in the Bottom Up Model. This observation however, does not discount the role of phonics and the importance of decoding in reading, for these are important factors in the reading process. What

Bottom Up Models do not do is account for all the other important factors influencing the reading process (Lipson and Wixon, 1991).

The Top Down Theory posits that reading begins in the head of the reader because the reader's background knowledge is the starting point. Meaning is located in the reader's knowledge and predictions about meanings and continues downward through the lower levels of processing using the text as needed to confirm predictions (Wixon and Lipson, 1991).

Texts may be interpreted using three main cues: semantic cues which deal with meaning information such as word meanings, syntactic cues which deal with language structure; and grapho-phonetic cues which deal with the relationship of letters and sounds. Readers have this cue system as part of their prior knowledge. Within the Top Down Theory, it is believed that when reading, the cues in the text trigger the cues in the reader's head and this interaction allows meaning to be constructed. However, a good reader does not use all the cues built into the system. Instead a reader predicts meaning and has it either confirmed or disconfirmed by the following text. If predictions are disconfirmed then a reader needs to change the predictions about the text. The less often a reader needs to change their predictions and the fewer cues needed from the text, the more effective the reader (Parker, 1985).

Unlike the Bottom Up Theory which goes from part to whole, the Top Down Theory moves from whole to part and focuses strongly on semantic and syntactic cues. Meaning resides in the reader and not in the text and reading is viewed as a language process. Teaching practice subscribing to this theory is based on the selection of texts that relate to the reader's prior knowledge, and using texts about familiar subjects. Language experience, whole language and directed silent reading are examples of this approach (Walker, 2000).

The Top Down Theory makes it very difficult to accommodate the behaviour of young readers learning to read. This theory does not fit with processes used by people beginning to read. When learning to read, it is very often text driven and not driven by the learner's knowledge as argued by the Top Down theorists. It does offer more than Bottom Up Theory because it incorporates the idea that

reading involves prior knowledge to make sense of texts, but it fails to account of many other important factors in reading (Lipson and Wixson, 1991).

The Interactive Theory has been dominant for some years. This approach views reading as a combination of both Top Down and Bottom Up theories and includes the context in which reading is occurring. Reading is defined by this theory as an interaction between a range of factors including the text, the learning environment and the reader (Walker, 2000).

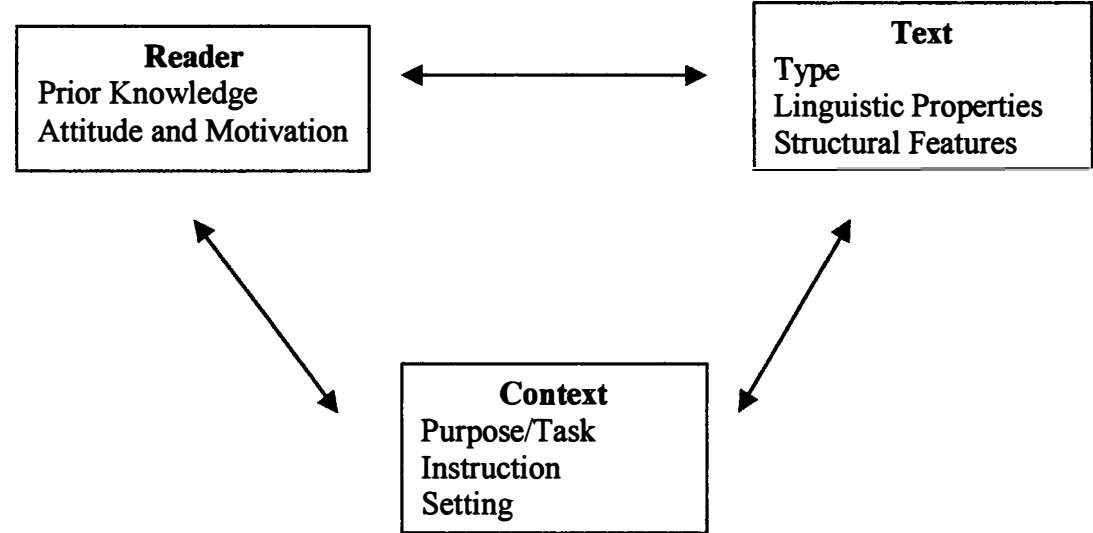
The Interactive Theory derives from Schema Theory. Schema theory places emphasis on prior knowledge and the reader's knowledge structures known as schemata. Reading comprehension occurs as readers construct relationships between what they know about a situation and the information suggested by a text. The reader's schema provides a framework for expectations that include files for different information. For example a school schema has files for classrooms, teachers, timetables and so forth (Parker, 1985).

Construction of meaning usually proceeds smoothly as most readers are not consciously aware of the process of referring to knowledge structures. Meaning construction becomes difficult for readers when they are presented with a text in which the meaning is not immediately apparent or a text for which they have inadequate background knowledge. This is an important point in regard to reading instruction as background knowledge of students is often overlooked when engaging in reading comprehension (Lipson and Wixson, 1991).

The Interactive Theory of reading suggests that a variety of reader factors interact with each other and with factors outside the reader to influence reading. In summary, Interaction Theory views reading as an interplay between three main factors: the reader, the text and the context. Reading factors that influence process and performance include the reader's prior knowledge, knowledge about reading, and attitude and motivation towards reading. Text factors that affect reading process include the type of text used, the linguistic features of the text and structural features such as headings, graphs, maps *et cetera*. Purpose and task make up the third set of factors. These include the general and specific

setting in which reading takes place and the type of instruction including content and methodology. (See Figure 1).

Reading is viewed as a cognitive process and meaning is seen to result from an interaction between the reader and the text involving both whole to part and part to whole. Instruction under this model varies depending on what is being learnt. This model encompasses the best of both Top Down and Bottom Up models but also takes into account environmental factors such as the setting. It recognises that reading involves a range of purposes and can be flexible in its delivery of instruction.



(Lipson and Wixon, 1991 p. 14)

Figure 1: Interactive Model of Reading

A more recent model of reading is the Socio-cultural Approach to reading. Within this model, success in reading can only be described in terms of the civil, socio-cultural and workplace demands and expectations that any particular culture places on its members. Literacy is only what a culture makes it. What is seen as high level literacy in a Western country such as Australia is very different from what is required in a small village in Peru (Freebody, 1982).

Unlike the other theories, the Socio-cultural model does not describe how a person learns to read. It is instead a theory based on what good readers do. Freebody (1982) argued that the demands of Western culture require readers to learn four reader roles. He has classified these reader roles as: code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst. A successful reader needs to break the code of written texts. In order to develop reading acquisition they need to master alphabetic script. To crack the code a reader has to recognise the sounds which make up a word, know which symbols are used to represent those sounds, predict possible letter sequences of the English language and automate all of the above knowledge (Rivalland, 1994).

To be a text participant is to engage in the text itself. This role deals mainly with comprehension and deriving meaning from text. The process of comprehension of the text places the reader into the role of the inferrer, here the reader must make connections between the text and other information required to fill out the less explicit aspects of text. Schema theory has drawn our attention to this aspect of the reading process. Within schema theory the reader has the role of activating knowledge of text structures as well as knowledge of the topic. The reader is engaged in the text as a meaning maker (Freebody, 1982 p. 4).

The third role of text user goes a step further. This role deals with the ability of the reader to develop and maintain resources for participating in 'what this text is for here and now' (Freebody, 1982 p. 5). It is through social interactions that we learn our positions as readers and what texts are used for. Reading is different in different environments and requires a range of skills or technologies. How a text is used in the school situation differs greatly from how a text is used in a leisure situation. There are different expectations and requirements for each situation. In a school situation we learn a different view of what texts are for and what our position as a reader is (Freebody, 1982 p. 5).

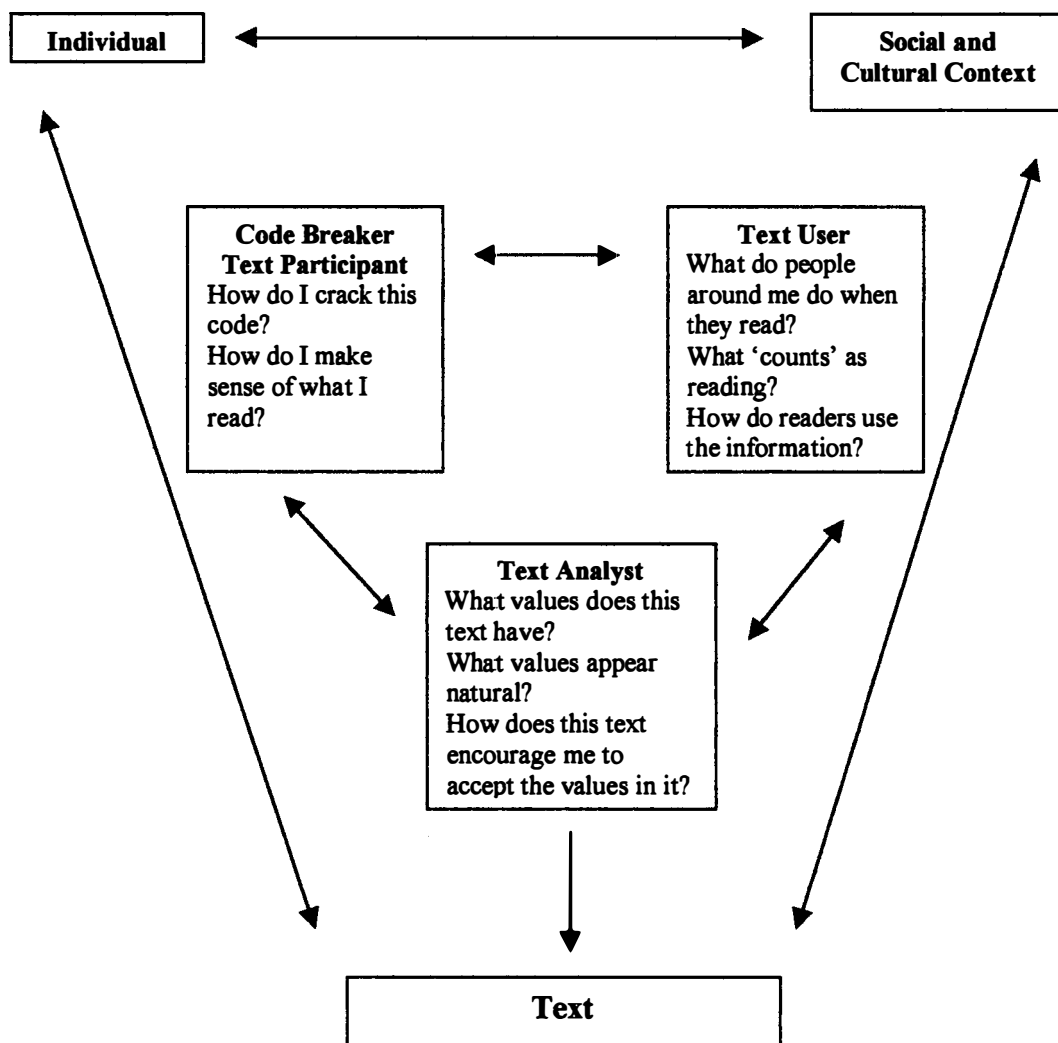
The term 'critical reading' is often used in discussions of what makes a good reader. The role of text analyst expands on this notion. To be successful at reading one must develop the understanding that texts are written by people with their own opinions and orientations. Poor readers are often susceptible to text manipulation as they are unable to analyse the piece in front of them and make

critical judgements on the meaning of the text. Good readers learn to interrogate text and challenge the ideology presented. Even if readers can successfully decode a text, comprehend it and take part in activities that may be based on the text, but cannot take on the role of analyst to examine the text in a critical light and to investigate the ways the text constructs a version of truth then they cannot be regarded as successful readers in a contemporary society. Reading, therefore, is viewed as involving many factors. A reader must be able to decode information, draw on prior knowledge, and understand his/her role and purpose as a reader (Freebody, 1982).

As with interactive models, the roles work together and interact with each other and this model can be combined with the interactive view. The cognitive and linguistic processes used by readers are shaped by the social and cultural practices around them. As noted earlier, the interactive model states there is an interaction between the reader, the text and the context. Within this model we can see the development of the four resource roles (see Figure 2). The roles of the code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst are shaped by the socio-cultural practices of the context in which reading is taking place. The processes used by one individual may differ from those used by others and will be constructed according to the situation in which reading takes place.

The way in which literacy instruction is shaped will affect the way a student uses a text and what counts as literacy in particular reading situations. Reading as an interaction between a variety of factors such as text, purpose and setting is made stronger with the addition of socio-cultural factors. Instruction needs to be focused on developing all of these roles. The context in which a student learns to read significantly influences their ability to develop all four roles.

Students need to be code breakers; they need to be meaning makers; they need to understand the roles of text in different situations; and they need to critically examine what they read. A classroom which focuses solely on reading aloud and phonics instruction is only allowing students to be code breakers. Instruction and texts must be chosen that allow for all four roles to be developed. Students need to become automatic decoders, meaning makers and analysts (Rivalland, 1994).



(Rivalland, 1994, p. 10)

Figure 2

Relationships between an Interactive Model of Reading and the Four Roles of a Reader

The School in which the research was carried out subscribes to the Interactive/Socio-cultural view of reading instruction. The literacy demands of our society have been identified and instruction and planning have been based on ways to ensure students can meet these demands. Reading is viewed by the school as an interactive process involving many influential factors such as the types of text chosen, individual knowledge and the setting but it is also acknowledged that students need to be able to critically analyse texts and develop appropriate literacy skills. The Literacy Plan of the school taking part in the current research is based on the Freebody's (1982) four roles and the school is

aiming to develop literacy practices which develop these four roles in its students.

The reading process is a complex one. Bottom Up and Top Down theories have failed to address this complexity. The Interactive Model has provided a better outline explaining the reading process by involving both internal and external reading factors. Combined with Freebody's (1982) four roles it provides a good understanding of the factors influencing the reading process and provides a solid foundation on which to build instruction.

2.4 Boys' Education and Literacy

In the school in which the present study was undertaken the students identified with literacy difficulties were almost all boys. Boys' education has become a significant issue for educational debate and discussion in several countries; the major focus being on boys' poor performance and achievement in literacy (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999). The United States is trialling boys' only classes, as is the United Kingdom. Germany has multiplied the number of education programs on gender issues in schools and Japan is developing programs around men's issues, thus highlighting the importance being placed on boys' issues worldwide (Connell, 1996). The O'Doherty Report (1994), which examined boys' education in NSW, revealed that boys under-perform in literacy tests. Boys' underachievement is a problem not confined only to NSW but is a problem across all Australian states and territories. Over the last ten to fifteen years there has been a steady decline in boys' academic achievement, appropriate behaviour, self-esteem and emotional growth resulting in increasing alienation of boys in the schooling system (Lillico, 2002).

The alienation of boys has cost schools and education system millions of dollars in teacher and administrator time, programs to combat truancy and behaviour interventions. Within individual schools, Deputies and Principals are spending more of their time with boys providing pastoral care and discipline. Research indicates that part of the problem lies with the downturn in boys' literacy and their consequent inability to glean information from books and printed material (Lillico, 2002).

The National Report on Schooling in Australia (1995) found girls generally performed better than boys in the aspects of literacy tested. In 1995 in Western Australia, girls in Years Three, Seven, and Ten outperformed boys in specified levels of reading, writing, speaking and listening by an average of 5% in Year Three, 3% in Year Seven and 9% in Year Ten. An examination of the literacy tests from students aged 10 and 14 conducted in Tasmania found that on average boys have three more incorrect answers than girls (Stoessiger, 2001). These statistics indicate a worrying trend for boys in Australia as they are consistently being outperformed by girls and the gap widens as boys progress through the schooling system (National Report on Schooling in Australia, 1995).

Schools around the country have identified an increase in the number of boys experiencing difficulties in literacy. The New South Wales Department of School Education reported that three quarters of the students receiving special assistance in reading are boys (West, 2001). A Victorian study gives some feel for the extent of the disadvantage of boys in English. The study which examined the Victorian Certificate of Education English results found boys fail English at twice the rate of girls, independent of social or cultural backgrounds. Even across the wide diversity of the State of Victoria, boys consistently performed half as well as girls (Stoessiger, 2001).

In a similar study which compared examination performance for female and male candidates in senior secondary English, it was found that for years of 1986-1991 South Australian girls achieved significantly higher levels than boys (Whitehouse 1994). Other states showed similar patterns. In Western Australia students' performances in the English Tertiary Entrance Examination indicated that twice as many boys failed English as girls and that twice as many girls achieved distinctions as boys (Martino 1995). Gender based analyses of literacy achievement such as these produce findings indicating that girls, as a group, generally do better than boys, as a group, both in basic skills tests in their early years of schooling and in final year English scores (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom in which boys from nursery school to junior school were interviewed about what they thought teachers could do to make boys learn, Wilson (2001 p. 1) found that the school classroom

environment was not suited to masculine learning styles. The boys indicated they wanted to spend more time outdoors, to be more active and that they did not see the value of presenting work neatly.

The traditional classroom environment and pedagogy appear to be disabling rather than enabling boys to become literate learners. West (2001) argues that boys are being set up for failure and this in turn is having detrimental effects on their motivation, attitude and beliefs about themselves as learners.

Research studies have strongly indicated that boys are struggling with education; in particular with English. Girls have been shown to consistently outperform boys in English. There is a strong case developing for investigating alternative forms of teaching English and to acknowledge the needs of boys. Traditionally, the English curriculum has relied heavily on the reading of fiction and the writing of narrative. Many boys are neglecting fiction and are therefore placing themselves in a position of disadvantage in a subject where the reading of such texts is essential for success (Millard, 1997).

Millard (1997) in her study of literacy practices of boys and girls found that boys predominantly gravitated towards texts containing action, facts and figures; particularly towards texts such as technology magazines and comics. These types of texts are rarely seen within the remedial English classroom. The introduction of the *Curriculum Framework* and *Student Outcome Statements* mandate the use of viewing texts within the English curriculum, however, classroom practice, particularly remedial classroom practice, does not yet make use of the range of visual texts available. It needs to be acknowledged that narrative is now composed in various non-print media such as film, television, comics, video clips. The increase of technology in society and the range of film media available and current policy documents all support the argument for a greater use of visual literacy in education.

Millard (1997) argues that employing visual texts can be a valuable approach for motivating boys and it can also help them achieve in all areas of literacy. The uses of visual texts are more easily assimilated than print forms and they are viewed as more relevant and real by students. Making use of new technologies

assists in expanding opportunities for talking, reading and writing; it draws on students' current social interests and helps them make connections between their own experiences and other modes of thought and expression (Millard, 1997).

In a study on the use of cartographic maps as texts in the teaching of secondary school students at a remote community school in Western Australia, it was found that these students were able to achieve significant literacy outcomes that they would not have achieved if conventional print text had been used (Crooks and Kenworthy, 2003).

Crooks' (2001) study highlights how the use of alternative texts can significantly develop functional and critical literacy in learners. It is also a good example of how taking learners' needs and experiences into account can improve learning outcomes. This can be applied to boys' learning. By allowing boys to have wider experiences of fiction in visual and computer based forms, educators can better engage boys in discussion and allow them to re-examine their prior assumptions. The use of films, comics and magazines in the classroom can be fed back into a study of other literary forms. For example, an analysis of advertising media can encourage an interest in language through a detailed and analytical reading of both magazine and television texts. An identification of alliteration and word play in these texts can then be extended to the reading and study of poetry (Millard, 1997).

In an examination of gender differences, Alloway and Gilbert (1999) investigated the social value placed upon school based literacy competence as compared with mathematic and science competence. High academic achievement on school-based literacy tests seems not be critical in terms of career advancement. For example, even in more humanity-based professions such as law and journalism, men hold the majority of positions of power, despite evidence that girls dominate in the area of literacy tasks. It is still predominantly men and boys who hold positions of privilege across a range of social and occupational domains. Because literacy competence is not as highly valued in the world of work, success in literacy is not valued highly in school (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

Historically, Western civilisation has a record of privileging Mathematics and Science over the Humanities. Girls' poorer representation in higher level Mathematics and Science subjects made them a clear target for academic improvement programs in the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast, boys' lower levels of performance in Humanities-based subjects and lower performance in literacy based tasks did not generate similar attention. The social value placed on knowledge has meant boys' deficiency in literacy despite recording higher numbers in remedial classes. This devaluation of literacy is dangerous; educators need to place a higher value on literacy within teaching practice in order to demonstrate to boys that being a literate person is a crucial requirement for active and informed citizenship (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

There are dangers in the current devaluation of literacy and literacy instruction. Literacy in school has come to be identified as feminised practice, which contributes towards a construction of school-based literacy as unmasculine and therefore undesirable for many young boys (Davies, 1997). Literacy as a practice counters the dominant constructions of masculinity. School based literacy practices need to undergo reform in order to make them desirable for both girls and boys. An understanding of how literacy, language and gender are interrelated in the school context must be developed (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

School programs need to move towards addressing issues such as social construction of femininity and masculinity, an awareness of different forms of literacy instead of just print based literacy and the role the whole school is taking in the construction of different forms of masculinity and femininity (Davies, 1997). Boys do not suddenly begin resisting school based literacy tasks in secondary classrooms. The process of alienation begins much earlier. It seems boys write less, read less, and instead engage in subject matters that are not usually endorsed by the school (Orlandi, 1996). There needs to be a greater understanding of social and textual constructions of femininity and masculinity, and how language practices within school reinforce such constructions (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999). These understandings need to be developed from early on in the education process.

Although this study does not examine boys' education in depth, it is a point of interest to the researcher as the school in question has a large number of boys to cater for in terms of remedial literacy education. Hence, this study involves only boys and their perceptions of the remedial program as well as their levels of self-esteem, attitude and motivation. The research by Alloway and Gilbert (1999) and West (2001) clearly indicates schools are not catering for boys and current literacy practices may be ignoring half of their target population. When students' needs are not being met, and they are in remedial classes, they may suffer from low self-esteem, therefore it is useful to investigate the research in this area.

2.5 Self-Esteem.

Before a discussion on self-esteem can begin, it needs to be defined. The literature abounds with an extensive range of terms such as 'self-esteem', 'self-concept' and 'self-confidence' and all appear to be applied to the same concept. The terms 'self-concept', 'self-perceptions', 'self-image' and 'self-regard', have all been used to refer to an individual's cognition and feelings about the self (Elbaum and Vaughn, 2001). As Lawrence (1988) observed, the difficulties of observing self-esteem arise because it is a hypothetical concept, one that cannot be observed or measured as a concrete entity. The result of this has been many interpretations of essentially the same concept.

For the purpose of this study, the model of self-concept devised by Harter (1996) has been chosen as it best encompasses the area of interest in this study. In Harter's model, self-concept is conceptualised in two parts - global and specific. Global self-concept refers to an individual overall feeling of self-worth whereas specific self-concept consists of academic competence, social acceptance and physical appearance. The model provides a multidimensional view of self-concept in which academic and non academic self-perceptions represent relatively independent components (Elbaum and Vaughn, 2001).

The academic domain does not solely deal with academic ability and achievement but instead it is the students' evaluations of whether they meet their own academic expectations. The social domain encompasses the individual's feelings about him/herself as a friend to others. Finally, the physical domain is a combination of physical appearance and capabilities and whether an individual is

satisfied with their body and performance. (Pope, McHale and Craighead, 1988). The question often arises as to whether an individual can have low self-concept in one domain and not in others. The research literature in the fields of psychology and education indicates that it is possible to have a high self-concept in some areas and a low self-concept in others; however it has also been found that the area of low self-concept can grow to encompass all the domains (Lawrence, 1988 and Elbaum and Vaughn, 2001).

Several studies in the field of psychology have indicated a strong relationship between self-concept and achievement. Though self-concept and achievement are probably interactive, successful school achievement appears to be positively correlated with self-concept. Students who do well in school tend to rate themselves higher in regards to self-concept than their lower achieving counterparts (Movitz and Molta, 1992). Self-concept plays a highly important role in a student's academic achievement. It is an essential ingredient for learning.

The importance of self-esteem in the academic setting was examined in a study by Pope, McHale and Craighead (1988). It was observed that positive self-esteem is a central factor in good social emotional judgement. Further, self-esteem is viewed as an important aspect of a student's overall functioning and plays a major role in education.

Self-concept issues are particularly relevant to adolescents. In adolescence, the problem of low self-esteem may be intensified in students with reading and/or learning difficulties due to academic difficulties, increased demands for performance, the need to plan and set goals for the future and alienation due to being labelled and singled out. In addition, developmental issues typical for this age group may affect identity formation and self worth (Raviv and Stone, 1991).

The period of adolescence has been well documented as a stage of turmoil and difficult adjustment. It is a time marked by conflicting feelings regarding security and independence, physical changes, developing sexuality, peer pressure and self consciousness (McPhail, 1993). Adolescents need to become independent but also need their family ties; conflict often arises between the need

for freedom and the need for family. There are also a great many physical changes taking place including sexual changes that can increase adolescent anxiety about self image. Peers also play an important role in identity formation; as the need to break free from the family increases, the desire to fit in and conform also increases. Adolescents are also extremely self conscious about their body image and are very conscious of how they look to others (Lerner, 1993). This is a particularly important consideration for educators and researchers working with adolescents who are remedial readers as they have self-concept issues that are particular to their stage of life as well as issues associated with being labelled as remedial or academically at-risk.

Research in literacy and self-esteem has found there is a relationship between self-esteem and reading attainment and that self-esteem can act as a motivator. In a study of remedial readers and self-esteem, Lawrence (1988) found that students behave in ways that fit their perception of themselves. A student who experiences difficulties in reading does not see the reading process as relevant to his/her self-concept and as a result is not motivated to learn and therefore avoids reading. These students see themselves as permanently retarded readers, a perception of themselves which has become part of their internal thinking.

As a result of his research, Lawrence (1988) called for an emphasis to be placed on self-esteem in the reading environment. Programs for reading often focus strongly on the cognitive aspects, such as the teaching of reading, writing and spelling and rarely incorporate an affective component. It has also been observed that research is lacking in this area. There has been much research in the areas of self-esteem and reading difficulties, but the connections and interactions between self-esteem and reading difficulties have rarely been linked to teaching programs and remediation.

In a study of self-concept and success-failure attributes of both learning disabled and non learning disabled students, Cooley and Ayres (1988) found that students with learning disabilities reported significantly lower self-concept scores than their non-learning disabled peers. The significance was even stronger when the analysis examined specific domains of self-concept; the study found that the competence and academic domains were most affected. This prompted the

researchers to conclude that interventions aimed at elevating self-concept should be aimed at the academic performance of students with difficulties and that assessments should be put in place to measure not only global self-esteem but the specific domains as well. This view is held by researchers such as Lawrence (1988), Burns (1982), Movitz and Molta (1992), Montgomery (1994) and Elbaum and Vaughn (2001) who found in their studies of students with learning difficulties that they may have a normal level of self-concept globally but a significantly lower self-concept in the academic realm. It has been hypothesised by some of these researchers, however, that eventually the global self-concept will be affected. If a student continually fails in one area, this failure will start affecting other areas, thus highlighting the importance of addressing the issue of self-concept as soon as possible, maybe even before the cognitive difficulties.

In a study of self-concept levels among three groups of children who were identified as either high achievers, learning disabled or non learning disabled, Montgomery (1994) found children with learning disabilities reported a lower self-concept than non learning disabled students and high achievers. She also examined the self-concept scores of each group in each of the six specific domains: academic, competence, social, physical, family and affect. Her results indicated that the academic and competence self-concepts of children with learning disabilities were significantly lower; however there were no significant differences in the social, family, affect or physical domains. Montgomery's (1994) findings support the previous argument for assessing the various domains of self-concept and for focusing on the academic self-concept.

In summary, the research around self-esteem has indicated a number of different connections between self-esteem and remedial programs. There is however, little documenting of students' perspectives; there is a large amount of information on student responses to self-esteem scales but very little on more in-depth student responses.

2.6 Attitude towards Reading

Understanding the role of attitude towards reading is important. Attitudes are formed in part on the basis of beliefs about outcomes of reading; it is natural to predict that poor readers, who have reason to expect frustrating outcomes, will

tend to harbour more negative attitudes than better readers (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995).

Extensive evidence relates reading attitude to ability (Askov and Fishback, 1973; Lipsky, 1983; Martin, 1984). In an examination of the attitudes towards reading Saracho and Dayton (1991) surveyed 2201 three- to five-year-old children in different regions in the United States who participated in early childhood programs. The study found that those children who had developed negative attitudes towards reading had difficulties developing fluent reading styles while those children who had developed positive attitudes towards reading had become more fluent, competent readers. Those children that entered school with less favourable attitudes towards reading were more likely to experience difficulties in reading as were children who were required to engage in reading experiences when they were not ready. The study also found that a positive attitude toward reading was an important aspect of a reading program and that there are indications of a relationship between positive reading attitudes and reading achievement. Saracho and Dayton (1991) called for greater research in the area and for a greater emphasis to be placed on developing positive attitudes towards reading even if it meant reducing the attention to word analysis skills. They hypothesised the possibility that improvement in the area of attitude would lead to improvement in vocabulary and word recognition skills (Saracho and Dayton 1991).

Attitude is widely believed by many in the educational and psychological fields to be a potential contributor to, or detractor from, one's ability to comprehend what is read. In a model of reading attitude, Mathewson (1985) identified that an attitude toward a particular topic content affected comprehension. He stated that a positive attitude toward a particular topic should in turn give rise to greater attention to that topic. Conversely, a poor attitude toward a topic should lead to losses in comprehension. This claim can be applied to the general domain of reading and reading achievement. If a student has a poor attitude towards reading, then according to Mathewson (1985) the student will not be taking in the information read and therefore not performing. The argument suggests that teachers should focus on identifying and working with the non-cognitive factors of reading before, or in conjunction with, the cognitive factors.

In a national study of children's attitudes towards reading, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) found increasingly negative attitudes towards reading in older children. Children were found to be very positive towards reading when they first started school, but their attitude became more negative as they got older. It was found that attitude related to ability and those students who were seen as less able had a more rapid descent towards negative attitudes. McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) also found that boys in particular had more negative attitudes. With the increasing interest in boys' education and the increasing numbers of boys identified as academically at-risk, this type of research highlights the need to examine attitudinal factors more closely.

Little time is spent developing positive attitudes toward reading. It has been found that girls develop more favourable attitudes than boys, which is significant considering it is boys who make up the majority of students in remedial type programs. In a study of the attitude of boys and girls towards reading it was found that boys and girls were affected differently and that age played a significant part. A longitudinal study which spanned three years involved 190 students in grades one to four in a suburban school in the south western United States. The study found that positive attitudes towards reading decreased as students got older. The study also found that girls maintained a more positive attitude than boys. Young boys were identified as having increasingly negative attitudes towards reading and they were also identified as being the main groups of problem readers thus highlighting the importance of attitude in reading instruction (Kush and Watkins, 1996).

An investigation of reading attitudes and levels of interest found that students engaged in limited voluntary reading had negative attitudes towards reading. Students in sixth grade from three middle schools in a south western school district in the United States were given a preference survey and open ended questions related to reading attitudes and reading preferences. The results suggested that children did not engage in reading for pleasure, had negative attitudes towards reading and felt that there was nothing of interest to read in school. The study also found that interest levels played a significant role in

developing positive attitudes towards reading. A significant number of children felt that if they could read materials they wanted to read in school such as magazines and comics, they would find reading more interesting and enjoyable. The research highlights that negative attitudes are linked to lack of interest whereas an increased interest level leads to more positive attitudes to reading (Worthy, Moorman and Turner, 1999).

The research into attitude highlights the impact reading attitude has on reading achievement and on the desire to engage in reading. In the case of students experiencing reading difficulties, reading attitude is an important affective component in engaging students in the reading process.

2.7 Motivation

Intricately linked to self-esteem and reading is the role of motivation. The self's basic role in the learning process is to generate motivation to approach and persist in learning activities. As Wigfield and Eccles state "an individual's choice, persistence and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity" (2000 p. 68). The role of motivation in learning to read is of great importance in the examination of students who experience difficulties in reading as it has been found to be strongly linked to issues of self-esteem which in turn have been correlated with achievement (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000; Seifert and O'Keefe, 2001).

The work of motivational theorists such as Vroom (1964), Ford (1992) and Winne (1985) has been grounded in expectancy-value theory which states motivation is influenced by what an individual sees as attainable and valuable. Individuals will attempt to obtain goals they value and perceive as valuable. From the point view of this researcher, motivation to read can be seen as a consequence of an individual's self-concept and the value the individual places on reading. Evidence from theory and research supports the notion that high motivation to read is associated with positive self-concept as a reader and high value assignment, while low motivation is associated with poor self-concept as a reader and low value assignment (Ford, 1992; Henk and Melnick, 1995; Wigfield, 1995).

Expectancy-value theory works on the notion that at any given point in time, a person has preferences among outcomes; for any pair of outcomes a person will prefer one to the other. Preference can be equated to one's strength of desire for different outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Specific outcomes are also viewed as being dependent not only on choice but also on events beyond one's control. Most events have an element of uncertainty, in which one can never be sure of the outcome. In seminal studies of work and motivation, it was found that people make choices based on the probability that a particular event will produce the desired outcome. It was hypothesised that every choice has a certain element of risk or uncertainty and based on the strength of desire and probability of achieving the desired outcome, one will make a choice to either pursue the activity or avoid it (Vroom, 1964). Students who struggle with reading do not view reading as a preferred choice of activity; nor do they associate a high probability of success with the activity of reading. As a result they avoid reading activity and have little desire to engage in reading or associated activities.

In a study into expectancy-value theory of motivation, Wigfield and Eccles (2000) postulated that expectancies and values influence achievement choices as well as performance, effort and persistence. Furthermore, expectancies and values are influenced by task specific beliefs such as ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of different tasks, individual goals and affective memories. The individual's perceptions of their own previous experiences and a variety of socialisation practices influence these cognitive variables. In connection with reading achievement and motivation to read, it means students quickly develop beliefs about what they are good at and what they value. These beliefs are influenced by past experiences of success and failure, the evaluative judgment and feedback of peers, parents and teachers, and perceptions of their own ability.

In a longitudinal study of children and adolescents it was found that children's beliefs about ability and values became more negative as they get older (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000). As children entered secondary school they believed they were less competent in many activities and often valued activities less. Two possible reasons were given for these results. First, it was theorised that as children got older they better understood evaluative feedback and engaged in more social

comparisons with peers and therefore felt less competent at tasks. Second, the changes in school environment may account for children lessening their achievement beliefs as evaluation becomes more salient and competition more likely (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000).

Extrapolating from the above study, it might be assumed that the achievement and ability beliefs of most struggling readers in high school would tend to make them less likely to be motivated to read.

A shift needs to be made in remedial instruction to include a focus on non-cognitive domains of motivation. Cognitive instruction may have a minimal effect if students do not have the desire to learn or the view that they are able to become good readers.

As stated in previous sections, much of the research surrounding reading has focused on cognitive aspects such as word recognition and comprehension. Reading, however, is an activity that requires effort and as with many tasks that require effort, one can choose to do it or not to do it. Students with more positive attitudes towards reading are usually more motivated to read. Furthermore, if students believe they can be successful at reading, and feel they can take on the challenge of difficult reading material, they are more likely to engage in it (Wigfield, 1994).

When the factors outlined above are missing, such as the students not believing that they can be successful; students are likely to avoid the tasks involved in reading (Seifert and O'Keefe, 2001). As a result, their motivation to try decreases and their attitude to reading becomes negative (Baker and Wigfield, 1999; Bandura, 1997; Mathewson, 1994). Children who are motivated and who spend more time reading become better readers; this is known as 'Matthew Effect' in reading. The term was coined by Walberg as cited in Stanovich (1986) after the Gospel according to Matthew in which it was written:

for unto to everyone that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath (Matthew, 25:29).

Children who read develop greater vocabularies. As a result they continue to read more, learn more word meanings and hence read even better. Children who read poorly have limited vocabularies, lack the desire to read more and do not learn more words and thereby inhibit their reading ability (Stanovich, 1986).

It can be argued that by supporting and nurturing reading motivation and achievement, education prospects for children who find reading difficult will improve their chances of success (Allington, 1986, 1991; Smith-Burke, 1989).

In a study which analysed the achievement and motivation levels of students involved in a program incorporating a motivational component it was found that levels of motivation and achievement increased. The study found the relationship between motivation and achievement to be significant, especially with students who were experiencing difficulties in reading (Gambrell, 1996).

Previous studies have found that motivational factors such as self-efficacy and causal attribution undergo developmental changes (Bandura, 1986; Hiebert, Winograd and Danner, 1984; Schunk, 1991; Stipek, 1993). Young children commonly (a) have inaccurate perceptions of causality, (b) overestimate the contingency between their behaviours and outcomes, (c) overstate their self-efficacy and ability. In a study which examined self efficacy, causal attribution and outcome expectancy in relation to reading and writing of 364 students in Grades Four, Seven and Ten from a Midwestern public school system found that these factors exert potentially important motivational influences on children's reading and writing. It was also found that there were substantial differences between the beliefs of high and low achievers. Low achievers exhibited a potentially dysfunctional belief pattern of ascribing higher outcome expectancy of reading and writing while simultaneously expressing low self-efficacy for their reading and writing and ascribing higher causality to factors that are external or uncontrollable. This pattern was found to have a strong negative impact both on motivation and on feeling of self-worth (Hiebert, Winograd and Danner, 1984; Schunk, 1991; Stipek, 1993; Weiner, 1985).

Intrinsic motivation and the desire to learn to read are important factors in the teaching of reading. If students view reading as purposeful, enjoyable and interesting, their desire to engage in activities to do with reading is increased. If reading is viewed as tedious, laborious and unrelated, then negative attitudes can develop towards reading (Saracho and Dayton, 1991). Students with reading difficulties often experience reading as a task to be avoided because it offers little enjoyment and is a hard, laborious activity.

Students who struggle to read often lack confidence in reading. As a result struggling readers avoid reading tasks because they believe they cannot do the work and therefore do not wish to feel humiliated (Ryan and Decci, 2000). In a study of the relationship between work avoidance and learning goals and their perceived relationship with competence and meaning, Seifert and O'Keefe (2001) found that a sense of competence and control were predictive of a learning goal while a lack of meaning was related to work avoidance. In their conclusions, the researchers linked emotions to learning goals. Teachers who instil in their students a sense of self assuredness and confidence will help students develop and achieve learning goals, while students who feel they are incompetent, bored or have no control adopt work avoidance tactics.

2.8 Literature on the Methodology

This study investigated the perceptions of boys in a secondary Focus English class at a local Catholic school. A case study approach was used that involved the use of surveys, interviews and a focus group. The research was based on both quantitative and qualitative research methods and involved the investigation of students' perceptions of a specific school program. The following section samples the literature on the methodology of case studies, surveys and focus groups.

2.8.1 Case Study Research

There are several reasons for using case studies as a form of research. Case studies are appropriate when there are only one or few cases available to study, such as the impact of a particular program or the effects of a reading program on achievement. Case studies are also particularly effective in the study of people's perceptions of social phenomena such as bullying activity. In effect, case studies

allow researchers to gain insights into the meanings people give to certain situations around them (McTavish and Loether, 2002).

Case studies (according to Stake 1995) can be classified into three different types: *intrinsic*, *instrumental* and *collective*. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken when a researcher wants to better understand a particular case. The intention is to better understand the nature of one case such as the view of a particular patient undergoing a specific type of treatment. The aim is to understand the case and not necessarily to relate it to broader issues or theoretical understandings (Stake, 1995, p. 262). Instrumental case studies provide insights into an issue or refine a theoretical explanation. In this type of case study, the actual case becomes secondary as the researcher seeks to understand some external theoretical question or problem. Collective case studies involve the extensive study of several instrumental cases. The selection of these cases is intended to allow better understanding or better ability to theorise about a broader context (Stake, 1995). In relation to the current research the case study undertaken here can be classified as an intrinsic case study, as the aim is to better understand a particular situation.

There are three main criticisms regarding the use of case study research. There are, however, ways to overcome these criticisms. First is the issue of generalisation. An inability to generalise to other cases or situations is one of the main criticisms of case study research. The question arises as to what extent the findings of a case study can be generalised to a larger population. One perspective of one case is not reliable and will be biased in one or more ways (McTavish and Loether, 2002). However, the nature of the case study is usually not meant to be representative of a larger group; instead the aim of the case study is to better understand a particular event or phenomenon. If one examines Stake's intrinsic case studies it is clear that the aim of this type of case study is to understand a particular event and its complexities rather than to generalise to a larger population (Punch, 1998).

The second criticism regarding case study research is the level of rigour. Case studies lack reliability and validity and that leaves them open to researcher bias and subjectivity (Burns, 2000). Examining evidence which supports

preconceived ideas is not viewed as rigorous research. Validity and reliability are two key concepts in a discussion of rigour. Reliability is concerned with

consistency; the quality of an instrument to produce the same results when employed under the same conditions on different occasions (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 438)

To establish reliability in case study research is impossible. Reliability in case studies focuses on results making sense and being agreed upon by all those concerned rather than with replicability (Burns, 2000 p. 476).

Reliability can be established in case study research by checking interpretations of descriptions of what happened by triangulation, by always having more than one source of confirmation, by reporting any personal bias, and by providing detailed documentation which allows for authentication of how the data was obtained and how decisions were made regarding data such as coding procedures (Punch, 1998 p. 156).

The validity of case studies often comes under intense scrutiny. Validity refers to

the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values. The capacity to measure what a method is intended to measure (Sarantakos, 1993. p. 440).

The validity of a case study is found in the detailed account of how the study was carried out. There are three main areas of validity to consider. The first is construct validity. Construct validity deals with the constructs the instrument is measuring. Constructs can be defined as

an aspect of human behaviour such as self-esteem or intelligence, they cannot be observed but some tests are intended to measure such constructs (Sarantakos, 1993. p. 74).

Construct validity examines what is being measured; it is an analysis of the meanings of test scores. An instrument is said to have construct validity if its theoretical construct is valid. Many case studies fail to develop an effective instrument to measure the construct under investigation and instead rely on subjective judgement to collect data. To allow for better construct validity, the

case study researcher must ensure that data are collected from a variety of sources and that there is proper documentation that links all parts together (McTavish and Loether, 2002).

The second aspect of validity to consider is internal validity, which deals with how well the findings match reality. Case studies give a perspective of reality; they provide an insight to what participants perceive as true, and therefore it is not feasible to try to measure how well the findings match reality. Instead internal validity can be measured using strategies such as triangulation, long term observation and continuous rechecking and monitoring (Burns, 2000 p. 357).

The third aspect is external validity which deals with whether findings can be generalised beyond the case studied. As discussed earlier, the emphasis of case studies is the study of a particular case; therefore external validity can be viewed as not having great importance. It is usually up to readers to generalise if the situation studied has any relation to their own situation and it is up to the researcher to provide a detailed description to allow readers to make decisions regarding its link to their own situations. The aim of the case study as a research method is to provide an in depth account of a particular situation and not what is generally reality for most (Burns, 2000 p. 359).

Another source of criticism of case study research is implementation. Case studies can be time consuming and can produce an overwhelming amount of information which is difficult to adequately analyse. This increases the tendency to be selective and biased. To overcome these issues, it is important that a case study has a clear focus or theme, that the documentation is succinct and that the documentation has been adequately checked by external parties (McTavish and Loether, 2002 p. 196). The use of these techniques allows for information to be ordered and reduces the amount of unnecessary information which in turn allows for better analysis.

While it has suffered from a number of criticisms, the case study method also has a number of strengths. Case studies provide a more holistic and in-depth description of a particular phenomenon which can lead to new theoretical or conceptual insights related to the case. They provide opportunities for

investigating and comparing different perspectives of the same event. If designed and carried out properly, a case study is an effective way of examining complex social processes.

2.8.2 Surveys

Surveys are the most common form of data collection used by the social sciences. In general, surveys are methods of data collection in which information is gathered through oral or written questioning (Sarantakos, 1993). The survey is designed to produce quantitative data about some population. The current research used two forms of survey. The first was a closed survey and the second was an open-ended survey designed by the researcher. The term 'survey' will be used throughout this thesis; however the term 'survey' will be used when referring to the researcher designed survey.

There are several different survey designs that researchers can choose from. The main two are cross sectional surveys and longitudinal surveys which include trend studies, cohort studies and panel studies. The current research used cross sectional surveys. Cross sectional surveys are based on the assumptions that data that are collected at one point from a sample selected to describe a larger population at that time. This type of survey can be used for both description and for analysing relationships between variables (Babbie, 1973). The most frequently used survey design is the cross sectional design.

A good survey should possess two characteristics at the question level and overall level - reliability and validity. A survey question is reliable if it evokes consistent responses from different participants. One of the problems with reliability in surveys occurs when there is ambiguous wording of questions as this causes unreliable responses. The validity of a question is determined by whether a question actually measures the concept of interest. Research with specific objectives for questions helps in producing relevant and specific questions thus limiting unreliable responses. Another limitation of surveys is bias. Biased questions are those questions which make one response more likely than another, regardless of the respondent's opinion. Bias in a survey affects reliability and validity and makes the responses given inaccurate (Weisberg and Bowen, 1977 p. 45).

On an overall level, the instrument used to gather data must be reliable and valid. As with case study research, both reliability and validity are important aspects of survey research. For an instrument to be viewed as effective and unbiased, it must demonstrate both principles.

As stated earlier, the survey is designed to gather information from a number of people and can contain a range of open-ended questions or closed questions designed to elicit a range of responses and opinions. The current research used a researcher designed open-ended survey as well as a closed survey. The open-ended question is one which does not limit the answer to a yes or no range of set alternatives. Participants can answer the question any way they like. An advantage of this kind of design is that it does not threaten to bias the findings by imposing a frame of reference that effectively limits the way a participant may answer. The main disadvantage is that the completed forms are difficult to analyse and the researcher has, in the end, to impose such a frame of reference on the answers in order to classify them (Marshall, 1997 p. 39).

Another disadvantage of the open-ended survey is its lack of sufficient reliability and validity. This defect can be partially overcome by triangulating data collection methods. The use of a reliable and valid survey alongside an open ended survey helps overcome the weakness of the open ended surveys. Triangulation of methods helps to compensate for the errors of each of the methods (Marshall, 1997).

The closed survey provides participants with a particular response format that has been chosen from a range of format options. Typical responses involve participants marking or circling one preference from a range of alternatives. Other response formats or sets include numerical responses, verbal responses, responses of increasing strength or graphic-numeric responses. Response sets must adhere to certain standards; most important is that the response categories are exhaustive, mutually exclusive and unidimensional (Sarantakos, 1993).

Exhaustive sets means that responses must cover all possible outcomes. It is important that the researcher explore the research item thoroughly before establishing the response categories. Mutually exclusive categories refer to the

fact that categories are expected to include items that are clearly distinguishable from each other. This ensures that the respondents can choose the right response without confusion. Finally, a set of categories should refer to and measure only one construct, in only one dimension. For example a question cannot measure both self-esteem and attitude (Sarantakos, 1993 p. 82).

Closed surveys of this type have a number of advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that they are cost effective, that each respondent receives the same set of questions which are phrased in the same way, that errors resulting from the recording of responses by the interviewer are reduced, that respondents are free to answer in their own time and pace, that a large sample from diverse locations can be easily reached and finally that the surveys can guarantee confidentiality and thereby allow for more truthful responses. The disadvantages include difficulties in securing an adequate response, and difficulties in sampling bias which can result from the surveys not being returned by a section of the sample. If the instrument is too complex or vague it will confuse respondents thereby affecting their responses. Closed surveys offer little flexibility; respondents are limited in their responses and there is no opportunity for observational data or for more exploratory data. Finally, the motivation of the respondent for answering the survey is unknown (Burns, 2001).

By using both open-ended and closed surveys the current research has attempted to minimise some of the disadvantages presented above.

2.8.3. Focus Groups

Focus groups provide another form of qualitative data collection. The focus group is an interview style designed for small groups. Focus groups are ideal for exploring people's experiences, opinions and concerns. A focus group allows for researchers to examine different perspectives as they operate within a social network. Focus groups are particularly suited to exploring attitudes and experiences around specific topics (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). A typical focus group consists of a small number of participants and a facilitator. The informal discussion-like atmosphere is intended to encourage all participants to speak freely about behaviours, attitudes and opinions they possess. The group atmosphere usually makes people more comfortable and willing to speak.

Therefore, the focus group is an excellent means for collecting data from young children and teens as these two groups respond well in group situations (Berg, 2001).

Research based on focus groups has a number of strengths. First, the practical strength of focus groups lies in the fact that they are comparatively easy to conduct. In many circumstances, the research can be done relatively quickly and cheaply. This is not to say that all focus groups are simple; some can be quite complex. The second strength is the ability of focus groups to allow for the exploration of topics and generation of hypotheses. Focus groups have the ability to produce some very useful data with relatively little input from the researcher (Morgan, 1988 p. 21).

The third strength of focus group research is that it can be combined effectively with other quantitative methods such as surveys. Focus groups can be used in the beginning stage of research to help construct questionnaires; the group work method can be employed to identify key issues which can be refined into specific questions. Focus groups can also be used in the later part of research; they can help examine reasons for anomalous findings and explain the occurrence of outliers which are identified but not explained in quantitative findings (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999 p. 7).

Focus group research methods also have a number of weaknesses. First, the focus group setting is an unnatural one; as a result there is an element of uncertainty as to whether what participants say is accurate. Second, the researcher has less control over the data generated by the group. The role of the facilitator is to guide group members away from unrelated topics. Group dynamics, however, lend themselves to animated discussion hence the facilitator only has a certain degree of control. Third, the group dynamics and its influence on individual behaviour is unpredictable. When one deals with groups there are issues regarding group dynamics, people tend to act differently in a group situation than they would in a one-to-one situation. The risk of group discussion is that one can never be sure if it mirrors individual behaviour. As a result individuals may be influenced by group behaviour thereby distorting the information gained (Morgan, 1988).

There are some basic elements in conducting successful focus groups. First, clearly defined objectives and/or research questions are needed. Second, a clear view of the nature of the group and an understanding of the characteristics of the group must be explored. Third, an atmosphere which assures confidentiality and rapport must be established between the facilitator and the group as well as between group members. In other words it is important everyone feels comfortable. Fourth, the facilitator must listen to what subjects are saying. Although it is important to have an agenda, it is more important the facilitator is flexible so that when interesting topics arise they are not unnecessarily truncated (Berg, 2001 p. 120).

Despite their weaknesses, what focus groups do best is produce an opportunity to collect data from groups by discussing topics of interest to the researcher. Used as a method of exploration of ideas and attitudes the focus group is a workable method. If the researcher defines the discussion topic, focus groups are more controlled because the group has some direction.

The use of multiple methods to gather data allows for triangulation of methods. Methods act as filters revealing some kinds of facts but obscuring others. For example, surveys made up of closed questions can provide highly comparable data, because they force the respondent to choose from limited number of categories. Interviews provide much finer detail, though it is less comparable. The data from the survey may contain errors due to the fact that respondents are forced to choose alternative answers that were not appropriate. Such errors may be revealed by triangulating with interview data (Marshall, 1997).

In sum, the literature has highlighted a number of important points. First, it is generally agreed that case studies do not make for valid and reliable research as they are prone to bias, cannot be generalised to larger cases and are based on human observation. However, a case study can provide good research if it is carried out correctly and uses a number of instruments to gather data. A case study is appropriate when a researcher is not looking to generalise to a larger population but instead to investigate particular social phenomena.

The current research used a number of methods including surveys and focus groups. The use of surveys, both closed and open, allowed for greater validity and reliability. The current research also focused on one single case and is not intended to be generalisable to a larger population.

Focus groups provide an avenue for further examining particular social phenomena. Being a group situation, focus groups allow for a range of viewpoints to be raised and a number of issues to be examined; they also allow for certain issues to be explored more deeply. The current research has used the focus group method to build on the data gained from the surveys. The researcher has thereby been able to get and in turn to provide a more in-depth view of respondents' perceptions.

2.9 Conclusion

A review of the relevant literature indicates that factors such as self-esteem, attitude and motivation have a strong effect on reading and on learning. Studies have also shown significant relationships between the non-cognitive factors and reading achievement. They have also shown significant relationships between negative self-esteem, attitude and the placement of remedial readers. Research also indicates that motivation to learn in students with difficulties is significantly lower than those students who do not experience difficulties.

There is little research documenting the use of self-esteem, motivation and attitude in remedial programs. There is also little documentation of students' perceptions of remedial English programs and of how their perceptions may be affecting factors such as self-esteem, motivation and attitude. Such programs are designed to help these students but the programs usually focus on cognitive factors rather than non-cognitive factors, thereby failing to take into account all the aspects involved in learning.

The research also highlights the importance of programs to help boys to develop better literacy learning. The research highlights the significant number of boys who are not achieving in the area of English and severely lagging behind their female counterparts. The literature has called for more research to be done into boys' education and literacy programs targeted at boys.

The research into remedial programs highlights the ongoing debate of researchers on which model of remediation works best: inclusion or withdrawal. The numerous research studies illustrate the need for flexible remedial programs, which put the needs of the student first.

Case study research has proven to be an effective way of analysing certain phenomena in society. They are not designed for generalisation to a larger population but can provide a good insight into a particular situation. This research has aimed to examine a particular population in a specific setting and the use of case study research methods has allowed for an in-depth analysis of the setting. A variety of methods including both closed and open-ended surveys plus a focus group has allowed for greater reliability and validity of the research. The literature has shown that surveys are an effective way of collecting data. Survey methods allow for researchers to gain an overall picture of participants' views and attitudes. Focus group interviews allow participants to discuss issues in more detail and builds upon the information gained from other methods such as surveys. Though each method has its weaknesses the literature has shown that case study research coupled with good methods of data collection is an effective way of exploring particular settings in-depth.

CHAPTER THREE

FRAMEWORK

3.1 Theoretical Model

The theoretical framework of this study is based upon Mathewson's Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read (see Figure 3). The Model highlights the intricate nature of attitude-reading concepts while also illustrating the importance of other non-cognitive factors such as motivation and self-esteem.

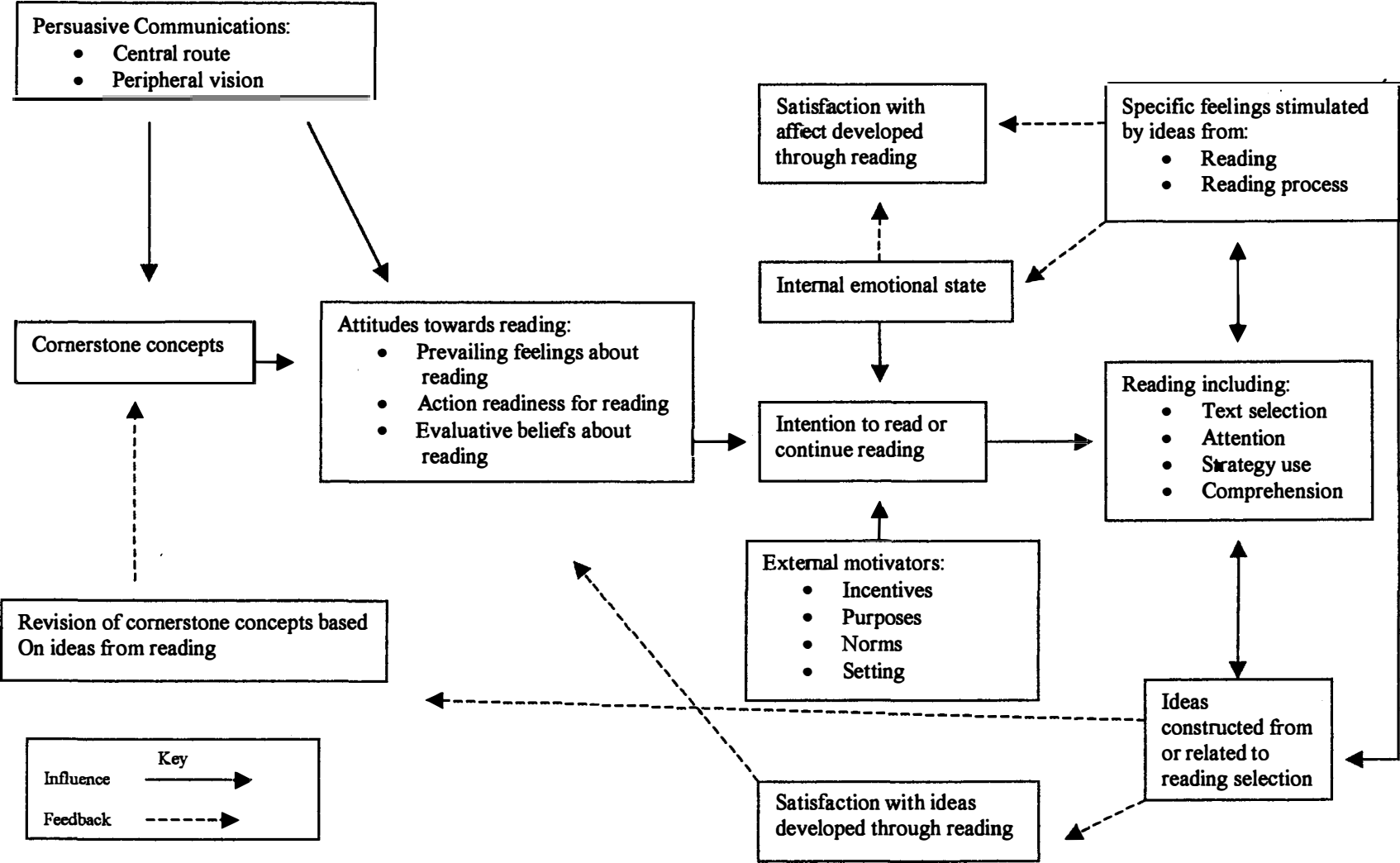
Attitude is one set of factors influencing an individual's intention to read and in which results of a given reading encounter are fed back to influence attitude. The model identifies two major and two minor factors. The major factors represented by solid arrows are the 'cornerstone concepts', including personal values, goals, self-concepts and persuasive communications, which can affect the reader through a central route such as a teacher or a peripheral route such as a book cover. The minor factors include cognitive and affective feedback through reading encounters (Mathewson, 1985).

In Mathewson's view, attitude comprises feelings, action readiness for reading and beliefs. Action readiness for reading implies a high or low interest in reading. A high interest indicates a favourable attitude. Two other factors, which are seen as contributors to the decision to read, are external motivators such as incentives and setting, and the individual's emotional state. Mathewson's model provides a tripartite view, which couches an individual's beliefs within the concept of attitude itself and therefore does not postulate a causal relationship between beliefs and feelings. The research surrounding reading often focuses on the cognitive aspects of reading and as a result many reading programs reflect this. Few documented programs deal with the non-cognitive factors such as attitude, self-esteem, perceptions and motivation. This study focused on the perspectives and feelings of students in a remedial program; it examined the affective side of reading and linked it to achievement. The study examined self-esteem, attitude and motivation as well as examining students' perceptions of placement in a remedial setting.

The model presented by Mathewson does not discount the validity of cognition in reading; instead it seeks to link both cognition and affect, recognising both as integral parts of the reading process. The various feedback paths of the model offer a dynamic, cyclical character to the model. The cornerstone concepts and persuasive communications influence attitude toward reading. Attitude influences intention; intention influences reading; and reading gives rise to internal emotions, feelings and ideas. To further perpetuate the cycle, personal satisfaction with feelings, ideas and emotional states that result from reading provide feedback to the initial attitude toward reading. In sum, favourable attitudes toward reading sustain intention to read and the outcomes of reading sustain satisfaction of readers (Mathewson, 1985).

The model supports the view that students' emotional and affective states need attention when planning for remedial instruction. The way a student feels about reading and reading instruction is likely to affect achievement in reading. This study aimed to clarify and examine these factors in regard to a specific secondary school remedial program.

Figure 3: Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read



CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

4.1 Sample

The students invited to take part in this study came from intact groups in Year Eight (N=6), Year Nine (N=11) and Year Ten (N=7), a total of 24 students overall. Each student was enrolled in a local Catholic secondary school located in a low to middle socio - economic area. The total enrolment for the School is 813 students. Students were selected for the study based on their participation in the School's Focus English Program. Each of these students had been placed in Focus English classes as a result of his performance on a range of standardised tests undertaken at the beginning of the year. The Focus English classes are small in number and therefore all male class members were invited to participate.

The Focus English Program

Students' entry into the Focus English Program is based on a school assessment of students, which includes a standardised test of learning ability administered to all students entering the school. All Year Eight English students are also given a range of diagnostic tests in reading, comprehension, writing and spelling. If students are performing two years below their chronological age they are then streamed into the Focus English classes and participate in a withdrawal program. The main aim of the program is to remediate students in order for them to return to the General stream.

In Years Eight and Nine, the Focus class program spans the major core areas (Mathematics, English, Society & Environment and Science). In Year Ten the focus classes only run in English, Society & Environment and Mathematics. Students can be in some or all of the Focus classes depending on their difficulties.

The boys selected to participate in this study made up three groups: Year Eight students in the Focus English Program who also participated in a Self-Esteem Development Program; students in Year Nine in the Focus English Program who Year Ten students who had only participated in the Focus English Program.

All participants had been in the Focus English Program since Year Eight, which meant the Year Ten participants were in the program for the third year.

Self-Esteem Development Program

The Self-Esteem Development Program was developed in 2001 by the Coordinator for Education Support and Literacy for Year Eight Focus English students out of concern that these students who had experienced years of failure, may have been feeling alienated from the rest of the year group as a result of streaming. The Program aims to develop a positive class environment, positive attitudes to learning, ability to take chances and positive feelings towards the self.

The Program consists of a range of activities designed to meet the aims outlined above. Students participate in one 20 to 30 minute activity a week. Activities include journal writing, goal setting and positive affirmations. The class teacher incorporates the activities into the English teaching program.

4.2 Design

The research design was a case study at a local Catholic secondary school. The study was cross-sectional across three-year levels and involved both quantitative and qualitative measures including surveys and focus groups.

4.3 Instruments

The Motivation to Read Profile

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell, et al, 1996) was administered to all students participating in the study. The MRP survey is a self-report, group-administered instrument. The survey assesses two specific dimensions of reading motivation: Self-Concept as a Reader and Value of Reading.

For the purpose of this study, the wording of some of the items was changed to be more appropriate to students' year levels. The MRP is American and developed for primary school children; however it can be adapted to be used with secondary school students (See Appendix 1).

Validity and Reliability

The MRP survey consists of 20 items and uses a four-point response scale. Ten items are assigned to the dimension of Self-Concept as a Reader and ten items to the dimension of Value of Reading (Gambrell, et al, 1996 p. 526-26).

The authors report that the Motivation to Read Profile was field tested in order to develop validity and reliability. They indicated that an initial pool of survey items was developed, using a four-point response scale to avoid neutral, central response patterns. Three experienced classroom teachers, who were also graduates in reading education, critiqued over 100 items for their construct validity. Items that received 100% agreement were sent to four classroom teachers for sorting as measures of self-concept or measures of values of reading. Only those that received 100% agreement were selected for inclusion in the MRP Survey. The final version of the MRP Survey was administered to third and fifth grade students in 27 classrooms in a U.S. state. Statistical analysis demonstrated moderately high reliability for both subscales (self-concept =.75; value=.82). Pre-test and post-test reliability coefficients were calculated for the subscales (self-concept=.68; value=.70) which confirmed a moderately high reliability of the instrument (Gambrell et al, 1996 p. 525-26).

For the purpose of this study, the survey was adapted slightly to suit secondary school students. However, the validity and reliability of the survey were not compromised as the questions were not changed; the only changes made were to the questions regarding what grade the student was in and to a format that was more suited to high school students.

Perceptions Survey

A survey was designed by the researcher to examine students' perceptions and experiences of their placement in the English Focus Program. The questions were open-ended and centred on students' feelings about and attitudes towards reading, and on the positives and negatives of placement in the Focus English Program (See Appendix 2).

The perceptions survey was group administered to boys in Years Eight to Ten in the English Focus Program. Groups of questions were designed to elicit students' responses in four areas. These included the students'

- Attitude towards reading different types of material and in different contexts
- Perceptions of the benefits of the Focus English Program
- Perceptions of the disadvantages of the Focus English Program
- Issues related to being in the Focus English Program

Focus Group

A Focus Group met after the surveys had been completed; students were selected randomly and a letter was sent to each student's parents. The Focus Group was created to allow for discussion of issues and more extensive responses to what boys from each Year group perceived of the Focus English Program. A number of guide questions were designed by the researcher to direct the discussion (see Appendix 3).

Pilot Study

The Perceptions Survey was trialled in a pilot study during Term 4 in 2002 with that year's Year Ten group. Seven boys who made up the Year Ten Focus English group were given the survey during one of their Focus English classes. Students were asked to complete the survey and comment on any difficulties they had and/or any changes they thought should be made to the survey in order to make it more accessible to students with reading difficulties.

The process allowed for any problems to be highlighted and for appropriate changes to be made. The pilot study results illustrated that the survey was easy to read, understandable, straightforward, easy to follow and not too long. (See Appendix 4).

4.4 Procedure

Each male student in the Focus English Program in Years Eight to Ten was invited to participate. There were only two female students in the English Focus Program across Years Eight to Ten; as a result they were excluded from the study in order not to introduce gender differences. The Principal's permission was

obtained to conduct the study and permission was obtained from both parents and students. The procedure conformed to the requirements applied by the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee. Copies of permission letters issued to all parties involved are included in Appendix 5.

Each student was administered the Motivation to Read Profile during one half of an English lesson in Term Three 2002. Due to the reading difficulties of the students the test was read out to the students. Once completed the tests were collected and scored. Each produced two scores, one for a student's Self-Concept as a Reader and another outlining their Value of Reading. These results were analysed using SPSS; the tests run were a Univariate ANOVA with a Tamhane Post Hoc and Kruskal –Wallis H Test with a Mann-Whitney U Post Hoc. The results are discussed in detail in the results section.

During the next week students were given the Perceptions Survey that asked students about their perceptions of the Focus English Program. It was administered during one half of their English lesson. Once again the survey was read to students and assistance was given to those students who had difficulty in writing. Once the surveys were completed they were collected, coded and analysed. The coding procedure consisted of determining frequencies of responses to questions.

Of the 24 participants, two from each year group (N=6) were randomly selected to participate in a Focus Group. The parents of those selected were sent letters seeking permission for their child to participate. Once all letters were returned, a time was selected to conduct the focus group. The most suitable time was during the Year Eight's English lesson, so those four students not in Year Eight were withdrawn from other classes with the permission of their teachers.

The focus group was held within a 20-minute period and conducted by a member of staff not involved in the Focus English Program. This was done in order to allow students to speak more freely about the Program. Before the session began each participant was introduced to the others and instructions were given on the purpose and aim of the session. Each participant was given the opportunity to respond to the guide questions and also relay any other feelings they had

regarding the Program. The session was recorded on audio tape. Once completed the audio tape was transcribed and coded. Once coding had been completed by the researcher the transcription and the coding were checked by two independent people to ensure the coding procedure was reliable (see 4.5 for further explanation).

4.5 Analysis Procedure

The analysis of data involved two phases: quantitative and qualitative.

Phase I: Quantitative Analysis

To compare scores on the Motivation to Read Profile among student groups, two tests were undertaken. A Univariate Analysis of Variance with a Tamhane Post Hoc test and the non parametric equivalent Kruskal-Wallis H Test with a Mann-Whitney U Post Hoc test were conducted on students' raw scores in both Self-Concept as a Reader and Value of Reading. The two tests were run because of difficulties with sample size (see 4.6 for an explanation). A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted to examine the relationship between Self-Concept as a Reader and Value of Reading, and reading attainment measures.

Phase II: Qualitative Analysis

Once the surveys and the focus group were completed, the data was transcribed and coded. The purpose of coding was to identify common factors in the data based on the particular social context of a secondary school remedial program. The survey was coded according to student responses to questions which fell within four main areas: attitude towards reading, benefits of the Focus English Program, disadvantages of the Focus English program and issues faced by students. The focus group responses were colour coded with each colour representing a major theme such as advantages and disadvantages, parental attitude, outside reactions, academic improvement, changes to the Focus English Program and other issues. The raw data were presented to two independent persons to code to ensure the coding practice was reliable and accurate. Any disagreements on coding were discussed and a consensus reached. Only those responses agreed upon by both coders were deemed relevant and included in the study. The data obtained from the surveys and focus group were cross referenced with quantitative data. Responses from the Perceptions Survey and focus group

were compared to the data from the Motivation to Read Profile to establish any links or discrepancies. Colour coding was again used to sort data into common themes and to highlight areas where responses were contradictory.

4.6 Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this study. The first limitation was the small sample size of the study. It has been clearly stated that this research was a case study and therefore was an examination of one particular case and will not be generalised to the wider community, so the small sample size was not an issue regarding generalisation. However, the sample size had a significant role in data analysis. This research used both quantitative and qualitative measures and the use of small numbers in quantitative measures was problematic when trying to establish significance between groups. Small sample numbers raise the issue of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance in using parametric tests such as ANOVAs. The ANOVA works on the following assumptions:

- The total variation can be split into components, each of which has a certain source of variation
- The samples are randomly selected
- The population is normally distributed
- The samples are independent
- The samples have common variance

(Sarantakos, 1996)

Before an ANOVA can be conducted, the necessary assumptions must be met. A small sample population increases the likelihood of these assumptions being violated. The ANOVA is a robust test which can adjust itself for variances in population, however this research had a small sample size of 24. The population variances were not equal and the respondents were not randomly selected as they were from intact groups of a specific case being studied. As a result the assumptions for an ANOVA were not met.

To address this limitation a number of measures have been taken. An ANOVA was run on the data and it was found to be a borderline case with regard to violating population normality and homogeneity of variance. The Levene test determined significance; however it was slight. The decision was made to run both the non parametric equivalent of an ANOVA the Kruskal-Wallis with a

Mann-Whitney Post Hoc Test; and a Univariate ANOVA with a Tamhane Post-Test. This decision allowed for better analysis of the data and addressed the violations associated with an ANOVA.

The second limitation involved the nature of the students' difficulty which meant reading and writing was a problem. The researcher endeavoured to overcome this by having both surveys read out to the students and by providing assistance to those students who had difficulty responding in written form. However, it cannot be stated for sure that students responded to the best of their ability as the process of writing a response may have limited their answers. The subsequent use of a focus group helped overcome this problem as it allowed for greater conversational opportunities and gave students the chance to speak freely without the added burden of having to read or write responses.

A third limitation is that the data may not accurately reflect respondents' true feelings as they may have wanted to portray themselves in a more positive light or they may have given responses they felt the researcher wanted to hear. This study has accounted for this by the inclusion of people who were not involved in the Focus English program to administer surveys and run the focus group. Using an outside person for the collecting of data gave the respondents a chance to reflect more accurately.

A fourth limitation is that the research deals with separate groups. The research examines the influence of a Self-Esteem Development Program on student achievement and perceptions in Years Eight, Nine and Ten. The Year Eight students had just begun the Program, the Year Nine students had been in the Program for two years and Year Ten students had no exposure to the program. Using three separate groups makes proof of causation difficult to establish; that is, one cannot say for sure that the Year Ten students were negative due the fact that they had no exposure to the program as there is no data on their attitudes in Year Eight or Year Nine. There was also a range of outside factors which could have influenced their thinking. However, even though causation could not be demonstrated, comparison between the groups did show some significant differences, some of which may be attributed to the fact that the Year Ten students were not part of the Self-Esteem Development Program.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

The data analysed in this section are presented in two parts. The first section deals with quantitative data and the second deals with qualitative data. To begin, an analysis of the Motivation to Read Profile is presented using a number of statistical measures including both a Univariate Analysis of Variance and its non parametric equivalent the Kruskal Wallace H test. A combination of tests was used because of the small sample size (N=24). A Univariate Analysis is dependent on certain assumptions regarding homogeneity and population variance. Small sample sizes have a higher risk of violating these assumptions and thereby mitigating the significance of the results (Sarantakos, 1993). By also using the Kruskal Wallace H test, which is designed for smaller sample sizes, significance can be reported on correctly.

The second section examines both the Perceptions Survey and Focus group interview. Information from the Perceptions Survey was collated to provide an overall picture of students' feelings regarding the Focus English Program. Information from the focus group interview is presented in order to provide triangulation.

5.1 Motivation to Read Profile

The approach to the analysis of results was to firstly determine the Self-Concept as a Reader and the Value of Reading scores. The calculations of both scores based on the responses to the Motivation to Read Profile are outlined in Appendix 1. Twenty four participants yielded usable data; they included Year Eight (N=7), Year Nine (N=10) and Year Ten (N=7). Specific Self-Concept as a Reader and Value of Reading scores for the data are given in Appendix 6.

A Univariate Analysis of Variance on raw scores was undertaken followed by a Tamhane Post Hoc test between year group and Self-Concept as a Reader and year group and Value of Reading. Table 1 displays the means and standard

deviations on the MRP for each year group and Table 2 provides results of univariate ANOVA (see Appendix 7 for entire analysis).

Table 1: Mean Scores on Motivation to Read Profile Raw Scores

Year Group	n		Self-Concept as a Reader	Value of Reading
8	7	M	22.14	28.29
		SD	2.54	2.56
9	10	M	24.30	24.20
		SD	3.53	3.50
10	7	M	23.21	25.13
		SD	3.73	3.42

Table 2: Results of Analysis of Variance for Year group by Value of Reading and Year group by Self-Concept as a Reader

Dependent Variable	Df	F	Sig
Value of Reading	2	6.929	.005
Self-Concept as A Reader	2	.759	.480

A significant difference between year groups was found for Value of Reading $F(2) = 6.929, p = .005$. There was no significant difference between the year groups in the scores on Self-Concept as a Reader $F(2) = .759, p = .480$. Where this difference lies needed to be determined by a Post Hoc Test on the Value of Reading. Table 3 presents the results of Tamhane 2 Post Hoc Test (see Appendix 8 for full analysis)

Table 3: Results of Tamhane 2 Post Hoc Test on Value of Reading

Year Group	Year Group	Mean Difference	Significance
8	9	3.89	.055
	10	5.29	.003
9	8	-3.89	.055
	10	1.40	.621
10	8	-5.29	.003
	9	-1.40	.621

The Post Hoc Test indicates a significant difference between the Year Eight group and the Year Ten group ($p = .003$). An examination of the means for each group, as shown in Table 1 (Year 8 = 28.29, Year 10 = 25.13), verified that the Year Ten group valued reading less than the Year Eight group.

The small sample size ($N = 24$) raises problems in analysis, which means the assumptions for an ANOVA may not have been met. In order to substantiate the results of the Univariate Analysis the non parametric equivalent Kruskal-Wallis H test was carried out as it allows for small sample sizes. Table 4 provides a summary of data analysis (see Appendix 9 for full analysis)

Table 4: Results of Kruskal-Wallis H Test between Value of Reading and Year Groups and Self-Concept as a Reader and Year Groups.

	Value of Reading	Self-concept as a Reader
Chi Square	10.225	1.640
df	2	2
Asymp. Sig	.006	.440

The results from the Kruskal-Wallis Test indicate a significant difference between groups in Value of Reading $\chi^2(2, N = 24) = 10.225, p = .006$. This confirms what was indicated from the Univariate Analysis of Variance. The Mann-Whitney Post Hoc Test was undertaken to investigate where the significance lies (see Table 5). Appendix 10 has the full analysis.

Table 5: Results of Mann Whitney U Post Hoc Test on Year Comparisons of Self Concept and Value of Reading

Year Comparisons	Variable	Mann Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig (2- tailed)
8 + 9	Self-Concept	21.500	-1.332	.183
	Value of Reading	11.00	-2.897	.017
9 + 10	Self-Concept	27.00	-7.85	.433
	Value of Reading	22.00	-1.289	.197
8 + 10	Self-Concept	24.00	-1.332	.948
	Value of Reading	2.000	-2.380	.004

The Post Hoc Test indicates significant difference between Year Eight and Year Ten scores ($U = 2.0$, $p = .004$). This supports the significance found by the Tamhane Post Hoc.

The respondents are part of a Focus English Program; a part of that program is regular testing in Oral Reading, Comprehension and Spelling. Each student in the program is tested twice a year; these results are recorded in terms of a Reading Age, Comprehension Age or Spelling Age (see Appendix 11 for scores). Part of the data analysis involves examining relationships between the Motivation to Read Profile scores and reading attainment measures.

A Pearson Product Correlation was performed on the reading attainment scores of each year group with both Self-Concept as a Reader, and Value of Reading scores. Table 6 presents the results (see Appendix 12 for full analysis).

Table 6: Pearson Correlation: Year Group by Reading Attainment Measures

Year Group	Value Of Reading		Comprehension	Spelling	Oral Reading
8	Value of Reading	Pearson Correlation	.416	.193	.627
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.176	.339	.066*
N = 7	Self-concept	Pearson Correlation	.437	.532	.487
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.163	.110	.134
9	Value of Reading	Pearson Correlation	.120	-.204	-.403
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.370	.286	.124
N = 10	Self-concept	Pearson Correlation	.616	.630	.169
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.029*	.026*	.320
10	Value of Reading	Pearson Correlation	.355	-.009	-.255
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.218	.492	.291
N = 7	Self-Concept	Pearson	-.101	-.345	-.415
		Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)	.415	.224
				.178	

* significant $p<.05$

A significant correlation exists between Self-Concept as a Reader and Comprehension in the Year Nine group ($r = .616, p<.05$) and a significant correlation exists between Self-Concept as a Reader and Spelling in the Year Nine group ($r = .630, p<.05$). These scores indicate that higher Self-Concept as a Reader is associated with higher Comprehension and Spelling scores in the Year Nine group. This association, however, does not suggest causation; it is difficult to ascertain whether Self-Concept as a Reader has led to higher scores in reading comprehension and spelling or vice versa. Alternatively, the variables could be influenced by a third unknown factor.

While these results are significant, it is important to note that some of the other results, for example, the correlation between Oral Reading and Value of Reading of the Year Eight students ($r = .627, p>.05$) approached significance. It may be that the small numbers have led to an underestimation of relationships between variables. As a result it is difficult to pinpoint why there is a relationship between variables and whether the small sample size has masked certain relationships between variables.

5.2 Perceptions Survey

Four main areas were examined in the Perceptions Survey:

- Students’ attitude towards reading.
- Perceived benefits of the Focus English Program.
- Perceived disadvantages of the Focus English Program.
- Student issues related to being in the Focus English Program.

Attitudes Toward Reading

Students were asked what they liked to read, what they did not like to read, what they would choose to read in class and if they thought reading was important. Respondents gave between one and five written responses for each of the questions. The results showed consistent responses from all 24 participants with 48% indicating that they enjoyed reading magazines and 30% indicating they enjoyed books of their own choice (see Figure 4)

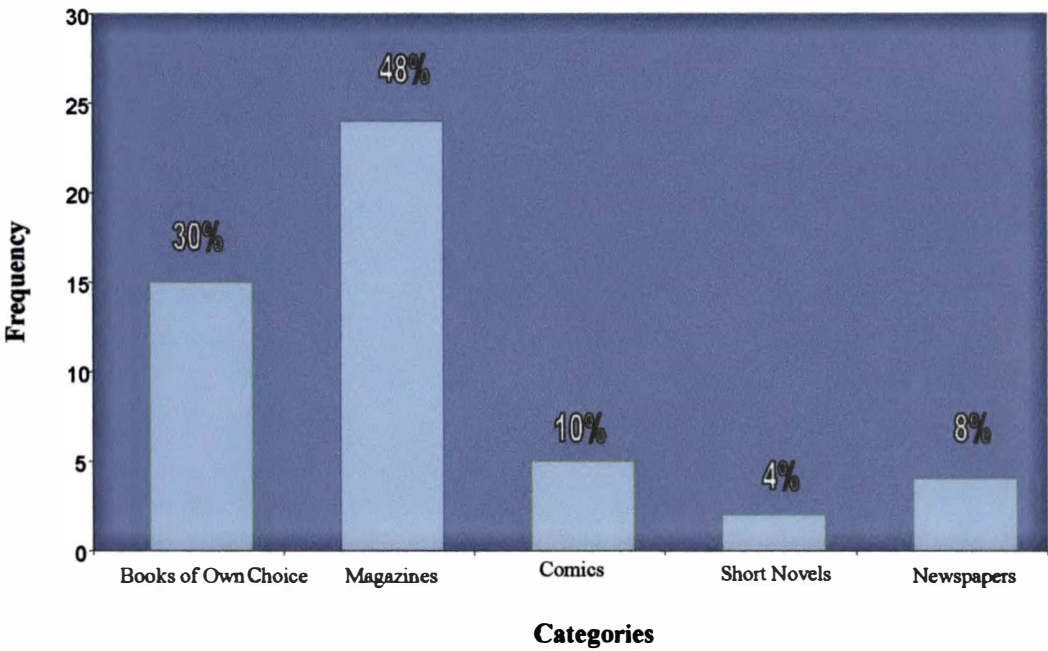


Figure 4: Preferences for Reading Material

Figure 5 presents students’ responses to the questions of what type of material they disliked reading. Newspapers gained the most responses for reading material most disliked with 56% responses for that category.

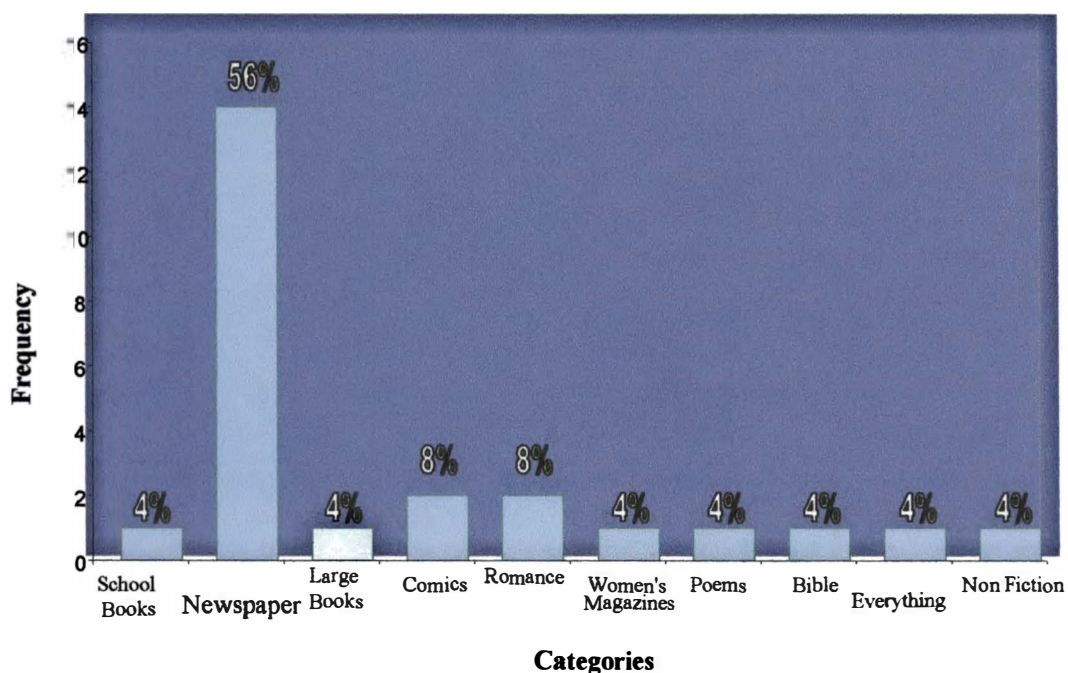


Figure 5: Reading Material Disliked by Students

The results showed that students do like to read but that they want a choice in what they read and they like to read material that is of interest to them. Across Year Eight, Nine and Ten all respondents indicated a desire to read magazines and books of their choice and indicated a strong dislike for newspapers.

Respondents were asked if they thought reading was important. The survey indicated that 92% of responses indicated reading was important for a variety of reasons. The main response was it was viewed as an important life skill; other reasons included “jobs”, “helps in courses”, “spelling” and “vocabulary”. There were two responses of “not important”. Figure 6 outlines the frequency of responses.

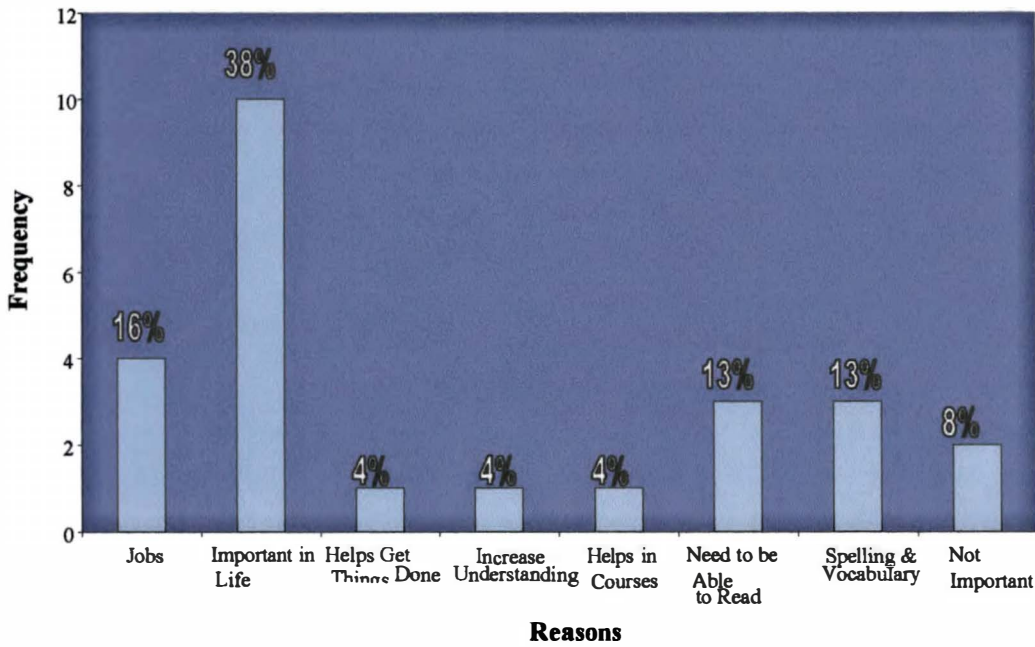


Figure 6: Student Reasons for Reading

Perceived Benefits of the Focus English Program.

Students were surveyed on what they thought were the benefits of the Focus English Program and if they thought the Focus English Program was assisting them.

Overall, the participants were positive about the Focus English Program. All but two participants stated that they felt the Focus Program had helped them. The main reasons given included:

- Assistance with reading
- Good teachers who helped
- Small class size
- More teacher time

Two students felt that the program was not beneficial; one because he does not read and the other because he felt he was a good enough reader.

Participants identified a number of good features of the Focus English Program. The category identified as the most positive feature was that work is set at an appropriate level; 25% of responses fell in this category. Students viewed the enjoyable with 18% of respondents indicating the class was fun to be in. The

amount of reading undertaken in the class was also viewed as a positive feature of the Focus English Program with 14% of responses. The positive features are presented in Figure 7 below.

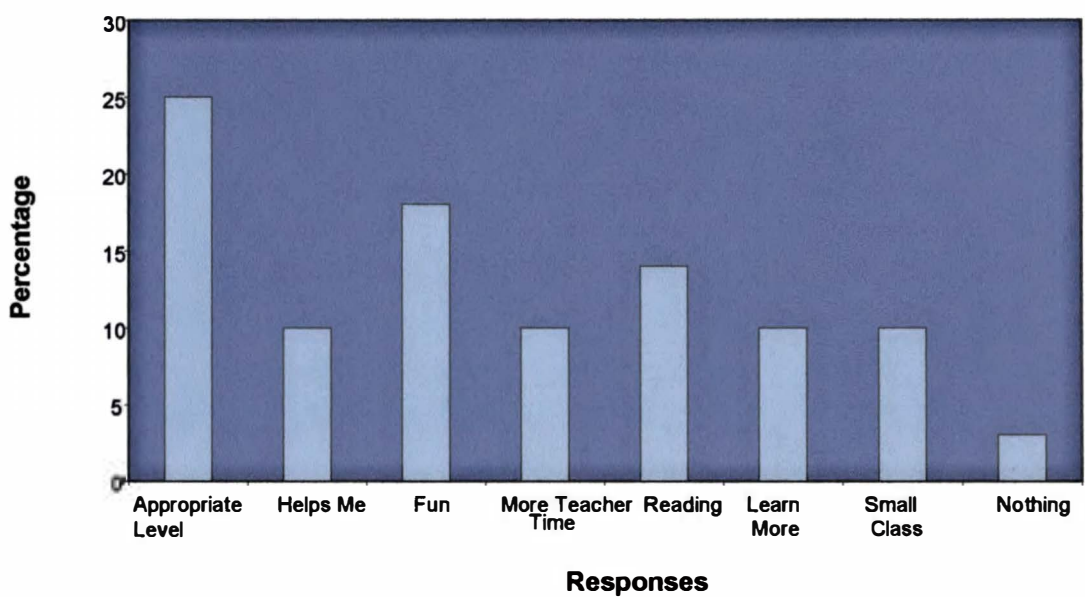


Figure 7: Positive Features of the Focus English Program

Perceived Negative Features of the Focus Program

As well as the positive features students were asked to identify any negative features of the Focus English Program. It is in this area where differences occurred in the opinions of different year groups.

The majority of Year Eight and Nine responses indicated that the Program had no negative features. A minority of negative responses indicated issues such as:

- Class is too loud
- People in the class are disruptive
- Small class

Only one participant indicated that a negative feature was teasing from other students outside of the Focus English Program.

The majority of Year Ten responses were more negative than those of Year Eight and Year Nine participants. They pointed to the constant changing of teachers

and to teasing from other students outside the Focus English class as disadvantages of the class.

Other Issues

Participants were asked to respond to a number of questions in this category:

- What would you change?
- How do you feel?
- What do your friends and peers think?
- Why are you in Focus English?

Participants suggested a number of changes to the Focus English Program (see Figure 8)

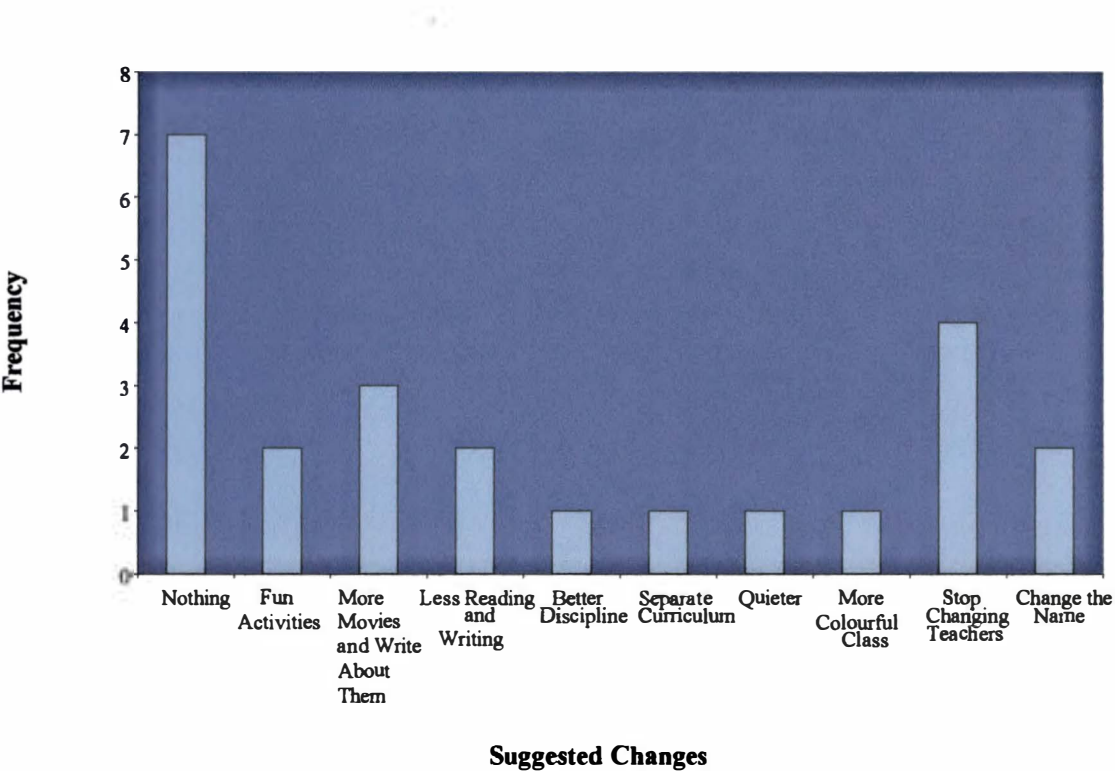


Figure 8: Suggested Changes to the Focus English Program

The results show that many of the students could not suggest any changes either because they could not think of any possible changes or because they felt the program was working well as it was. The next most popular response was to “stop changing teachers” which came from the Year Ten students. The other

suggested changes were wide ranging and involved a range of issues from discipline to class set up.

When participants were asked how they felt about being in the Focus English Program, the majority of participants indicated positive feelings about being in the class. Only one respondent indicated that he hated it. Figure 9 displays the range of participants’ responses.

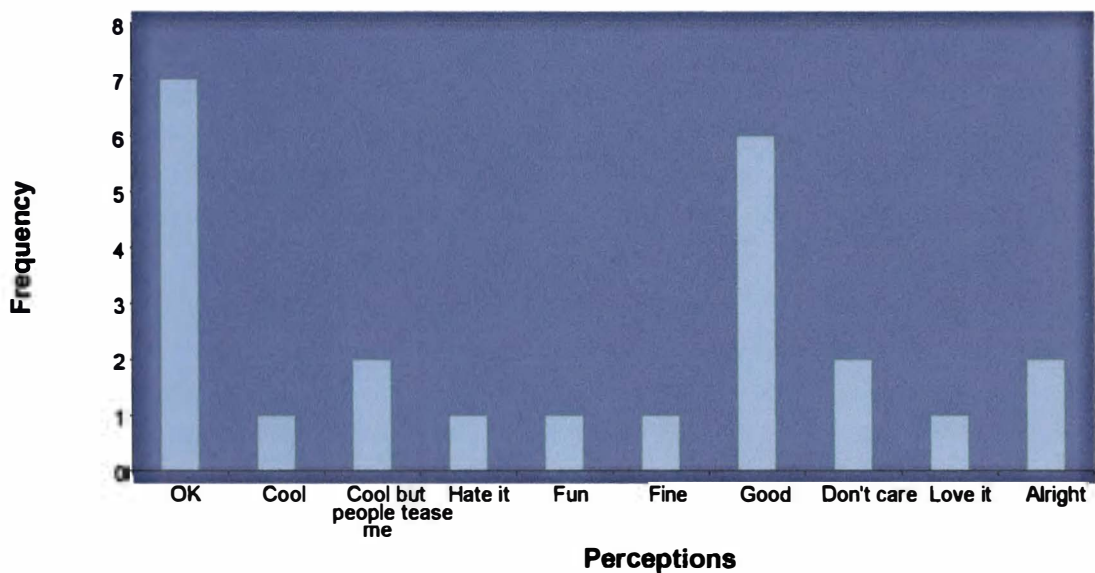


Figure 9: Student Perceptions about being in the Focus English Program

Respondents were asked to identify the reasons they believed they were in the Focus English class. The Year Ten students gave the most negative responses while the Year Eight and Nine students had a good understanding of why they were placed in the class. The Year Eight and Nine responses are presented in the table below.

Table 7: Year 8 and Year 9 Responses Regarding Class Placement

Response	Frequency
Reading and Spelling Problems	7
Trouble with English	3
Help with Learning	3
Dyslexia	2
Dumb	2

The Year Ten responses were quite different and included more negative perceptions (see Table 8)

Table 8: Year 10 Responses Regarding Class Placement

Responses	Frequency
Dumb or not a smart as others	5
Learning difficulties	1
Failure on tests	1

The majority of Year Eight and Nine students were positive; only two students thought they were in the program because they were “dumb”. The Year Ten students in comparison were very negative, with five out of the seven students believing that they were in the program because they were “dumb” or “not as smart as others”.

The final question asked participants to evaluate what they thought their peers thought of the Focus English Program. The table below summarises the responses from the different Year groups.

Table 9: Friends and Peers’ Views as Perceived by Year 8, 9 and 10 Focus English Students.

Year 8		Year 9		Year 10	
Good	(2)	Not Sure	(3)	Good	(1)
Dumb	(2)	Cool	(1)	Crap	(1)
Don’t Know	(2)	OK	(1)	For dumb people	(2)
Don’t Care	(1)	Alright	(1)	Stupid	(1)
		Better Class	(1)	Dumb	(2)
		Want to be in it	(1)		
		For dumb people	(2)		

() No. of Responses

The Year Eight group had a variety of responses regarding outside perceptions of the class ranging from positive to more negative responses. The Year Nine group

had the most positive perceptions of outside views with only two negative responses.

The Year Ten group responses indicated that they believed others viewed the class in a negative way. This result corresponds with the Year Tens' predominantly negative responses to their perceptions of why they were placed in the Focus English Program.

In summary, the Perceptions Survey yielded some interesting results regarding students' perceptions of the Focus English Program. Each Year group offered results that were both similar and different in terms of content of the Focus English Program and the impact the program was having on them academically and emotionally. The results are investigated further in the Discussion section.

5.3 Focus Group Interview

The Focus group interview was conducted with six of the 24 participants. The six were made up of two Year Eight students, two Year Nine students and two Year Ten students and were randomly chosen. The session was conducted by an independent facilitator and was recorded on audio tape; it was not possible to identify students from the tape recording. Each student was assigned a number one to six for reporting purposes; pseudonyms were used when students referred to another student within the interview text. Students were instructed to give both negative and positive features of the program. A selection of student quotes is used to support results; an example of a full page of transcript can be seen in Appendix 13.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Participants were firstly asked to identify any advantages or disadvantages of being the Focus English Program. The participants indicated two main advantages:

- Small class
- More teacher one-to-one

Student 1: *Um I think the benefits of it are the classes are smaller; you've got more one-to-one with the teacher and um as long as your class is easy to get along with it is a good class. I like it.*

Student 3: *Easier to concentrate because there are not as many people in the class to talk to and everything, so you can concentrate on your work and everything.*

The participants indicated a number of disadvantages to being in the Focus English Program including.

- No excursions
- No girls in the class
- No friends in the class.

All participants voiced an opinion about excursions. Many felt that being in the Focus English class meant they missed out on excursions.

Student 5: *General class get to go on more excursions*

Student 1: *I have to go with Gary [’s opinion]; I reckon there has to be more excursions...*

One student brought up the issue of not receiving enough help outside of the Focus English class such as in option classes ie: woodwork or technical drawing.

Student 2: *Oh like some of the disadvantages are like um if you have manual arts you get homework and you don't have as much help from the teachers and that makes it hard.*

Overall the participants focused on the issue of excursions as a major disadvantage and the issues of small classes and more teacher time as the advantages.

Outside Reactions

Participants were asked to identify whether they experienced any hassles outside of the classroom and how they coped with any negative reactions. All

participants indicated that there were few hassles outside the classroom and if they did experience any negativity, they had strategies to deal with it such as ignoring comments.

Student 1: *Um I don't think that there are many problems being in the Focus class but I guess if you can't stand up for yourself, people might walk over you and call you names.*

Student 1: *Yep, you might not be as smart as them; you might not be as good as them but in other ways you are better than them.*

Student 2: *Yeah and no one really teases you.*

Student 5: *No there's no hassles, but same as Wayne [said]. It's pretty good like they'd rather be in the Focus class ...*

Participants felt that there were really few or no hassles outside the classroom and if they did experience negative attitudes participants responded that they mainly ignored any teasing.

Student 4: *Yeah, I just ignore them.*

Student 5: *Yeah, the same; I just ignore them as well.*

Student 1: *Yeah, I just ignore them as well, I have to say.*

Perceived Parental Attitudes

Participants were asked to comment on what they believed their parents thought of their placement in the Focus English class. All participants indicated that they thought their parents thought it was better to be in the class because they were getting extra help and support and more teacher time.

Student 2: *Oh I reckon my parents like it better because um I can get more help with the teacher; because there are not as many kids in the class ...*

Academic Improvement

When asked to comment on whether they felt they had improved academically all students indicated that they felt the program had helped them improve academically.

Student 6: *Yeah, I think you do because you get more one-to-one with the teachers.*

Student 5: *Yeah, I've been in it since Year Eight and it's pretty good like um I've gone up to an A from a D so its pretty good now and I've got better heaps at reading.*

Many responses pointed to academic improvement resulting from more teacher time and availability and smaller class sizes. This supports students' views of the main advantages of being in the Focus English Program.

Changes to the Focus English Program

Participants were very specific when it came to changes to the Focus English Program. As with the perceived disadvantages, excursions were the main topic of discussion among participants. All participants commented that they would like more excursions and that they felt teachers did not trust them because they were in the Focus English Program. They also wanted to view more movies that were relevant to them, as they felt not enough were shown and those that were shown were boring and irrelevant.

Student 1: *Yeah um I think we would like to have more excursions and a choice of videos we like to watch during English because some of the videos that we choose, some of teachers that, some of the videos teachers choose are boring and some people in our class are ADD or they've got problems and they just can't sit there and watch the videos.*

Student 3: *I'd have to agree because, [at] one stage all the General class went on an excursion and us Focus class just had to sorta like do normal work.*

Student 6: *More excursions that would be better.*

Many of the participants felt discriminated against because they were a part of the Focus English Program. They felt teachers viewed them as students that would play up and misbehave on excursions because they were typically those students who had previously been in trouble. Many of the participants believed they had not been given the chance to prove themselves and saw it as very unfair that other classes were allowed to go on excursions.

Student 2: Yeah I think more excursions because like when the General people want to go on excursions they are allowed and when we want to go on one we're not because the teachers like think we're not, we're like irresponsible and stuff and like

Participants also wanted to view more movies in class and felt that videos should make up a more significant part of their curriculum. Many regarded the videos currently shown as irrelevant to them and boring. They wanted videos they could connect to and which would enhance their learning. The participants felt they learnt better through visual techniques such as videos. Reading a novel was viewed as a difficult task and not achievable in some circumstances.

The issues raised by participants support recent findings in boys' education and literacy. Developments in cinema and information technology have meant that there has been a shift in what counts as literacy in Western culture. Narrative now has many more forms than can be enclosed between the covers of books. There is a strong argument for more emphasis to be placed on visual literacy, especially for boys. The work of Millard (1997) has shown that boys are more engaged through visual learning and respond more positively to visual forms of communication. Boys desire action in their narratives and it is films, videos and computers that provide this action.

The current research has focused on boys in a remedial class and as it stands the Focus English Program appears to be doubly disadvantaging them both as boys and as remedial readers. The current school curriculum is heavily dependent on the reading and writing of fiction; the interests of boys often go unacknowledged (Millard, 1997). With the introduction of outcome based learning, there is now

an opportunity to better engage boys and, in particular, for the Focus English Program to provide a learning program which facilitates motivation and success.

Many remedial students are disadvantaged by print literacy because of the difficulties they have in reading. By placing more emphasis on visual literacy, these students could achieve success and demonstrate skills at a higher cognitive level. In turn this would allow students to experience success and would help them develop the skills to achieve in the other strands.

Other Issues Discussed

Three main issues were raised by participants:

- Discipline within the Focus Class
- Reading Material
- Access to Computers

One participant felt some students in the Focus English Program got away with certain behaviours that others were unable to get away with. He thought this was unfair and did not set a good standard for the class.

Student 3: Oh, OK um yeah, I reckon some of the teachers should be like a bit more strict with um some of the kids in our class because they like get like just say that they like just say they are bad they don't get busted like some of us other people so yeah that's what I reckon.

A second student felt that reading groups needed to be set up in the class in order to cater for a range of reading needs.

Student 5: Yeah um, like to be treated like a General class. Like don't get read like two- year- old books [books for someone aged two] and stuff like that. You know what I am saying

The student felt a better solution was to have age related groups in class. He felt some of the reading material presented to him was babyish and more suited to a lower level.

Student 5: *Classes would be smaller but you could have reading ages into it, so you can improve your reading instead of reading two- year- old books or whatever we're reading.*

The issue of computers in the classroom was raised by one of the participants and this led to more of the participants agreeing that there needs to be more access to computers in all classes. It was felt that many of them experienced difficulties in handwriting and spelling and that the use of computers such as laptops would help overcome these difficulties and make completion of work easier. Participants also discussed the fact that using computers would also improve their skills in typing and computer literacy.

Student 1: *I reckon that like, with some of us, we've got really bad handwriting and I reckon that we should have like computer or something.*

Student 5: *At the same time we learn how to use a computer as well*

Student 1: *Yep, um cause some of us, cause I find with my spelling I can spell better on a computer than what I can when writing just normal.*

Participants were quite clear on what they felt were relevant issues and the points they raised were valid in that they could directly affect their learning. The students' emphasis on computers again supports the need to further examine the value and use of visual literacy and computer literacy. Information technology is a major part of society and computer skills are fast becoming an essential skill. Greater access to computers would help students develop computer literacy skills, decrease their stress and engage them in an alternative form of literacy learning.

In summary the Focus group interview allowed students to raise a number of valid points and discuss a range of topics including:

- Benefits of small classes
- More one-to-one with teacher
- More excursions
- More movies

- Academic improvement
- Use of computers

These were the main themes identified from the Interview.

5.4 Conclusions

The results reveal a number of interesting features regarding students' perceptions of the Focus English Program. The Motivation to Read Profile indicated that the Year Ten students value reading less than the Year Eight and Nine students. However, in the Perceptions Survey, the Year Ten students indicate that they thought reading was important. The Perceptions Survey indicated that most students saw reading as important and recognised the value of Focus English Program. The Year Ten students however were most negative when it came to identifying why they were placed in the program; the Year Eight and Nine students had a much more positive understanding of why they were in the program.

The focus group interviews highlighted more clearly what students thought of the Program. Many found it beneficial because of the benefits of small classes and more time with the teacher. They indicated that teasing outside the class did occur but that it had little impact on them. The most compelling features of the focus group interview were students' views on academic improvement, excursions and the use of computers in the classroom. All students agreed that more excursions were needed and that they should have access to computers on a more regular basis. There was also strong agreement on the academic benefits of the Focus English Program; all students felt they were improving their skills.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this study's findings will be presented in relation to the aims of the research. The major aim was to investigate the perceptions of boys in a secondary school English remedial program. A number of key issues arose from the study and each is presented in the following section. Issues regarding self-concept, motivation, the Focus English Program, peer influences and areas in need of change were the major themes arising from the research.

6.1 Self-Concept as a Reader

Each boy in Years Eight and Nine were part of a Self-Esteem Development Program, which aimed at developing students' self awareness, confidence and ability to work as a group. The study sought to investigate whether the Self-Esteem Development Program was having an effect on students' levels of self-esteem, attitude, motivation and achievement. The research by Harter (1996) in the area of self-esteem has found that self-esteem is both global and specific in nature. The global self-esteem encompasses an overall feeling of self worth whereas specific self-esteem deals with certain areas of one's life such as academic achievement, body image and social interaction. The study endeavoured to investigate whether students' self-esteem was affected by the Focus English Program and if the Self-Esteem Program was having a positive effect on Year Eight and Nine students.

The research found that there was no significant difference between Year groups regarding Self-Concept as a Reader. However, the Motivation to Read Profile Raw Scores did show that most participants scored quite low on Self-Concept as a Reader section (see Appendix 7) indicating that most students viewed themselves as poor readers.

This result does not necessarily mean that they have a low self-esteem. These students are aware they are not good readers; this is why they are in the Focus English Program. The questions posed by the Motivation to Read Profile to obtain a Self-Concept as a Reader score centred on how they rate themselves as

readers compared to others and how they perceive their reading skills; these students know they lack certain reading skills and are at a lower level than their peers. These results alone however do not give an indication as to whether these students have low self-esteem. The literature has indicated that self-esteem incorporates a range of domains: social acceptance, physical appearance and academic competence. It has been argued that one can have low self-esteem in one of the domains but not the others. Therefore, the participants in this study have a low self-concept as a reader but this does not necessarily mean they have low self-esteem on a global level.

When the Self-Concept of a Reader scores of each Year group were compared to different measures of reading attainment such as Comprehension, Spelling and Oral Reading using a Pearson Correlation, it was found that there was a significant positive correlation between the Year Nine group and Comprehension and Spelling and it was also found that Year Eight group were approaching significance in the area of Oral Reading. Even though causation cannot be demonstrated, it is an interesting result when one looks at the perceptions of the Year Ten group.

Attitude differences between the Year Eight and Nine students on the one hand and the Year Ten students on the other were revealed by both the Perceptions Survey and Motivation to Read Profile. The Perceptions Survey showed the Year Ten group to be most negative in terms of their perceptions of why they were in the program identifying factors such as they were “dumb” or “not as smart”. Year Ten students also perceived mainstream students’ perceptions of the remedial class and of them as a disadvantage of the Focus Program.

The Year Eight and Nine students were quite different in their responses. The Year Eight group were varied with a balance of negative and positive responses; however they had a good understanding of why they were in the class and gave responses such as “reading problems” and “need help with learning”. Overall, they felt positive about the program and felt they were benefiting from the Focus English Program. The Year Nine group were the most positive. They had a good understanding of why they were placed in the Focus English Program and they had the most positive perception of how others viewed the class, eliciting

responses such as “cool class” and “others want to be in it”. The Year Nine students perceived the class as a positive experience that was benefiting them.

The results of the Year Nine participants’ Self-Concept as a Reader scores showed a positive correlation with two of the three reading attainment measures and the Year Eights’ scores were approaching significance with one of the reading attainment measures. The Year Ten students’ scores showed no significance. The results indicate that the Year Eight and Nine students felt positive regarding their learning. The Year Eight students have only experienced a small amount of time in the Self-Esteem Development Program whereas the Year Nine students have had over a year of exposure and the Year Ten students have had none. Although causation has not been established, the Year Eight and Nine participants have displayed more positive perspectives with regard to the Focus English Program and they have shown that they are improving academically and their self-concept is higher. The Year Ten participants have shown much more negative perceptions and even though their reading attainment scores have improved over the three years in which they have been in the program; their self-concept as readers remains low.

6.2 Motivation to Read

An analysis of students’ attitudes and motivation to read provides interesting results. The Motivation to Read Profile gave a Value of Reading score and, when compared across Year Groups, significance was found between Year Eights and Year Tens with Year Eight participants indicating a higher value of reading than Year Ten participants. The Year Ten students have been in the Focus English Program for three years whereas the Year Eight students have just begun so, from these results, it can be surmised that the Year Eight students have a stronger motivation due to the fact that they have just begun the program whereas the Year Ten students have lost motivation because they have been in the program for too long and have given up seeing the point of reading. In the Year Tens’ perception, they are not improving even though their reading results show an improvement. In their view, they would have moved into a mainstream class if they had improved academically. These results, coupled with the results of the Perceptions Survey in which the Year Ten participants were very negative,

reinforce the possibility that the Year Tens' extended placement may have had adverse affects.

These findings are supported by the research such as that conducted by Wigfield and Eccles (2000), who investigated the motivation of children and found that as children got older and entered secondary school their attitudes and beliefs became negative and they developed a lack of motivation to read. The Year Ten students have experienced three years of frustration and lack of control over their learning and as a result their motivation to learn has decreased. A catch 22 situation develops where they do not read and as a result their reading does not improve and as a result they read less and become more frustrated. Students need a sense of competence and control to engage in learning. Students who feel incompetent and bored or have no control develop work avoidance tactics (Seifert and O'Keefe, 2001).

Interestingly, when the Perceptions Survey was analysed further, the Year Ten students presented a slightly different picture. All students were asked if they thought reading was important. Based on the results of the Motivation to Read Profile one would envisage that the Year Ten students would see reading as insignificant to them, however the majority of respondents in all Year groups indicated that they thought reading was a very important life skill. Many of the Year Ten responses in particular made reference to the importance of reading in "getting a good job", "getting on in life" and "understanding things". This led to a closer examination of the types of questions asked of respondents in the Motivation to Read Profile which gave a Value of Reading Score. The questions asked students to say:

- If libraries are a good place to spend time
- If reading is a good way to spend time
- If they will read when they are older
- If books are good presents
- If reading well is important.

An analysis of the responses from the Year Ten group found that the majority indicated they did feel reading is important either by ticking that it is "important" or "very important". However, many of them ticked lower responses regarding

the other questions such as whether they liked using libraries or getting a book for a present. These questions tend to focus on reading for pleasure and associate value of reading with reading for leisure. Had they asked questions centred around topics such as work, developing understanding and developing learning the responses may have well been different. The Perceptions Survey found that the Year Ten students did indeed value reading but as a skill rather than a leisure activity.

Another issue raised by the research which follows on from the above point, is whether students in programs like the Focus English Program can be expected to actually like reading. The research in the literature has shown the importance of reading attitude in learning. Many school students do not engage in reading for pleasure as they feel there is nothing of interest to read in school. Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) found that increased interest levels lead to an increase in positive attitudes. The Perceptions Survey highlighted that the majority of participants did enjoy reading but that they wanted choice.

Participants wanted to read material such as magazines, comics and novels of their choice. There was a strong dislike for materials such as large novels and newspapers. Unfortunately, it is these types of materials which are presented to them in class. These students struggle with reading and with motivation to read and yet they are in classes which present them with materials which they dislike. The students' responses indicated that the Focus Program would probably be more successful if it used more of the material that participants wanted to read.

From the study, it can be concluded that the Year Ten participants were the group most affected by low motivation. They presented as the most negative group especially regarding the reasons for their placement in the program and their perception of their peers' negative attitude to the program. The Year Ten participants did see reading as a valuable skill; however it was not an activity they wanted to engage in. Because other issues affected Year Ten responses, such as the continual changing of teachers, it cannot be said conclusively that extended placement in the program had a negative impact on the year group. There is, however, evidence that being in the program for three years could have affected their motivation and attitude. The Year Eight and Nine participants presented much more positive responses. The Year Eight and Nine students'

involvement in the Self-Esteem Development Program may have contributed to the fact that both these year groups were more positive about the Focus English Program.

6.3 The Focus English Program

The main aim of this study was to discover what the boys' perceptions were of the Focus English Program. As the main consumers of the Focus English Program, it was important to find out what they thought. The results from the Perceptions Survey and Focus group interview have provided the most information regarding the boys' views.

From the results, a number of conclusions can be made. The Focus English Program is not catering to the reading needs of its target group. All participants in Years Eight, Nine and Ten indicated a range of reading material they liked and disliked. The materials they disliked reading are used in the Focus English Program; often students are required to read larger books and materials that they see as irrelevant. If students had access to materials they did like, they may be more inclined to engage in reading activities.

The participants identified a number of benefits of the Focus English Program. The participants reported that the classes were enjoyable. This finding is important as it affects student participation and motivation. The literature has shown that student motivation is an important aspect of learning. If students are engaged in purposeful, enjoyable and interesting activities, their desire to engage in activities to do with reading and learning is increased. Students, especially those in remedial situations, need to feel a sense of purpose and feel they are in a supportive environment which is enjoyable and purposeful (Saracho and Dayton, 1991).

The participants felt that the work was set at an appropriate level for them and that it enabled them to achieve some success which they may not otherwise have achieved. This has a positive impact on student learning and attitude; if students are experiencing success they are more likely to tackle harder work and take risks in their learning. This finding is aligned with Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Value theory. Vroom posited that at any given point in time a person has preferences

among outcomes; for any pair of outcomes a person will prefer one to the other. Students who dislike reading and find reading difficult will avoid reading (Ford, 1992). The participants in the Focus English Program felt they were able to take risks as they felt the work was set at a level at which they could achieve.

Small classes and more teacher time were seen as major benefits of the Focus English Program. All participants liked the small class size as it allowed the teacher to spend more time with them and allowed them the opportunity to access one-to-one teaching. Students felt that these factors positively influenced their learning and that they were achieving academic success and improving their levels of literacy.

The Focus English Program has benefited students by helping students succeed and take risks and by developing positive attitudes and increasing levels of learning.

Participants also identified a number of disadvantages. It was here that a difference was observed between Year groups. The Perceptions Survey showed the majority of Year Eight and Nine participants indicated that there were no major disadvantages and those participants who did identify some disadvantages pointed to occasional class noise and to the classroom not having enough colour. The Year Ten participants were much more vocal and they identified a number of disadvantages such as the constant changing of their teachers. This group of students unfortunately suffered a number of teacher changes which affected their learning and motivation. These students felt that they were just assigned any available teacher and that no one really cared because they were the “Focus” class. Year Ten participants also identified “teasing” from those outside the class as a major issue. They believed they were teased and called “dumb” because they were in the Focus English Program. The Year Eight and Nine students were mostly positive. The Year Ten students, however, were extremely negative believing their peers thought the class was “crap” and “for dumb people”. These factors made the Year Ten students very negative towards the Focus English Program and thereby affected their learning, motivation and attitude.

The study shows that the Year Ten participants had become quite disillusioned by the system which they were in. Had they had access to the Self-Esteem Development Program and had they had a constant teacher, or had they been returned to mainstream classes, their responses may have been different. This finding is quite disconcerting because the Year Ten group were in the middle of the year in which they make choices regarding their career paths and in their last year of compulsory schooling. To have a group with negative perceptions making decisions regarding their career path is worrying as they were not feeling positive about school and their learning and are at risk of making the wrong decisions about their future. This was a major disadvantage to the Focus English Program for Year Ten students as the program had failed to address their needs. Perhaps the practice of retaining Year Ten students in the program is an area which needs to be examined more closely.

6.4 Peer Influences

Conforming to peer group expectations is important during the adolescent phase of life; teenagers do not like to stand out or be viewed as different (Lerner, 1996). Being part of a remedial program immediately places students in a position of difference and how students cope with this and the impact of these influences was an important aspect the study. Researchers such as Harter (1996) have shown that peers can influence self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Participants were asked to comment on how they thought their peers perceived the Focus English Program and whether they were subjected to teasing. The year groups were quite different in their responses with regard to peer perspectives.

The Year Eights' gave a range of responses from negative to positive and included some responses which were classed as neutral. These responses included comments such as "don't care" and "don't know". As stated earlier, the Year Eight students have not been in the program for an extended period of time so they may not have had time to develop an opinion regarding what their peers think or conversely they may have not yet reached the stage where peer opinion counts.

The Year Nines' mostly gave positive responses indicating that they believed their peers thought the class was an enjoyable class to be in. The Year Nine participants have consistently indicated that they thought the class was enjoyable and fun to be in. Their positive responses have probably had an effect on their peers outside the Program with the result that their mainstream peers developed positive attitudes to the Program and to the students being in it. Feeling so accepted by their peers outside the Program appears to have had an important effect on their learning. If remedial students feel secure in their placement in the class and they feel accepted as normal by other students, then they are more likely to be involved in their learning and display positive attitudes.

As stated earlier, the Year Ten group gave a range of negative responses in this area. Only one participant indicated those outside the class thought it was "good". This group of students did not feel the Focus English Program was viewed positively by others which had serious implications for the education of this group. If students feel embarrassed about being in the class then they will not approach their learning with the right attitude or motivation. If others think they are "dumb", then they will begin to believe this themselves. Year Tens' perceptions were reinforced by the answers that they gave regarding their placement in the program. They said they were in the program because they were "dumb" and "not smart". The answers of Year Eight and Nine students highlight a significant difference in self perception from the Year Ten students. Rather than seeing themselves as "dumb" or thinking that their mainstream peers saw them as dumb, Year Eight and Nine students, when asked why they were in the Focus English program, said they were there because of "learning problems and/or "dyslexia". Year Ten responses pointed to irremediable cognitive deficits. The Year Eight and Nine responses pointed to difficulties with learning that they saw as problems the Program was helping them to deal with.

The focus interview gave a better insight into whether students were subjected to teasing. Each of the six participants acknowledged that at times there was teasing by others outside the class. The majority of students indicated that they just ignored any teasing or stood up for themselves by teasing back. One boy did say that being in the Focus Program meant he had to be able to stand up for himself at times and he believed that it would be more difficult to be in the

Program if a student could not. The six students interviewed had their own strategies for dealing with any teasing and the majority felt that it was not a major issue for them.

6.5 Suggested Changes

All participants had good ideas about what they wanted to change in the Focus English Program. It has been well documented that research into remedial education has often been conducted with teachers, administrators and parents but rarely have the students been asked their opinions. It is the students who are the main target group of any remedial program and the success of the program is often based on the academic improvement of students. These students are in the unique position to comment on what works and what does not.

The Perceptions Survey gave the participants the opportunity to suggest any changes they would make, the responses included “nothing”, “more colourful class”, “more movies and write about them”, “change the name”, “stop changing teachers”, “better discipline”, “separate curriculum” and “more fun activities”. All these suggestions were valid and achievable within the Focus English Program as they do not require major changes and indicate that overall the Focus English Program is providing a good service to these students.

The focus interview provided more in-depth information regarding changes to the program. There were a number of suggested changes made by the participants which included:

- Excursions
- Movies
- Computers
- Curriculum
- Better discipline

The issue of excursions was dominant. Participants felt they should be able to access more excursions. There was a strong sense of injustice when discussing excursions as they felt that being in the Focus English Program meant they had fewer opportunities to go on excursions. The participants felt that when it came to going on excursions, they were wrongly judged by teachers as being “disruptive” and “untrustworthy”. One participant believed that teachers should

give them the opportunity to prove themselves instead of making premature judgements about their behaviour. The participants felt they had wrongly been given the tag of “troublemakers” just because they were “focus kids”. The participants also believed excursions would assist in their learning. Many felt they did not learn as well in a classroom and believed that if they had more opportunities to engage in practical activities they would benefit more academically.

Participants also wanted more movies to be shown in class instead having to read such large novels. Participants indicated they would rather watch movies that were relevant to them and use those as a base for writing essays and having discussions. Many students with learning difficulties tend to have varying learning styles and often these learning styles are not accommodated in the classroom. Many of these students are visual learners and benefit from more practical examples, so the argument for more excursions and movies is valid.

The Focus English Program could perhaps, place greater emphasis on meeting the outcomes for visual literacy. It is likely that students would be able to achieve higher levels of visual literacy than print literacy. The cognitive operations for visual and print on any level are much the same. This would have the effect of building students’ self-esteem, which may thereby enhance their capacity to use print materials effectively. The Student Outcome Statements in the learning area of English have catered for visual literacy through the strand of Viewing. As with all strands each has different levels attached, so while many remedial students may struggle with other strands such as reading, they have an opportunity to work at higher levels within the viewing strand. It can also be argued that cognitively each strand is not so different; to achieve Level 4 in Viewing would require the same cognitive skill as achieving Level 4 in Reading. The strand outcome statements for both Viewing and Reading in Level 4 are shown below and each requires students to critically evaluate texts, which is a high order cognitive skill.

V 4 Strand Outcome Statement

The student uses knowledge of the characteristics of a range of visual texts to construct meaning; understands that texts are constructed for particular purposes and audiences; identifies the ways in which the codes and conventions of visual texts work to shape viewers' interpretations; and selects, uses and reflects on strategies for different viewing purposes.

(Education Department of Western Australia, 1998 p. 42)

R 4 Strand Outcome Statement

The student understands how language structures work to shape meaning; explains possible reasons for varying interpretations; and justifies own interpretations of ideas, information and events in text.

(Education Department of Western Australia, 1998 p. 70.)

It would be possible for a remedial student to achieve higher levels in the Viewing Strand. This would allow such students to achieve higher levels and gain greater confidence which would transfer to other English strands.

The study showed computers were also a major issue. At present the students have limited access to laptop computers in the school. Participants indicated they would like to have access to laptops for all classes. They all recognised that they had difficulties in spelling and writing and that this was a major issue in completing work. The participants often felt under pressure to complete assignments and struggled to get them done; often work was not handed in and if it was, teachers had a hard time understanding their written work. One participant who had access to a laptop for some of his classes found he was able to write faster, spell better and get work completed on time and neatly. The majority of participants agreed that computers made school life easier as they did not have to worry so much about spelling, speed and neatness. The Focus English Program needs to recognise the needs of the students. The aim of the Program is to assist students in their learning. At present, the writing demands placed on students is not assisting their learning. The introduction of more computers would greatly aid students in expressing themselves.

The area of curriculum elicited a number of responses. A number of suggestions were made regarding curriculum including the use of movies and excursions. Other issues that arose dealt with choice. Participants wanted more choice of materials for reading and viewing. As previous studies have suggested, reading attitude is closely linked to whether students like what they are reading. At present the participants feel that the types of materials presented to them are boring and irrelevant. One boy also suggested the use of reading groups within the class setting based on reading ages. This would allow for those at different levels to progress at their own rate without having to wait for others to catch up. However, for this to work, students would need to be engaged in their reading and be motivated to read. This would not be achieved unless the materials given to students were appealing. The introduction of materials such as magazines, comics and short novels is needed. The materials must cater to the interests of the students and perhaps a survey of students' interests is needed before purchasing reading materials.

Discipline was an area which generated a great deal of discussion. Throughout the Perceptions Survey and Focus Interview, there were comments made about discipline. Often participants regarded factors such as "class is too noisy", "not enough control in the class" and "not enough discipline" to be the negative features of the Focus English Program. One participant in the focus interview group felt that some members of the class were allowed to get away with behaviour that was inappropriate whereas others were not. These views allowed students to develop divisions within the classroom and resentment of others in the class, which do not provide good conditions for learning. The participants also felt that at times some teachers lacked control of the class especially of the more disruptive students. Students claimed this interfered with the learning process of others in the class and led to their feeling that they were being treated unfairly.

The issue here is two-fold. First, is the issue of perceived favouritism. Students within any class are often unaware of certain situations affecting other students and these situations influence teachers' decisions regarding discipline. Often the students in remedial classes come to them with many other issues which other class members are not privy to. Though favouritism may appear to be taking

place it is usually a matter of individual student management in which the teacher is making decisions based on individual cases. Second, is the issue of behavioural management. Remedial students can be difficult and require strong management. If a teacher is assigned to such a class without the appropriate knowledge and background, problems in discipline can occur. This is what occurred with the Year Ten students, who had constant changes of teachers, some of whom were not skilled in taking a remedial class. As a result, the Year Ten students felt negative about the class and felt that they were not achieving.

There is a call here for better training and better support of teachers who are assigned Focus English classes. Support must include a range of strategies for accessing, analysing and responding to students' perceptions and feelings. There must be good Professional Development available for teachers who are assigned difficult classes; teachers must feel confident in taking on remedial classes. Too often teachers are assigned these classes without adequate support structures.

6.6 Conclusions

This study examined the perspectives of boys in a secondary school remedial program. It investigated whether the Self-Esteem Development Program put in place was having an effect on motivation, self-esteem and attitude and whether extended placement in the Focus English Program was having adverse affects.

The study has shown that there is a difference between the motivation, attitude and self-esteem in the different year groups. All year groups indicated they had a low Self-Concept as a Reader but whether this was linked to self-esteem is unclear. Certainly these students were aware that they were poor readers but this does not necessarily mean they had a high or low self-esteem. The issue of self-esteem, motivation and attitude came through more clearly in the written answers provided by the participants. The Year Ten participants were the most negative of the group. Whether this negativity can be attributed to not being exposed to the Self-Esteem Development Program or extended placement in the Focus English Program, a combination of both, or other factors, is not conclusive. However, these are certainly factors that need to be examined further. The Year Tens' responses certainly appear to suggest that being in the Program for three

years has had adverse effects. The students felt that they were not developing in a positive direction and as a result had become quite disillusioned.

The Year Nine students were the most positive group. This group had a good understanding of why they were in the program. They felt the program was enjoyable and believed those outside the class thought so too. While this group had had maximum exposure to the Self-Esteem Development Program, it is not possible to directly link the Self-Esteem Development Program to the attitude of the Year Nine students. There is evidence, however, that the program may be having positive effects on the students. Research into the attitude and motivation of the Year Nine students when they are in Year Ten would give a clearer picture of whether the program is working and whether extended placement is having a major impact.

The Year Eight group also displayed positive attitude. This group has had limited exposure to the Self-Esteem Development Program and they have only been in the Focus English Program for a short while. These factors make it difficult to draw conclusions regarding their attitude, self-esteem and motivation. This group tended give both negative and positive responses. However, it can be concluded that the Year Eight group is mainly positive about being the Focus English Program.

The Focus English Program is not perfect. A number of changes need to be made to the Program regarding teacher training, extended placement in the program, and resources. There is a particular need for the Focus English Program to explore curriculum options. Outcomes based education has opened the door for programs such as the Focus English Program to explore alternative forms of developing literacy. The major issue raised by participants was the need for more visual learning. Participants wanted more movies, excursions and computers. There is an opportunity here to acknowledge students' needs and engage them in their learning. There are so many alternative forms of teaching students that are more easily assimilated than print. Information technology is an integral part of society; yet within the English learning area it is often underutilised as a teaching tool. Movies and videos can be a valuable medium for motivating students, especially boys, and they provide students an alternative

way to learn to critically analyse text. Research into boys' education has highlighted that boys learn differently. Because boys make up the majority of remedial classes it is essential that a shift be made in the way they are educated.

The boys in this study claimed that there was a need for better, more relevant material and the need to incorporate more excursions and movies into the curriculum. These are realistic expectations which can be achieved. Using non conventional texts such as comics, advertising materials, sports and fitness magazines, movies and video games in the classroom would increase boys' interest levels and would result in more engagement in literacy practices. The use of video games as an opportunity for developing critical literacy in boys is a resource which needs to be investigated further. Video games constitute a multibillion dollar industry and are marketed almost exclusively to young males. The ways in which video games construct and market ideas about masculinity and femininity open the door for a range of discussions and writing opportunities on questions of masculinity in a non threatening way (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

There are also many films and magazines which address similar issues to those discussed above. By addressing these issues a number of outcomes can be achieved. The goals of the Focus English Program are to assist students in developing their literacy skills, to raise their confidence, to encourage students to take academic risks and to gain an appreciation of knowledge and education. These goals are currently not being achieved as many students are being "turned off" learning. Incorporating visual literacy strategies and high interest print and non print texts will better engage learners and thereby increase their confidence and motivation and thereby ensure that the Focus English Program better meets the needs of its target group.

If these changes are investigated more fully and the Focus English Program is continually monitored, one could be confident that the Program will continue to meet the needs of its target group.

Overall, it can be concluded that the Focus English Program and the Self-Esteem Development Program are successful. The majority of students in this study enjoyed the Focus English Program and felt that they were succeeding academically. They enjoyed the small classes and the opportunity to access more teacher time. The study has found that the Self-Esteem Development Program is not harming students. Although it cannot be conclusively proven that it is improving the self-esteem of learners, it does seem to do so.

6.7 Recommendations and Suggestions

A number of recommendations have been formulated as a result of this study. This study was a case study of a particular program in a secondary school and the recommendations presented are aimed at the Focus English Program. It was the purpose of this study to examine the Focus English Program with the aim of suggesting improvements that will benefit the students in the program. It is recommended that:

1. Reading materials be based on student preferences in order to increase reading motivation and attitudes. For example, silent reading programs could be introduced in which students are encouraged to bring their own reading materials to promote reading for pleasure.
2. Increased in-service and support of teachers who are involved in teaching remedial classes be provided, perhaps through after school weekly seminars for teachers on issues such as literacy strategies, learning difficulties and boys' education
3. A more uniform behaviour management policy be implemented in order to assist in discipline of difficult students. Perhaps the use of Individualised Education Plans could be prepared for more difficult students
4. The placement of students in Year Ten who still require support be investigated and alternative placements to be explored.
5. If the Year Ten Focus Program is to continue then it is recommended that the Self-Esteem Development Program be continued through to Year Ten.

6. A more Integrated Curriculum which caters for a range of learning styles and provides students with continuity across the curriculum be considered.
7. Focus English Students be given equal access to excursions. A camp for Focus English Students be considered in order to develop team building skills, communication skills and confidence.
8. Small class sizes be retained.
9. Access to computers and laptops for use in the classroom be increased. Appropriate computer programs will need to be purchased to support students' computer literacy and functional literacy development.
10. Visual literacy be emphasised more strongly.

The Focus English Program needs to address the recommendations outlined above and incorporate new ways of thinking in curriculum planning. Most students the Focus English Program are boys and therefore it is essential that issues regarding boys' education and learning be addressed. Boys are more likely to participate and achieve in school literacy work if they do not see participation and achievement in such work as being in conflict with constructions of masculinity. If boys can see such work as being relevant to their preferred ways of accessing information then they are more likely to achieve success in the classroom (Alloway and Gilbert, 1999).

6.8 Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This study has been limited by small numbers and the specificity of the research. Being a case study of a small defined group has meant that generalisations to a larger population is difficult. In order to develop a more general understanding of remedial programs and their effect on students, research needs to go further to include a wider population which includes both genders as well as investigating a broader range of remedial programs.

A number of issues have been raised by this study regarding remedial education, boys' education and the incorporation of non-cognitive factors in learning. This study illustrates the disadvantages that boys face within the English curriculum and the need for further investigation into the alternative forms of literacy such as visual literacy. There needs to be a shift in pedagogical practices in the teaching of English to boys to incorporate a range of texts in both print and visual form. Boys are at risk of becoming alienated within the secondary school curriculum especially in the area of Humanities. There is a need to acknowledge boys' interests and to cater for their range of tastes; this is not say girls' interests and tastes are to be ignored but there is a call for a more balanced curriculum. Further research is needed into the area of students' interests and achievement in the classroom setting as well as further investigation into the role of non print texts.

An important aspect of this study was the focus on boys' perspectives. The study demonstrated that the boys in the Focus English Program had strong opinions regarding their education. Students' opinions are often regarded as irrelevant and are therefore not taken into consideration. This study, however, found that students knew what they wanted and that they were able to articulate recommendations that were realistic and could be beneficial to their education. As recipients of remedial education, these students were able to view their situation in ways that were not evident to administrators, parents or teachers. By accessing student opinions, this study reflected upon current practices in a new way and has thereby been able to develop a range of recommendations. The issues of more visual forms of education, the use of computers in the classroom, increased teacher training and better text selection are now at the forefront of curriculum planning. These are areas that may not have been considered previously and they have now allowed for a program to be developed that better caters for the needs of its students.

Developments in remedial education have seen a shift in thinking from withdrawing students towards a system of mainstreaming. This is an area which has caused much debate and the research is still undecided on which is the best method. This study has highlighted both the advantages and disadvantages of a system which is based on streaming. Results from the study have shown that

those students who were in the program for three years were certainly much more negative and had negative perceptions of themselves as learners. That particular cohort were also the group that had no support in terms of developing non-cognitive aspects of learning. Limited work had been done with this group on addressing issues of self-esteem, attitude and motivation. There are implications here for further research into the prolonged placement of students in remedial education. There is a need for longitudinal research of a remedial group to determine firstly, if extended placement has detrimental effects and secondly, whether the introduction of programs which incorporate affective factors influence students' attitudes, motivation and perceptions even if placed within a program for an extended period.

This study has demonstrated that incorporation of a Self-Esteem Program into a remedial program has had some positive benefits. The findings showed that the two groups that had been involved in the Program were more positive and displayed a good understanding of why they were placed in the program. There is certainly a strong argument supporting the integration of programs which address self-esteem, motivation and attitude. Remedial readers, especially those in secondary school, come into programs with many issues which influence their learning. It is important that these issues are recognised and addressed.

The goal of good education practice is to provide the best education for students, to take in account their educational needs and to present them with the greatest opportunities for learning. In order to do this educational institutions are often in a constant state of evaluation, however, students' perceptions are often left out of the evaluation process. It is often assumed that students do not know what is best, yet they are the ones that spend a majority of their time in the classroom. They are the ones in the best position to make judgements about educational practice. The opinions of students are underestimated and devalued. This research intended to give value to students and to allow them to have a voice on issues which directly affected them. Remedial students in particular tend to fall at the bottom of the educational pyramid; these students rarely have the opportunity to contribute and are often left to feel that they are not important. It is these students that require support and opportunity, it is these students who need to feel valued members of the education community and it is these students

who need to be heard in terms of what they require in order to access best educational practice. With the shift in educational pedagogy and the increase pressure on teachers and administrators to produce knowledgeable and well adjusted students, there is a need now to value students more and to recognise that there is a wealth of information and insight which is being neglected.

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Motivation to Read Profile

Reading Survey

Name:

Date:

Highlight one response for each question.

Sample 1: I am in ..

Eighth grade.

Ninth grade.

Tenth grade.

Sample 2: I am a..

Male

Female

1. My peers think I am a ...

A very good reader.

A good reader.

An OK reader.

A poor reader.

2. Reading a book/magazine/newspaper is something I like to do ...

Never.

Not very often.

Sometimes.

Often.

3. I read ...

Not as well as my friends.
About the same as my friends.
A little better than my friends.
A lot better than my friends.

4. My good friends think reading is ...

Really enjoyable.
Enjoyable.
OK to do.
Boring.

5. When I come to a word I don't know. I can ...

Almost always figure it out.
Sometimes figure it out.
Almost never figure it out.
Never figure it out.

6. I tell my friends about books/magazines/newspapers I have read ...

I never do this.
I almost never do this.
I do this some of the time.
I do this a lot.

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand ...

Almost everything I have read.
Some of what I have read.
Almost none of what I have read.
None of what I have read.

8. People who read a lot are ...

Very interesting.
Interesting.
Not very interesting.
Boring.

9. I am ...

- A poor reader.
- An OK reader.
- A good reader.
- A very good reader.

10. I think libraries are ...

- A great place to spend time.
- An interesting place to spend time.
- An OK place to spend time.
- A boring place to spend time.

11. I worry about what other students think about my reading ...

- Every day.
- Almost every day.
- Once in a while.
- Never.

12. Knowing how to read well is ...

- Not very important.
- Sort of important.
- Important.
- Very important.

13. When a teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ...

- Can never think of an answer.
- Have trouble thinking of an answer.
- Sometimes think of an answer.
- Always think of an answer.

14. I think reading is ...

- A boring way to spend time.
- An OK way to spend time.
- An interesting way to spend time.
- A great way to spend time.

15. Reading is ...

Very easy for me.
Kind of easy for me.
Kind of hard for me.
Very hard for me.

16. When I grow up I will spend ...

None of my time reading.
A very little of my time reading.
Some of my time reading.
A lot of my time reading.

17. When I am in a group discussing reading activities, I ...

Almost never talk about my ideas.
Sometimes talk about my ideas.
Almost always talk about my ideas.
Always talk about my ideas.

18. I would like for my teachers to read material out loud to the class..

Every day.
Almost every day.
Once in a while.
Never.

19. When I read out loud I am a ...

Poor reader.
OK reader.
Good reader.
A very good reader.

20. When someone gives me a book/magazine for a present, I feel ...

Very happy.
Sort of happy.
Sort of unhappy.
Very unhappy.

Perceptions Survey

Name:

Age:

Year:

Here’s your chance to say what you think about the Focus English Program.
Please read the following questions and answer in as much detail as possible.

1. What do you like to read?

2. What don’t you like to read?

3. Do you think reading is important? Why/Why not?

4. Do you think the Focus English Program helps you improve your reading?
Why/Why not?

5. If you could choose what you read in class what would it be?

6. What are the good features of the focus English Program?

7. What are the bad features of the Focus English Program?

8. What would you change about the Focus English Program?

9. How do you feel about being in the Focus English Program?

10. Why do you believe you were placed in the Focus English Program?

11. What do you believe your friends and peers think about the Focus English Program.

The End

FOCUS GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the benefits of being in the Focus English Program?
2. How do you think it helps being in the Program?
3. What do you think are the disadvantages of being in the Focus English Program?
4. Do you have any hassles outside the classroom in regard to you being in the Focus English Program?
5. How do you cope with negative reactions and comments?
6. What do you believe your parents think about you being in the Focus English Program?
7. What would you change about the Focus English Program?
8. Are there any other issues you want to discuss regarding the Focus English Program and your placement in it?

PILOT STUDY

A pilot study of the Perceptions Survey was carried out in Term 4 of 2001 on the current group of Year Ten boys in the Focus English Program. The aim of the pilot study was to determine if the survey was suitable for a group of boys who are identified as remedial readers. The Perceptions Survey was written by the researcher and therefore needed to be trialled in order to determine if changes needed to be made.

The survey was given to eight boys who made up the Yr 10 Focus English class during one of their English lessons. Each student was told that the purpose of the exercise was to determine if the survey was suitable in terms of:

- Ease of reading
- Ease of understanding
- Relevant questions
- Length

The boys were given the survey to fill in. The survey was read out loud for the students and a discussion regarding the survey was held after completion.

Results of the pilot study showed that all participants found the survey easy to read and understand and felt they could respond even without it being read out. All participants found the questions to be relevant and easy to understand. The participants felt that the survey was not too long and took a relatively short time to fill in.

From the researcher perspective the answers given were relevant to the questions and provided the information the survey intended to collect. Participants had little trouble filling it in or understanding the questions. The survey could easily be completed in regular class time which runs for 80 minutes as it took the participants only about 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Overall, the pilot study showed that the Perceptions Survey did not need any alterations and was suitable for administration to students identified as remedial readers as it displayed ease of reading and understanding

Dear Mr Bull,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a study within your school. I am currently undertaking a Masters degree at Edith Cowan University and the research I am planning to undertake involves a study of the boys in the Year 8-10 Focus English classes. I am interested in examining how students feel about being in the Focus English classes and what issues they face as a result. I am also interested in the links between self-esteem, motivation, attitude and achievement in the remedial setting.

The research will cause minimal disruption to classes and involves students who are in the focus classes filling out a self-esteem survey and questionnaire examining their perceptions of the program. A few students will then be selected to form a focus group that will look at the benefits and disadvantages of the program.

All data will be kept confidential and any tape recordings will be wiped as soon as they have been transcribed. Students will be assigned a number or pseudonym to replace their name so they will not be identified. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure environment. You have the right to withdraw your school from the research at anytime and for any reason.

If you agree please fill in the consent form below and return it to me as soon as possible.

Your consideration is appreciated
Yours sincerely

Angela Milmo

I agree to allow Angela Milmo to conduct her study within the school.

Signed Date.....

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a teacher with the Catholic education Office and am carrying out research in the areas of remediation and self-esteem. This research is towards a Masters degree at Edith Cowan University and will, I believe, be of educational benefit to your child and school as I will be investigating the links between self-esteem, attitude, motivation and reading achievement in a remedial setting.

I am seeking your permission to allow your child to participate in this study which will involve responding to a confidential survey and questionnaire. The results will be used to establish links between self-esteem, motivation attitude and reading achievement.

Your child's responses will be recorded by a number and not by name and so will remain anonymous. There will no possible risk of identification in any part of the research process. You will have the right to withdraw your child at anytime and for any reason. Documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at all times. The only other person apart from myself who will see the raw data is my University Supervisor Dr. Marion Milton, as she will be assisting in the development of my thesis.

Would you please sign the attached consent form and return via your child as soon as possible.

Your consideration is appreciated

Yours sincerely

Angela Milmoe

I/we give permission for my child.....
to participate in the research being conducted by Angela Milmoe.

Signed

Date.....

Dear Student,

How would you like to take part in an exciting research study in which you get to have a say about how you feel about the Focus classes? I want to know what you think and how you feel. I am currently undertaking a Masters degree at Edith Cowan University and my research is based on self-esteem, motivation, attitude and reading achievement. It won't take much of your time and involves filling in a survey on self-esteem and motivation and a questionnaire regarding the Focus classes. Some of you may also be asked to take part in a small group discussion which will involve talking about what you like and hate about the program.

Your identity will remain anonymous as number will be attached to your responses instead of your name. All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure setting. Some responses may be recorded; however, the tapes will be erased as soon as they have been transcribed. The only people who will see the data is myself and my University Supervisor Dr. Marion Milton. You have the right to withdraw from the research at anytime and for any reason. If for some reason you change your mind about participating that is fine and is your right.

If you would like to participate please fill out the consent form below and return it to me as soon as possible.

Your consideration is appreciated

Yours sincerely

Angela Milmoe

I Agree to participate in the research being conducted by Angela Milmoe

Signed

Date.....

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for allowing your child to participate in the first phase of my research. I would now like to ask your permission to allow your child to participate in the second phase.

The second phase involves your child taking part in a focus group that involves a small group of student discussing the benefits and disadvantages of the Focus Program run at the school. The information gained from this group will contribute a great deal to my research and will give a broader understanding of how students feel about the program and what could be improved.

Your child’s responses will be recorded on tape, however to ensure confidentiality your child will be given a pseudonym instead of using their name, the tapes will be wiped after they have been transcribed and documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure area. My University Supervisor, Dr. Marion Milton and myself will be the only people to the raw data, therefore keeping your child’s responses private. You have the right to withdraw your child at any stage and for any reason.

Would you please the attached consent form and return via your child as soon as possible.

Your consideration is appreciated

Yours sincerely
Angela Milmoe

I/we..... give permission for my child.....
To participate in the research being conducted by Angela Milmoe

Signed..... Date.....

Self-Concept and Motivation To Read Scores For Each Participant

Year Group	Self-Concept as a Reader	Value of Reading
8	20	29
8	23	27
8	22	32
8	20	24
8	20	27
8	27	29
8	23	30
9	26	27
9	20	17
9	22	22
9	25	26
9	31	26
9	22	27
9	21	22
9	24	27
9	23	28
9	29	22
10	25	22
10	22	23
10	26	24
10	18	21
10	31	24
10	17	22
10	20	25

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Between-Subjects Factors

		N
Year	8	7
Group	9	10
	10	7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: VALUE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	106.796 ^a	2	53.398	6.929	.005
Intercept	14851.219	1	14851.219	1927.197	.000
YEAR	106.796	2	53.398	6.929	.005
Error	161.829	21	7.706		
Total	15419.000	24			
Corrected Total	268.625	23			

a. R Squared = .398 (Adjusted R Squared = .340)

Between-Subjects Factors

		N
Year	8	7
Group	9	10
	10	7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: SELFCON

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	21.573 ^a	2	10.786	.759	.480
Intercept	12399.620	1	12399.620	872.669	.000
YEAR	21.573	2	10.786	.759	.480
Error	298.386	21	14.209		
Total	13247.000	24			
Corrected Total	319.958	23			

a. R Squared = .067 (Adjusted R Squared = -.021)

Tamhane 2 Post Hoc Test

Post Hoc Tests

Year Group

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: VALUE
Tamhane

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
(I) Year Group	(J) Year Group				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8	9	3.89	1.37	.055	-6.80E-02	7.84
	10	5.29*	1.48	.003	2.08	8.49
9	8	-3.89	1.37	.055	-7.84	6.80E-02
	10	1.40	1.37	.621	-1.98	4.78
10	8	-5.29*	1.48	.003	-8.49	-2.08
	9	-1.40	1.37	.621	-4.78	1.98

Based on observed means.
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: SELFCON
Tamhane

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
(I) Year Group	(J) Year Group				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8	9	-2.16	1.86	.415	-6.11	1.80
	10	-.57	2.01	.991	-6.73	5.59
9	8	2.16	1.86	.415	-1.80	6.11
	10	1.59	1.86	.862	-4.63	7.80
10	8	.57	2.01	.991	-5.59	6.73
	9	-1.59	1.86	.862	-7.80	4.63

Based on observed means.

Kruskal Wallis H Test

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks

	Year Group	N	Mean Rank
SELFCON	8	7	10.64
	9	10	14.65
	10	7	11.29
	Total	24	
VALUE	8	7	19.14
	9	10	11.40
	10	7	7.43
	Total	24	

Test Statistics^{a, b}

	SELFCON	VALUE
Chi-Square	1.640	10.225
df	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.440	.006

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: Year Group

Mann-Whitney U Post Hoc Test

NPar Tests

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Year Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SELFCON	8	7	7.07	49.50
	9	10	10.35	103.50
	Total	17		
VALUE	8	7	12.43	87.00
	9	10	6.60	66.00
	Total	17		

Test Statistics^b

	SELFCON	VALUE
Mann-Whitney U	21.500	11.000
Wilcoxon W	49.500	66.000
Z	-1.332	-2.380
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.183	.017
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.193 ^a	.019 ^a

- a. Not corrected for ties.
- b. Grouping Variable: Year Group

NPar Tests

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Year Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SELFCON	8	7	7.57	53.00
	10	7	7.43	52.00
	Total	14		
VALUE	8	7	10.71	75.00
	10	7	4.29	30.00
	Total	14		

Formal Testing Score (Age: Months)**Appendix 11**

Year Group	Oral Reading	Comprehension	Spelling
8	10.03	11.05	10.09
8	8.03	9.01	9.05
8	9.10	8.07	7.11
8	7.10	7.05	7.11
8	7.08	6.08	6.07
8	10.03	10.07	10.09
8	8.06	9.05	8.02
9	10.06	13.01	10.03
9	12.06	11.02	11.05
9	13.06	11.02	11.08
9	12.06	13.01	10.06
9	13.00	13.01	14.06
9	9.06	9.05	9.02
9	10.07	11.06	10.09
9	9.03	10.07	10.03
9	10.00	12.01	10.06
9	10.07	12.00	11.06
10	10.00	10.07	10.06
10	9.00	9.00	9.09
10	10.00	12.06	10.01
10	12.00	12.06	11.06
10	10.01	10.00	9.09
10	10.06	9.05	9.05
10	11.00	13.01	11.03

Pearson Correlations

Correlations

		YEAR	SELFCON	ORAL	COMP	SPELL	VALUE
YEAR	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
SELFCON	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	1.000	.487	.437	.532	.350
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.134	.163	.110	.221
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
ORAL	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.487	1.000	.858**	.792*	.627
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.134	.	.007	.017	.066
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
COMP	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.437	.858**	1.000	.949**	.416
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.163	.007	.	.001	.176
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
SPELL	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.532	.792*	.949**	1.000	.193
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.110	.017	.001	.	.339
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
VALUE	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.350	.627	.416	.193	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.221	.066	.176	.339	.
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7

**.

*.

a.

Correlations

		YEAR	ORAL	SELFCON	VALUE	COMP	SPELL
YEAR	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a	. ^a
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
ORAL	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	1.000	.169	-.403	.471	.699*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.320	.124	.085	.012
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
SELFCON	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.169	1.000	.349	.616*	.630*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.320	.	.162	.029	.026
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
VALUE	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	-.403	.349	1.000	.120	-.204
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.124	.162	.	.370	.286
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
COMP	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.471	.616*	.120	1.000	.488
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.085	.029	.370	.	.076
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
SPELL	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.699*	.630*	-.204	.488	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.012	.026	.286	.076	.
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10

*.

a.

Correlations

		YEAR	SELFCON	VALUE	ORAL	COMP	SPELL
YEAR	Pearson Correlation	^a	^a	^a	^a	^a	^a
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
SELFCON	Pearson Correlation	^a	1.000	.452	-.415	-.101	-.345
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.	.154	.178	.415	.224
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
VALUE	Pearson Correlation	^a	.452	1.000	-.255	.355	-.009
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.154	.	.291	.218	.492
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
ORAL	Pearson Correlation	^a	-.415	-.255	1.000	.713*	.830*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.178	.291	.	.036	.010
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
COMP	Pearson Correlation	^a	-.101	.355	.713*	1.000	.888**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.415	.218	.036	.	.004
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
SPELL	Pearson Correlation	^a	-.345	-.009	.830*	.888**	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.224	.492	.010	.004	.
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

a. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

Transcript Focus Group Interview: 29/10/02

Qu 1: What do you think are the benefits of being in the Focus English Program? How do you think it helps being?

Student 1: Um I think the benefits of it are the classes are smaller, you've got more, you've got more one-to-one with the teacher and um as long as your class is easy to get on with it is a good class. I like it.

Student 2: Um, its good because the teacher can like spend more time with ya because she doesn't have as many teachers um students to work with.

Student 3: Easier to concentrate because there is not as many people in the class to talk to and everything so you can concentrate on your work and everything.

Student 4: Yeah I think the work is a bit easier cause like they don't pile as much on as they do in other classes.

Student 5: Yeah it pretty cool like not as much homework and stuff. A lot easier.

Student 6: More time to spend on assignments and stuff.

Qu 2: What do you think are the disadvantages of being the Focus English Program?

Student 3: Don't have as many friends in my class but um that's really it.

Facilitator: You don't why is that?

Student 3: because they're really smart.

Facilitator: Oh you mean your friends outside of class are not in your class.

Student 4: Um well ah if you don't like the people in your class you can't change because they are always around you and you can't away because it is a small class.

Student 5: it's all boys no girls

Facilitator: You like the girls

Student 5: Yeah its pretty bad and it'd be better if we got more excursions, that's a disadvantage.

Facilitator: Oh right.

Student 5: general classes get to go on more excursions

Student 1: I have to go with Student 5 I reckon um there has to be more excursions and I don't reckon there are any disadvantages to our classes. I reckon they're cool.

Student 2: oh like some of the disadvantages are like um if you got manual arts subject you get homework and you know don't have as much help from the teachers and that makes it hard.

Facilitator: So you don't have as much help as in Focus.

Student 2: Get more help in Focus and English

Student 6: I can't really see any disadvantages in our Focus class.